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Covenant Relationships and Women in Ministry

The Garden Training Center, Inc.
An Apostolic School of Ministry



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ISBN 979-8-9868163-7-1

Cover design by Garden Publishing Co./BTSM

Interior design by Garden Publishing Co.

Printed in the United States of America.

Acknowledgments

Holy Spirit is the inspiration for the content of this book, however someone put words to it. This book was written by Lauren Caldwell, Brandy Helton, Kevin McSpadden, and Robyn Tucker.

This book is one of a series of books written and distributed by The Apostolic School of Ministry from The Garden Training Center, Inc. The series arises from the foundational teachings of the school of ministry, founded by Brandy Helton. Brandy wrote several sections that are included in each book such as “God’s Love” and the prayers included at the end of each book.

Many thanks to the team of writers of the series for their collaboration to make the series available to the public. The writers are: Lauren Caldwell, Jessica Doggett, Danetta Ferguson, Debra Gray, Elisa Griffith, Nancy Hadley, Robin Harmon, Brandy Helton, Grant Hill, Kevin McSpadden, and Paula Pelzel. Each have sought Holy Spirit for the words He wants to speak through them. The result is a mixture of personalities and communication strategies that convey the total message in a beautiful, diverse way.

A special thanks goes to Nancy Hadley, Kevin McSpadden and Chelsey Butcher with Garden Publishing Co., for their preparation and fine tuning of the text.

Encouragement and Prayer for the Reader

Beloved of God, these teachings are written to reveal Jesus Christ and His heart of love for all who call upon His name to save them.

God has sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to save all who would believe in Him and His Word.

God desires to reveal Himself and to give us His divine nature in Christ Jesus our Lord through the power of His Holy Spirit.

God is Jealous. He wants us to encounter His presence daily and walk with Him in glory – intimate communion - today, while it is called today, and forever.

It is my prayer that this teaching would so impact the readers that all would come to know and believe JESUS, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, our Great God and Savior, and receive the PERFECT LOVE He has for us all as we grow up into Him and mature as true sons and daughters of God.

May you grow in faith and knowledge of your God and Savior and come to know the love that He has for you. I pray for you the Apostle Paul's prayer for spiritual growth:

Ephesians 3:14-21 The Living Bible (TLB)

"14-15 When I think of the wisdom and scope of his plan, I fall down on my knees and pray to the Father of all the great family of God—some of them already in heaven and some down here on earth— 16 that out of his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you the mighty inner strengthening of his Holy Spirit. 17 And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, living within you as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love; 18-19 and may you be able to feel and understand, as all God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is; and to experience this love for yourselves, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it or fully know or understand it. And so at last you will be filled up with God himself.

20 Now glory be to God, who by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of—infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes. 21 May he be given glory forever and ever through endless ages because of his master plan of salvation for the Church through Jesus Christ."

In Christ our Lord,
Brandy Helton
A child of God

God's Love

God's love is good news! Don't believe the lie that God is distant, unapproachable, and angry!

God is love. He is the only true, eternal God. He is perfect and holy, and He is truth. God is One. He has revealed Himself in three distinct, individual, equal persons: God the Father, God the Son – Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit.

The Bible tells the story of God's perfect love. In that love, God created the first family to live on the earth with Him. Through their deep intimate relationship with the Father, Adam and Eve were meant to fulfill all that was in God's heart on Earth just like it is in Heaven, for God's glory and purposes. Adam and Eve were chosen to walk with God, clothed in His glory presence and were perfect, as He is perfect, and they lived in His beautiful garden, the secret place called Eden. He gave them His breath, life and power to have dominion over all He created and wanted them to reproduce that LIFE replenishing the earth with it, until all the earth is filled with His glory.

Genesis 1:26-28

"26 Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our

image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

God created His children in His likeness. He made them spirit beings, with a soul – mind, will and emotions – and placed them in a physical body. He gave His children the choice to love Him and to walk with Him in obedience to His every word. He gave the first family the power to overcome any temptation offered to them through God’s adversary, the devil, who had rebelled against the Most High God in Heaven’s glory and was cast down to the earth. The devil, Satan, brought great darkness and chaos prior to Adam and Eve’s existence.

Adam and Eve were deceived into thinking that God was not perfect in love as Satan, the adversary, tempted them to believe that God would not keep His Word to them. Through their own will, Adam and Eve disobeyed the Father by eating from a tree that had the power to open their eyes to both good and evil. Through their choice of disobedience, they willfully gave their inheritance and authority over to the devil and his kingdom. Sin entered mankind, which produced death, eternal separation from a Holy God. Adam and Eve were banished from the dwelling and intima-

cy of perfection in the garden and were sent into the world as a fallen creation.

Father God knew He had to come Himself and save His family, and in His wisdom, He chose to send His Son, Jesus Christ into the world to save us and restore fallen mankind back to relationship with Him. Through His Son, He destroyed all the works of the devil and the curse of death. Hebrews 9:22 says, *“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”* Remission means to cancel the penalty, so according to the law there must be shedding of blood to cancel the penalty for sin. The Father cancelled the penalty for the sins of His children through the shedding of the blood of His innocent, holy Son Jesus, who was the Sent One, called and chosen to die for all, so all could live.

John 3:16-21

“16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 ‘He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may

be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

Jesus was conceived by God’s Holy Spirit in the womb of a young virgin named Mary. He appeared as the second Adam, in the flesh, with the choice to walk in perfect love and obedience, full of God’s Spirit, as a man to do the will of His Father.

Jesus grew up as any male child did in the flesh but He had divine fellowship with His Father and Holy Spirit. At the appointed time, He was revealed as being sent from God to save. Jesus went around doing good and healed all who were oppressed by the devil spiritually and physically. He revealed His Father’s heart and perfect love to all who believed through His teachings, grace and miraculous power.

Salvation means eternal life, healing, deliverance, protection, peace, wholeness, and forgiveness. Salvation came to all men through the cross, where the Son of God, the perfect One, was slaughtered as a lamb, bearing all sin for all times from a fallen people. Jesus bore the wrath of God against the darkness that separated God’s family from Him. Jesus was punished for our sin and died to cleanse us from the guilt, shame and condemnation sin produces. Sin separates. Love restores.

Jesus was crucified, dead and buried, spending three days and nights in the depths of Hades, the realm of the dead fallen race. Jesus took back the keys of death and hell from that old serpent the devil, Satan, and therefore, all authority was restored back to Jesus.

Great Holy Spirit breathed LIFE into Jesus and raised Him from the dead. He appeared to His disciples, those who followed Him and obeyed His teachings. He showed them that He conquered sin, death and the grave and now, had the keys of hell and death, and would give ETERNAL LIFE to ALL who chose to believe in Him. King Jesus ascended back to the Father of glory where He ever lives to make intercession for us all, and He is coming again to the earth in power to establish His Father's Kingdom on Earth.

Jesus Christ is the head and Lord over His church, those who have made Him Lord and Savior, by believing He is the Son of the Living God and God in the flesh, who finished the work the Father gave Him to do. He not only died for our sins to save and heal us, He chose to give His authority to those He called and chose to follow Him as His disciples, His family.

Jesus has commissioned His followers to do the same works that He did while He lived on the earth.

John 14:12-14

“12 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. 13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

God loves us and desires that none should perish. He desires for His family to be with Him where He

is. These books are written to inspire all who read them and to reveal the heart of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and Holy Spirit in order that we might RECEIVE THE LOVE HE HAS FOR US and be CHANGED INTO HIS VERY LIKENESS. God desires to dwell with His family forever and ever just as He did in the beginning. How glorious it is to live in His presence and dominion, beholding His goodness, forever and ever, amen.

The book of Revelation describes the time that is coming when all things are made new according to God's heart of love:

Revelation 21:1-7

"1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful.' 6 And He said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be

My son.”

To understand what is presented in the Bible, you must start by understanding God’s love. The good news is that God loves you!

The Heart of It

When God says He loves His children, He means it. He has taken significant, powerful, and far-reaching steps to ensure that those who believe in Jesus can know the love of God that surpasses human knowledge. In fact, God has entered into covenant relationship with His people, and He has sealed that covenant forever with the blood of His beloved Son. Furthermore, God calls people into covenant relationship with each other so that the work of His Kingdom can be accomplished. This kind of relationship is deeper than mere agreement – it is a commitment to the work of God and to one another. This book explores how God’s people can walk in covenant together to see the Kingdom of Jesus manifest on the earth. It also covers God’s heart for all His people, male and female, and contains some key instruction for women of God. All believers, men and women, need to understand the truth of covenant relationship and God’s heart for all His children in order to fully become what God intended all along – the pure and spotless bride He is preparing for King Jesus. Read on to discover the beauty and power of covenant relationships built upon the foundation of God’s love and empowered by mutual commitment.

Covenant Relationships and Women in Ministry

COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS

In current times, the idea of a covenant strikes some as foreign, outdated, or simply unnecessary. Modern people, especially in the Western world, have replaced the deep, unbreakable bonds of covenant relationships with things like the romanticized notion of “doing business on a handshake” or the childish “pinky swear.” However, God places tremendous value on covenants - relationships that are not meant to be broken. To God, covenants hold such value, in fact, that the blood of His Son serves as His guarantee that He shall never break the covenant He makes with those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. So then, what exactly are covenant relationships and why do they matter so much to God?

To better understand what a covenant truly means, consider the prayer of Jesus in *John 17: 20-24*:

“20 “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who [j]will believe in Me through their

word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. 24 “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

In this beautiful prayer, Jesus lifts those who believe in Him up to the Father, asking that, through God’s glory, they may be *one*. Just as Jesus is One with God the Father and Holy Spirit, His heart’s cry is for all of us who believe in Him to be in perfect unity with one another. Jesus desires His followers to be joined with one another in faith, led by the Holy Spirit, and deeply rooted His steadfast love for us. Because the Father loves us just as He loves Jesus, we are empowered to love each other with a height, width, length, and depth that surpasses earthly ability or understanding (*Ephesians 3:14-18*).

With this understanding in mind, we can begin to approach a true understanding of covenants. Merriam Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines covenants as: “A usually formal, solemn, and binding agreement; a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.” Covenants are formal, meaning they are recognized and usually public proclama-

tions. They are also binding, which means they are not intended to be broken. In fact, breaking covenants can come with severe consequences. Finally, covenants are formed with a purpose in mind, which means those involved are promising to carry out certain actions.

When it comes to our covenant relationship with God, believers must remember that God is absolutely faithful to His promises – what He has said, He most certainly shall do. Not only that, but God’s faithfulness carries over from generation to generation for those who love Him and are faithful to Him.

Deuteronomy 7:9

“Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;”

1 Chronicles 16:15

“Remember His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations,”

In the passages above, God makes it clear that He intends to join Himself to a faithful people by carrying out his merciful, just, and pure commandments. Furthermore, don’t believe for a minute that God’s covenant promises will eventually run out. The “thousand generations” referred to in the passage above are not meant to express a limitation, but rather an ongoing, reoccurring expression of God’s mercy, kindness, grace, and love.

The key for believers to benefit from this covenant

is twofold: 1. We must remember that God's faithfulness never runs out and that He will do what His word says He will do. 2. We must love God, which we express through our obedience to Him and our relationship with Him.

Look at it this way: God has publicly entered into a covenant with believers through the death and resurrection of Jesus. The public declaration of this covenant took place at the cross. Those who make Jesus Lord of their lives receive saving grace and empowerment for good – God's blessing. God faithfully carries out all the promises of His word on our behalf. We lovingly serve and obey the wonderful God who loved us enough to give His Son on our behalf. This covenant is a joining together that God intends to last forever.

Furthermore, even though many of the Old Testament promises were made directly to Israel, God has extended those same promises to Gentile believers through Jesus:

Galatians 3:13-14

“13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Galatians 3: 26-29

“26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither

slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

These Scriptures make clear that modern believers, whether Jewish or Gentile, can fully receive every promise God has made. He has joined us to Himself as part of His family, and now we have the privilege of trusting Him to carry out all He has promised as we lovingly walk with Him in obedience and faith.

Now it is time to consider how God's covenant promises actually include believers. As it turns out, God intends for us to represent Him to others in the hope that they, too, will receive Jesus, along with all God's amazing benefits!

The Ministry of Reconciliation

Jesus did not leave any doubt that His Father in Heaven had sent Him to the earth with a very specific mission: seek and save that which was lost. In one of the most famous passages of the Bible, Jesus clearly laid out His purpose:

John 3:16-17

"16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

Jesus suffered on the cross and died so that all who believe in Him can receive forgiveness of sin,

empowerment for God's purposes, and an intimate relationship with God the Father, among many other blessings. Nonetheless, our covenant relationship with God does not stop once we are grafted into His family. Quite the contrary: God wants us to extend the same invitation we received to others who do not yet know Him.

Consider what Paul writes in *2 Corinthians 5: 18-21*:

“18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not [d]imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Just as God worked to reconcile us to Himself through Jesus, He has now commissioned to help with the family business: winning souls. The passage above names you as an official ambassador for Jesus, one who pleads with others to receive the same mercy, grace, and love that God has given you. In other words, we have work to do!

Remember that covenant relationships are formed for the purpose of carrying out action. Looking to our perfect model, Jesus, reveals God's intent for every believer in carrying out the work of God's kingdom.

The Work You Have Given Me

As with any Kingdom principle, Jesus is the best model of what covenant relationship ought to look like. In short, Jesus called twelve apostles to Himself, taught them, and sent them out with the exact message He proclaimed. In other words, God gave Jesus a mission, and Jesus passed that mission on to His followers.

Toward the end of His time of ministry, Jesus prayed for those He invites to join His mission, which includes you and me. In *John 17:4*, Jesus says, *“I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”* What an incredible statement! In essence, Jesus was praying, “Father, I have done all you asked of Me, and now I am praying for these believers, and for those who will believe, so that they may continue the mission You began in Me!”

Jesus initiated God’s New Covenant, and now we have the privilege of representing Him by carrying out His work. That is the nature of covenant – we have been saved, healed, delivered, set free, and empowered by the Almighty God of the universe. That same God invites us to join Him in the family business.

In fact, each and every believer in Jesus has an important role to play in carrying out the work of God’s Kingdom. Only *you* can fulfill the part intended for you. The best part is that God has uniquely crafted each of us to complete our specific work, and He has gone before us to prepare that work just for us.

Ephesians 2:8-10

“8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Do you see how generous and wonderful God is? His grace saved us, and His power works in and through us to complete tasks designed specifically to energize and delight us. Not only that, but if believers are genuinely following the lead of Holy Spirit, we can expect Him to guide us to those with whom we can effectively and powerfully build His Kingdom. This principle, known as alignment, amplifies the power of individual believers as the members of the body of Christ join together to carry out His will.

Alignment – Functioning as the Body of Christ

Previously, we discussed the high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17, so let's return to that prayer for another important insight. In *John 17:6*, Jesus prays, “6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.” It is important to understand that God Himself gave us as a gift to Jesus, and as we will see shortly, He considers this gift uniquely significant.

With this truth established, we know from Scripture that God has plans for every believer that are

both extraordinary and intimate. By abiding in Jesus we find our true purpose and power. *John 15:4-8* poetically illustrates the nature and importance of remaining intimately connected to Jesus:

“4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you[b] will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

Like branches connected to the vine, we draw our sustenance from the True Source, Jesus. Bearing fruit does not depend upon the branch’s spectacular effort, but upon remaining connected to the vine. Only in that connectedness can any believer expect to bear fruit for the Kingdom.

Building upon this truth, can you imagine a vine with only one branch? Even if it bore tremendous amounts of fruit, it would still be an unnatural and strange sight to discover a vine with only one branch laden with delicious and enticing fruit. It is very similar in the Kingdom of Jesus. A vine with many branches, each unique, each connected to the vine in its own particular location, creates a fuller and more fruitful harvest. That’s why King Jesus leads His followers to those fellow be-

lievers who can walk faithfully together.

It's already powerful to consider ourselves part of a fruit-bearing plant, but what if Jesus has an even more intimate and special idea in mind? In fact, the Bible explains that Jesus sees believers as His very own body:

Ephesians 4:11-16

“11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

The Lord gives each person who surrenders to Him unique gifts, callings, and passions with the intent that, just as a body with many parts works in harmony to build itself up, we would all have an important and special role in building each other and, ultimately, the Kingdom. Let that thought penetrate your heart – Jesus has made a covenant with you that has essentially made you

part of His body. That's how much He values you. Just to drive the point home, consider this: which part of your body do you consider unimportant enough to ignore or cast away? You see, Jesus loves you just like a part of Himself.

Not only that, but you have a part to play in extending the love of Jesus to others, both within His body and outside of it. However, that means you will also need the help of others. No individual body part can carry out all the functions of the body alone. In order for the body to function, both naturally and spiritually speaking, each part must be in its place doing what it is designed to do. This is the importance of alignment. After all, what good is a foot that twists itself at the wrong angle? What good is an eye that does not point the way the brain needs it to look? Practically speaking, no body part that refuses to be part of the body does any good whatsoever.

That sobering fact should bring conviction to anyone who separates themselves from the body of Christ. Nobody is intended to walk alone. Every person has a place, a role, and a function meant to build up and support the body.

What does that mean for you specifically? It means you will need to surrender to God's will by aligning with fellow believers so that you fulfill your unique and essential function in the body of Christ. Let Holy Spirit show you where He wants you to serve. Let Him reveal what functions, roles, gifts, and abilities He has given you. Let Him lead you to those under whose authority He intends to see you flourish. Get into your place and wholeheartedly serve God and His people. That's what

it means to be in alignment.

It is a mutually beneficial relationship based on the covenant love of God. It is life-giving, and it puts His glory on display.

Part of aligning properly with God's will and His delegated authority is to willingly sacrifice personal agendas, desire for recognition or gain, and the individualistic notion that we can do Kingdom work on our own.

In *John 5:19-20*, Jesus revealed the deep importance of alignment with the Father's will: *"19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel."* Jesus carried out marvelous exploits by submitting to the Father's will. If Jesus Himself said He could do nothing "of Himself," the modern-day believer would do well to take on the same mindset. We must lay down our pride and personal agendas so that we may carry out the will of God.

When this happens, believers will find that God calls them together to carry out His work. This process reveals the heart of the Father: that each person willingly and lovingly gives up their own personal desires in order that the name of Jesus may be lifted high. The beauty of this sacrifice is that, in pursuing the will of God, believers discover true joy, true peace, and true value. They find that God's plans are so much bigger and better

than they previously could have imagined. Ultimately, they find themselves joined with fellow believers who are, in many cases, closer and more faithful than blood relatives.

This unity occurs when people come together for God's purposes. This mutual edification happens when people join together not for what they can receive, but in order to give to one another unselfishly. There is a sincere agreement and commitment to fulfill the work God has given, and God empowers such groups to see the work to its finish.

In his book, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, Bill Johnson describes what such covenant-based relationship can look like practically:

"I see what moves the Father, and I allow what moves Him to set my course. As a pastor, I know what it is like to watch other people's dreams flourish under the umbrella of the ministry at my church. But my first concern is always with God's agenda for us. When we consider other people for our board or leadership team, their agenda must go out the window. I do not pay attention to anybody's agenda, no matter how lofty it is or how much money they have to accomplish it. I am immune to other people's agenda until they lay them down and pick up my agenda, which God gave me for our church. Then and only then, their agendas become important to me. Their desires and wishes come alive in my mind as they share them with me. I believe that's how the Father works. As He sees you and me surrender to His agenda, He's

suddenly interested in hearing what we have to say. Our yieldedness and surrender make Him vulnerable to our dreams.” - Bill Johnson, The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind, p.146.

This excerpt shows how God works: He will call certain people by giving them a mandate or a Heavenly agenda. Obviously, they cannot complete the work alone, so God also calls others to walk alongside them. The work and the Kingdom are the focus, and love is the foundation for those called to walk together. In such relationships, as we have previously noted, those involved are united not because of what they each receive, but what they all give to each other. Thus, Love Himself is glorified and put on display for the world to see, and the work of the Kingdom prospers.

Ultimately, God invites believers into a family relationship with Him and with other believers. We did not choose our earthly families – they are an unchangeable part of our identity. In similar fashion, we may not have chosen where God plants us or with whom. That’s His job! But, if we can choose to submit to His plan, His authority, and His leadership, we will find ourselves walking with like-minded and like-hearted people who love us just as we love them, flaws and all. That doesn’t mean there won’t be issues to resolve. But with love as the basis and a covenantal relationship serving as the guarantee that we are in this together until the very end, it becomes much easier to continue walking out our issues together.

Look at what the Bible says about this special way of relating to each other:

Psalm 68:6

*“God sets the solitary in families;
He brings out those who are bound into prosperity;
But the rebellious dwell in a dry land.”*

Ephesians 3:14-21

“14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father [f]of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

As those God has lovingly joined to Himself as part of His family, God has set us up for success. More importantly, He has made a covenant with us that makes us part of His family, His body of believers, who have the privilege of carrying out His work in this world.

In light of what we have discussed so far, it is essential for every believer to lay hold of the power and the love available to them within the context of God’s covenant with us and His intended cov-

enant relationships with others. That means that every believer, male and female, has an irreplaceable role in seeing the fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

However, throughout history, the enemy has worked hard to keep half the body of Christ from accepting its role - specifically, the women of God. For generations, faithful women were told that their role was to be inside the home only, and that the real work of ministry was the exclusive domain of men. That has never been God's intent, and thankfully, God is working to free women of God from inaccurate ways of thinking and launch them into their true destiny. With that in mind, let's now dive more deeply into God's intent for His beloved daughters by seeing what the Bible actually says about them.

(Note: If you are a man of God, do not skip this part. You are called not only to know what follows, but to be a carrier of the truth. Let this section empower you also as you read and consider the truth and the goodness of God.)

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

In order to have a proper understanding of the intended functions of both males and females in the body of Christ, especially within the context of covenant relationship, it is important to grasp our identity as the Bride of Christ. Furthermore, as believers grow in their understanding of this identity, both men and women can more deeply appreciate the love of God, as well as His desire to empower His beloved.

The “born again” believers, known biblically as the Church, including both male and female, are all considered to be part of the Bride of Christ. (For the purposes of this book, the Bride of Christ will be referred to as the “Bride.”) For males, it may be challenging to see themselves as a “bride,” just as for females it may be difficult to see themselves as “sons of God.” For all of us, the key to understanding this paradigm of the Bride relies primarily on the revelation of how Jesus feels toward His Church as a Bridegroom feels for His Bride. It is not so much about a male trying to relate to a female as a “bride,” or for a female trying to relate to the male as a “son.” The mystery that He is wanting to reveal to us as the Bride is one of the deep, passionate, cherishing love that He has for us - like the love a bridegroom has for his bride. As a male or female, we want to encounter and embrace the love of God for us as a bride from her bridegroom. This profound mystery is a spiritual mystery that Ephesians 5:32 speaks of and can only be revealed by the Spirit of God.

Ephesians 5:32

“32 For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

In the Beginning... God’s Heart Revealed

God, who is LOVE, created man in His image and His likeness for the purpose of LOVE. Sharing His love with another was God’s first and principal intent in creating man. Love is always meant to be shared, and through His creation, God formed

someone with whom to share His love. But God did not stop there. He wanted man to share His love with another.

God saw that all His creation was good, except for one thing. He said, *“It is not good that man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18 LEB).*

In the visible world, all things had male and female counterparts except for man. God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, so He created man’s counterpart, woman.

In *Genesis 2:18-25 (LEB)* we read:

“And Yahweh God said, ‘it is not good for that the man is alone; I will make for him a helper as his counterpart’... But for the man there was not found a helper as his counterpart. And Yahweh God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man. While he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. And Yahweh God fashioned the rib which he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. And the man said, ‘She is now bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh; she shall be called ‘Woman,’ for she was taken from man.’ Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cling to his wife, and they shall be as one flesh. And the man and his wife, both of them, were naked, and they were not ashamed.”

The word used for “helper” in *Genesis 2:18* can also be translated as a “helping counterpart.” The word counterpart is defined as “oneness from two parts,” so a counterpart in marriage is meant to

complete the other. When the husband and wife join “as one flesh” in marriage, they complete one another.

To accomplish the division into two parts, Adam was put into a deep sleep. Prophetically we see the Kingdom principle of *John 12:24* that says,

John 12:24 NIV

“24 unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

In order to have his counterpart, God caused man, the earthly bridegroom, to die to himself so that he would no longer be one, but two. Jesus, our eternal Bridegroom, did this for His eternal Bride at the cross. In His death, the Bride was taken from his side and birthed. Out of Jesus came the blood that paid for our sins and washed us clean so that we could be His counterpart.

Author Gene Edwards says it beautifully: “She was in man. She was hidden right there in him! Unseen, unconceived of by any mortal mind. Yet there she was all the time, in him. She was an unveiled mystery hidden in man” (*The Divine Romance*, page 28).

We see here one of God’s primary reasons for creating humankind in His image was to share His love with man and for man to turn around and share that love with his counterpart, his bride. Man is entrusted with being an image bearer of God and through marriage, man reflects the intimate relationship God wants to have with us. God’s word clearly shows us that when we come

together in unity and we love one another, we begin to express the complete image of God in the earth. This beautiful design of creation with Adam and Eve when He made them in His image was to interact and participate with them in the most intimate way, as one.

Another translation of *Genesis 2:18* from the Passion Translation reads: *“Then Yahweh-God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. Therefore, I will fashion a suitable partner to be his help and strength.’”*

The Hebrew word for suitable partner is ‘ezer (Strong’s, 5828). This word ‘ezer, translated as “help” or “helper” is actually a term that is used for military help. Significantly, the word describing the woman is the same word God uses to describe Himself at least fourteen times in scripture. Here is an example of this:

Psalm 124:8 NIV

“Our help [‘ezer] is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”

Another meaning of ‘ezer is strong rescuer. This knowledge sheds light on a common misconception applied to the role of woman as helper. So often we hear the word “helper,” and we think of the woman as being inferior or reduced to a subservient role. However, God’s choice of the word ‘ezer to describe both Himself and woman teaches us that the woman carries equal worth, and she may even be God’s secret weapon! The Passion Translation footnote in *Genesis 2:18* reads,

“...God’s choice of the word ezer indicates that

a man's wife is his first line of defense and an equal partner in the journey of life.... She is the dynamic solution to man's loneliness as one who protects, reveals, and helps. Some see the ancient pictographic rendering of ezer as 'E (eye)- Z (man) -R (weapon), to mean 'the revealer of the enemy.'"

Notice here the Hebrew language gives deeper meaning of the word 'ezer by using the letters that also represent pictures.

God chose words to describe the relationship between the man and woman as a side-by-side relationship, where neither is less than or greater than. They are equal in value, but different in purpose. God had intention and reason in separating the two, and each is meant to carry different strengths and purposes. We need to use God's truth expressed in His word as a standard of measure so that there are no misunderstandings concerning the role of both male and female.

And there is more! God designed the bride and bridegroom to have babies. He says, "*Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth....*" (Genesis 1:28). Isn't this incredible?! God invites mankind to join Him in building His family through this covenant love of the two becoming one.

Along with the mandate to reproduce, the two as one were created to co-reign with the Creator of the Universe:

Genesis 1:26

"26 and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over

the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

This dominion that God gave to both Adam and Eve refers to the ability to exercise care on behalf of those under their care. This is a God given authority whose purpose is to serve others in order to benefit them. God adds to this understanding in *Genesis 2:15* when we read, “*Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.*”

The Hebrew word for tend is ‘abad and means “to work or to serve” (Strong’s, H5647), and the Hebrew word for keep is samar, which means “to exercise great care over, to hedge about, to guard, to protect, to preserve, to save, to watch” (Strong’s, H8104). Thus, it is evident that the dominion God gave mankind would produce a service and protection of the land, a genuine concern and care for what God had created. Dominion has often been misunderstood or misinterpreted as domination. Actually, domination is the perversion of this beautiful gift that God gave to the man and woman in the Garden. Domination benefits only the one dominating, whereas dominion benefits the earth and those under their care.

Psalm 116:16

“16 The heavens are the Lord’s heavens, but the earth has He given to the children of men.”

This command to co-reign, to take dominion, is still for today, and the earth and all that is in it continues to look for the man and woman to take their positions of strength.

In Kris Valloton's book, Purity: The New Moral Revolution, he explains the creation story and the man and woman's purpose like this:

“God stated that Adam was alone, and he needed a helper. In what way was he alone? He was alone because there was a relational void in his heart because God had fashioned him in His image. God is, in Himself, a relationship, an intimate exchange of love and friendship. Unlike everything else in His creation, He made mankind to relate both to Himself and to one another in this loving relationship. Until God made the woman, there was no one in the Garden to whom Adam could relate in the way he related to his God. What is interesting to note here is that the Bible doesn't say that Adam required a mate in order to reproduce. In order for Adam to reproduce children who would bear the image of God, as we have seen, the process of reproduction had to be part of an intimate, loving, and faithful friendship that mirrored the relationship that God made us to have with him.

So, God solved Adam's loneliness by putting him to sleep and breaking him apart. From then on, Adam would relate to his wife in the same way he related to God because she completed him in the same way God did. Man was manufactured with a God receptacle, so to speak, a place for his Creator to plug into his soul and complete the circuit of his life. God perfectly fits man because he was created for Gods' pleasure and companionship. And when God literally took woman from man's side, He created a similar void that could only be filled by her.

Without her, Adam was missing the rest of himself.

You'll notice that the Bible never counts women in a crowd after this. This is because God knows that it takes both male and female to make one whole person! This divine version of marriage is at the absolute center of God's heart and will for humankind. Millennia later, He would reveal to His people that their ultimate destiny was to be married eternally to His Son, to be the Bride of Christ." (Kris Valloton, Purity: The New Moral Revolution, pages 121-122)

God does not discriminate gender as society does. He loves both the man and the woman and celebrates their union, calling the two to become one. As they come together, they express the full image of God. While He is a God of order and has placed the husband to be head over the wife, He does not place one's value or purpose over the other.

Ephesians 5:23

"23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body."

The Bride Relates to Her Husband Christ as God the Son relates to God the Father

In the passage that follows, we can once again see how scripture highlights the parallels between the Bride of Jesus and the natural earthly marriage of husband and wife:

Ephesians 5:21-24

"22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as

to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

Holy Spirit gives clear instruction regarding order inside of marriage as He compares it to the order with the Church and her Bridegroom. Culturally, the word “submit” has been misunderstood, miscommunicated, and misused, leading many men and women (within the role of husband and wife) to stray away from the original intent and heart of Father God. With all that we have learned in the last few pages, God’s heart and value for the husband and wife teaches us that He is not a God who discriminates. He loves and values both uniquely, but not less than or greater than the other. However, He is a God of divine order.

From the very beginning, we see Him “hovering over the face of the earth to bring chaos into order” (Genesis 1). Holy Spirit continues to bring order from chaos to this day. One of the main ways He does that is inside the marriage relationship. With perfect wisdom, He has assigned both the husband and wife their role and purpose. He knows what is best for us; He knows there needs to be one who ultimately takes the lead. For example, let’s consider two people dancing. I am always amazed at the elegance and grace with which they flow. It appears as if they are one, and it is difficult for those observing the dance to really determine who is leading and who is following. The beauty is in the oneness - not in one outshining the other, but in the fluidity of their dance. Imagine, however, if both were trying to lead.

What would that look like? It would certainly not have the appearance of “oneness.” Both would be bumping into each other, stepping on each other’s toes, maybe even falling from getting tangled up in each other’s feet. We might describe it as “chaos!” Or imagine if both were trying to follow. What would this look like? It would be just as likely to result in chaos.

To use the metaphor of dancing for marriage, when a husband and wife are dancing, following the lead of the husband will require an act of faith. A lot of the time the wife is moving backward in following his lead so she must trust him. Other times he may be leading her to the left, or to twirl, or to be pulled in close. She would need to “feel” his leading; she might need him to direct more clearly by placing pressure on her back or hand. Similarly, in a marriage, dancing takes practice. Sometimes we might step on each other’s toes. If that happens, we repent, we ask for forgiveness, and we keep practicing.

For a wife to submit to her husband, it does not mean that she is controlled by him. It does not mean that she never speaks or that she can’t express her thoughts. It definitely does not mean she is inferior or subservient to him. Remember, even in the garden with the first marriage, God created order. He created the wife to be the husband’s ‘ezer [helper].

These passages naturally extend to the relationship between the Bride (the church) and the Bridegroom (Jesus), directing us to submit to the authority of Jesus and to His Lordship.

Consider how husbands are instructed to love their wives:

Ephesians 5:25-27

“25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

Submission looks pretty easy when we think about it from that perspective. If someone willingly lays down their life for another, submitting to that love should be effortless!

We also see the eternal rewards of the wife and husband when she submits to his headship:

1 Peter 3:1-2

“3 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.”

1 Peter 3:7

“Husbands, likewise, dwell with your wives with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”

The covenant of marriage as created and intended by Elohim from the beginning is one of the

greatest gifts He has given mankind. Our marriage should reflect the divine image of God to the world, and we should model the love relationship that Jesus desires with His Bride.

Ephesians 5:30-32

“30 For we are members of His body of His flesh and of His bones. 31 For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”. 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Headship

We have been given the perfect model, Jesus Christ. He lived a life of love, service, and sacrifice. He chose humility over pride. He is equal with God in all respects because He is God, yet He willingly left the throne of heaven to live as a servant, to love extravagantly, and to sacrifice Himself to save us. Paul reveals God’s heart toward headship in *Philippians 2:5-8*:

Philippians 2:5-8

“5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 who being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 8 but made himself nothing, taking the nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”

This exhortation makes it clear that headship isn’t an attitude of being large and in charge. Rather, it is a mindset of humility, serving the ones under

our authority. Godly headship is not concerned with the will of humans but focuses on obedience to God's will. Ultimately, serving as head comes from a love that makes someone willing to die for the ones in their care.

In marriage, the husband is the head - he is the point man, the one out front.

Ephesians 5:23

“23 For the husband is head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, He Himself being the savior of the body.”

In other words, headship in marriage is modeled after the love of Jesus. Husbands follow the example He set in humility, service, obedience, and sacrifice. Wives submit in faith and love to the one who cherishes them so dearly. In this way, two can act as one, both fully loved and honored, just as Father God intended.

Co-laboring With Christ

Christ chose the Bride to co-labor with Him and to stand beside Him. When the Bride responds in submission, Jesus knows He can trust her with His authority.

Matthew 28:18-20

“18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am

*with you always, even to the end of the age.”
Amen.”*

Ephesians 1:17-23

“17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

God is Able!

Ephesians 3:20-21

“20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

As the Bride of Christ, we have the same authority and power.

Matthew 10:7

“7 And as you go, preach say, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Acts 1:8

“8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”

As the Bride of Christ, we are co-heirs with Christ.

Galatians 3:29

“29 And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Single and Divorced Women and Widows

For a woman who is single and has never been a bride, a divorced woman, or a widow, the concept of being the Bride of Christ can be challenging. Attempting to place yourself in an unknown experience is difficult. Moreover, some experienced woundedness through their earthly marriage, which can also be troublesome. Even understanding the concept of being the bride of Christ within the conceptions and ideals of our culture can feel unimaginable.

Regardless of where you may fall in this spectrum, the mystery that God is wanting to reveal to us as the Bride is one of the deep, passionate, cherishing love that He has for us. If you are in Christ, Jesus is your head and eternal husband. He fulfills every role of headship in your life, regardless of whether or not you are married, and He will do this for eternity. Better still, eternity

begins the moment we respond with a “Yes” to His covenant proposal.

WOMEN OF GOD IN THE BIBLE

Understanding that every believer has been joined to Jesus as His Bride ought to empower our walk with Him as His covenant partner, His co-laborer. Building on that knowledge, this section will briefly discuss a selected group of women and their testimonies and journeys of faith from the Old Testament and the New Testament. We are not able to cover all in this book, but the intent is for the Lord to reveal His heart for His daughters, His beloved, His bride.

The Lord empowers His chosen vessels of honor in many ways. Additionally, Holy Spirit works within the children of God and anoints them to accomplish His will. The Lord truly knows the plans He has for each and every one of His children. Be encouraged as you read what God has done through those who accept His call in obedience and love.

Women of God in the Old Testament

Eve

The first woman God created was Eve. She, like Adam, was made in the image of God. Eve was called to walk in the glory Presence of God in His Garden. God chose Eve to become the wife of Adam. She was formed and taken from Adam’s side to be his helpmate and his beloved. She would become the mother of all the living. She was commissioned to rule and reign with him. She was called to walk beside him - not beneath

him, or in front of him. *Beside* him.

Genesis 2:21-24

“21 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

23 And 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 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Genesis 3:20

“And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.”

God had a wonderful plan for male and female walking alongside each other to see His Kingdom established on the earth. He blessed them and empowered them to carry this out together. He never desired for either of them to walk alone. What a beginning!

Sarah

Sarah was the wife of Abraham. Abraham is known as a father of many nations!

Genesis 17:1-7

“17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old,

the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. 2 And I will make My covenant between Me and you and will multiply you exceedingly." 3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you."

God called Sarah the mother of nations and declared that kings of peoples shall be from her! What a destiny!

Genesis 17:15-16

"15 Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."

God's promise to Sarah is especially wonderful since she was barren and past her childbearing years at the time God spoke this to her. Nonetheless, God had a supernatural plan for Sarah and Abraham. At the age of ninety, the Lord opened Sarah's womb. She conceived and bore Abraham a son, and they named him Isaac. Isaac would

carry on the divine mandate and blessing from his father. What a story of God's sovereign grace and faithfulness!

In the New Testament book of Hebrews, it is written of Sarah, *"11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore"* (Hebrews 11:11-12).

Ruth

Ruth was a Moabite and the daughter-in-law of Naomi. While Naomi and her husband were originally from Bethlehem, they chose to settle in Moab due to a famine occurring in their homeland. While there, their two sons married women from the land who did not serve or know the Lord their God. One of these women was Ruth. The family suffered great loss as Naomi's husband, along with both of her sons, died in a time of famine. Ruth chose to stay with Naomi and never to leave her side. She was fiercely loyal to Naomi, which symbolizes faithfulness to God and His people. Ruth could have left Naomi and gone back to her own people, but instead, she chose to stay with Naomi and never leave her. More importantly, she also chose to worship and serve the God Naomi served. It is written in the book of Ruth,

Ruth 1:16

"But Ruth said:

"Entreat me not to leave you,

*Or to turn back from following after you;
For wherever you go, I will go;
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;
Your people shall be my people,
And your God, my God.”*

What bravery and what devotion! God was working His perfect will in the lives of these women of God. In His perfect timing, the Lord provided a husband for Ruth. This husband, Boaz, would be the chosen one of God for her to marry, and in this bloodline, they would bear a child named Obed. Obed begot a son named Jesse, who would later have a son named David, who would one day reign as a King in Israel.

Ruth 4:17

“And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

God chose a loyal-hearted Gentile from Moab to be a part of the lineage of King David, and ultimately, of Jesus Himself.

Hannah

In the first book of Samuel it is written of a woman of God named Hannah, who was married to a man who had two wives:

1 Samuel 1:2

“And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.”

She too was barren and yet earnestly desired to have a child. She sought the Lord God and cried out to Him for a child. By faith, she promised to give the child to God to serve Him for His purposes. God heard her prayers and she bore a son, Samuel, who later became a great prophet of Israel. What faith!

1 Samuel 1:11

“Then she made a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.”

1 Samuel 1:27-28

“27 For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. 28 Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord.” So they worshiped the Lord there.

The Lord God was faithful to Hannah, and she was faithful to keep her word to God!

Deborah

In the book of Judges, it is written of a woman named Deborah who served God as a prophet and judge in Israel:

Judges 5:4-10

“4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 5 And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah be-

tween Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6 Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; 7 and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand?'" 8 And Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!" 9 So she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him."

God gave Israel a great victory in this battle! Deborah was used by God prophetically, by speaking God's will as she encouraged the armies and their leaders. Barak, a leading general, insisted that she go with them in battle! What a brave woman of God full of God's Spirit who boldly proclaimed His words!

Judges 5:7

"7 Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel."

Judges 5:12

"12 "Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake,

sing a song!”

Huldah

The Prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shullam (keeper of King Josiah’s wardrobe), is perhaps one of the least known of the seven women prophets in scripture. At a time when Zephaniah was prophesying in the synagogues and Jeremiah prophesying in the marketplaces, Huldah was prophesying to the women. Some texts also suggest that she have may also trained King Josiah as a child.

The king’s court called on her to prophesy to the king and she gave this message:

2 Kings 22:14-20

*“14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to **Huldah the prophetess**, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her.*

15 Then she said to them, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘Tell the man who sent you to Me, 16 “Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read— 17 because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.’ ” ’ 18 But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, in this manner you shall speak to him, ‘Thus says the Lord

God of Israel: “Concerning the words which you have heard— 19 because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,” says the Lord. 20 “Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place.” So they brought back word to the king.”

(Source Reference - Huldah - <https://www.womanofnoblecharacter.com/female-prophets-of-the-bible/>)

Huldah boldly spoke the word of the Lord in faith, and her words came to pass.

Esther

“Esther was a woman God chose for a very specific time and purpose. A scholarly article about Esther says the following:

“In the biblical book named after her, Esther is a young Jewish woman living in the Persian diaspora who finds favor with the king, becomes queen, and risks her life to save the Jewish people from destruction when the court official Haman persuades the king to authorize a pogrom against all the Jews of the empire.”

“Esther first appears in the story as one of the young virgins collected into the king’s harem as

possible replacements for Vashti, the banished wife of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I, reigned 485—465 B.C.E.). She is identified as the daughter of Avihail (Esth 2:15) and the cousin and adopted daughter of Mordecai, from the tribe of Benjamin (Esther 2:5–7). Not much is revealed about her character, but she is described as beautiful (2:7) and obedient (2:10), and she appears to be pliant and cooperative.”

Esther 2:7

“7 And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.”

She quickly wins the favor of the chief eunuch, Hegai, and, when her turn comes to spend the night with the king, she is richly blessed and kept.

Esther 2:9

“9 Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king’s palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women.”

Ahasuerus falls in love with her and makes her his queen. All this takes place while Esther keeps her Jewish identity secret (*Esther 2:10, 20*).

Esther 2:16-17

“16 So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus,

into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. 17 The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.”

After Esther becomes queen, her cousin Mordecai becomes involved in a power struggle with the grand vizier Haman the Agagite, a descendant of an Amalekite king who was an enemy of Israel during the time of King Saul (*1 Samuel 15:32*). Mordecai refuses to bow before Haman, and this so infuriates Haman that he resolves not only to put Mordecai to death, but also to slaughter his entire people. He secures the king's permission to do this, and a date is set, Adar 13 (this episode determines the date of the festival of Purim, a popular Jewish festival). When Mordecai learns of Haman's plot, he rushes to the palace to inform Esther, weeping and clothed in sackcloth (*Esther 4:1-3*).

Esther Saves the Jews from the Plot Against Them

At this point in the story, Esther's character comes to the forefront. When she first learns of Haman's plot and the threat to the Jews, her reaction is one of helplessness. On pain of death, she cannot approach the king without being summoned, and the king has not summoned her in thirty days, implying that she has fallen out of favor (*Esther 4:11*). However, following Mordecai's insistent prodding, she resolves to do what she can to save her people, ending with the ringing declaration "After that I will go to the king, though it is against

the law; and if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16). The pliant and obedient Esther has become a woman of action.”

(Esther: Bible by Sidnie White Crawford, updated by Joshua Aaron Alfaro. Last updated June 23, 2021

<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/esther-bible#:~:text=In%20the%20biblical%20book%20named,the%20Jews%20of%20the%20empire.>

What an amazing woman God chose to help stop a genocide against her own people Israel in the midst of her own struggle of being taken captive against her will to serve another nation’s king.

Proverbs chapter 31 is written to describe a wise or virtuous woman.

Proverbs 31 NLT

“A Wife of Noble Character

10 Who can find a virtuous and capable wife?

She is more precious than rubies.

*11 Her husband can trust her,
and she will greatly enrich his life.*

*12 She brings him good, not harm,
all the days of her life.*

*13 She finds wool and flax
and busily spins it.*

*14 She is like a merchant’s ship,
bringing her food from afar.*

*15 She gets up before dawn to prepare break-
fast for her household
and plan the day’s work for her servant girls.*

*16 She goes to inspect a field and buys it;
with her earnings she plants a vineyard.*

17 She is energetic and strong,

a hard worker.
18 *She makes sure her dealings are profitable;
her lamp burns late into the night.*
19 *Her hands are busy spinning thread,
her fingers twisting fiber.*
20 *She extends a helping hand to the poor
and opens her arms to the needy.*
21 *She has no fear of winter for her household,
for everyone has warm clothes.*
22 *She makes her own bedspreads.
She dresses in fine linen and purple gowns.*
23 *Her husband is well known at the city gates,
where he sits with the other civic leaders.*
24 *She makes belted linen garments
and sashes to sell to the merchants.*
25 *She is clothed with strength and dignity,
and she laughs without fear of the future.*
26 *When she speaks, her words are wise,
and she gives instructions with kindness.*
27 *She carefully watches everything in her
household
and suffers nothing from laziness.*
28 *Her children stand and bless her.
Her husband praises her:*
29 *“There are many virtuous and capable wom-
en in the world,
but you surpass them all!”*
30 *Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not
last;
but a woman who fears the Lord will be greatly
praised.*
31 *Reward her for all she has done.
Let her deeds publicly declare her praise.”*

Each of these Old Testament ladies demonstrate the love and mercy of God through their own lives and testimonies. They clearly demonstrate that

God looks at the heart of all of His children, both male and female. He meets us in our weaknesses and even sufferings and is able to work all things together for good to those who love Him. These women truly are of noble character, transformed by God's Word and Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:34 KJV

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.”

Women in the New Testament

Mary – “Blessed are you among women!”

Mary was chosen by God the Father to be Jesus's mother! What a beautiful story of love and trust and God's goodness.

Luke 1:26-38

“26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”

29 But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. 30 Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. 32 He will be great, and

will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

34 Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?”

35 And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible.”

38 Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.”

Mary simply believed God. Her response to God the Father is one of the greatest responses a child of God can say: “Be it done to me according to Your Word!” What trust! What faith! What obedience!

In this account we also see that God came to her relative **Elizabeth** in her ‘old age’ and allowed her to conceive and bring forth, a prophet and forerunner for Jesus, John the Baptist!

Luke 1:11-17

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

When Mary went to visit Elizabeth, she rejoiced, and the babe in her womb leapt and was filled with Holy Spirit!

Luke 1:41-44

"41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy."

**"For with God nothing will be impossible."
Luke 1:37**

Anna

Anna was a prophetess and an intercessor! She was a woman who spoke what God said. She devoted her entire life to God in the temple in fasting and prayers. Her heart was devoted to praying for the promised Messiah. She was able to see the Promised One as Joseph and Mary brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.

Luke 2:36-38

“36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”

Women as traveling companions and friends of Jesus

Many Women Minister to Jesus

Luke 8:1-3

*“1 Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, 2 and **certain women** who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—**Mary called Magdalene**, out of whom had come seven demons, 3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and **Su-sanna**, and many others who provided for Him*

from their substance.” (Emphasis Added)

Mary and Martha Worship and Serve

Luke 10:38-39

*“38 Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named **Martha** welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called **Mary**, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.”*

John 12:3-7

*“3 Then **Mary** took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. 4 But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, who would betray Him, said, 5 “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. 7 But Jesus said, “Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial.”*

The Widow’s Two Mites

Jesus gave honor to a woman who was a widow. He honored her in how she gave out of her poverty. With God, nothing goes unnoticed. Great is her reward in heaven!

Mark 12:41-44

“41 Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. 42

Then **one poor widow** came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. 43 So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; 44 for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”

Samaritan Woman at the Well

Jesus chose to reveal Himself as the Messiah to a woman He encountered in her daily duties drawing water from the well! The Kingdom of heaven drew near as He met her and introduced His great knowledge and love for her. He knew her and loved her. Moreover, she was honored for her faith.

John 4:7-30

“7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

11 The woman said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? 12 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?”

13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." 15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." 19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." **26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."**

27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" **28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" 30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him.**" (emphasis added)

This woman immediately went back to her city and told everyone she could about him! Sounds like powerful evangelism! Many came to see him due to her witness and testimony!

Women who were with Jesus to the end and announced His resurrection.

The Lord remembers! His love for His mother, even in his deepest pain and agony, made sure she was taken care of and entrusted her to John.

Behold Your Mother

John 19:25-27

*"25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus **His mother**, and **His mother's sister, Mary** the wife of Clopas, and **Mary Magdalene**. 26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" 27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home." (emphasis added)*

Scripture records the bravery and love His female followers had for him. They were watching over Him even after He had died.

Mark 15:47

*“46 Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.
47 And **Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses** observed where He was laid.” (emphasis added)*

Mary Magdalene was a firsthand witness to a tomb that had been opened! What JOY she must have felt as she saw this and as Jesus REVEALED Himself to her! Jesus gave these ladies permission to ‘go and tell His brothers’ what had happened! He is alive!

John 20:1-2

*“20 Now the first day of the week **Mary Magdalene** went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” (emphasis added)*

Matthew 28:1-10

*“1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, **Mary Magdalene and the other Mary** came to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and*

came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. 5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." 8 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me." (emphasis added)

John 20:11-18

"11 But **Mary** stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." 14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to

Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’ ” 18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things.” (emphasis added)

Women and the Great Commission

Matthew 28:18-20

“18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.”

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is for all believers, regardless of gender, color, race, or culture. He commissioned His disciples to go and do what He did. He commanded all believers to teach everyone about Him and His words. He gave all disciples the authority to go and save souls, baptize them, and to make disciples of nations! None of these orders from King Jesus was restricted to a particular sex. All who believe are blessed, commissioned, and sent.

Signs will follow those who Believe

Jesus promised those who believe in Him that they would carry out great exploits. He blessed men and women to be His representatives on earth. The Bible shows what amazing things followers of Jesus are anointed to accomplish:

John 14:12-14

“12 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. 13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

Mark 16:15-20

“15 And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.”

Empowered to Witness

The Lord Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they had been endued with power from on high as He had!

Luke 24:49

“49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

Acts 1:8

“8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Jesus was faithful to His word! He boldly announced to His disciples that Holy Spirit would be given to them. John the Baptist had prophesied that Jesus would ‘baptize in Holy Spirit and fire!’ He simply promised them the same power and authority that He walked in to preach of the Kingdom of heaven! They sought God and waited upon the Lord’s Words.

Acts 1:12-14

The Upper Room Prayer Meeting

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey. 13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer

and supplication, **with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus**, and with His brothers.”
(emphasis added)

Acts 2:1-4

“1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And **they were all filled** with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (emphasis added)

Hallelujah! The Spirit of God was poured out upon them all, yet more would await them as they continued to seek His face and accomplish His will!

Paul Instructed Both Men and Women

The Apostle Paul ministered in power to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah after his radical life changing conversion! Once a Pharisee of Pharisee’s, he now boldly preached Jesus as both Lord and Christ. He led many to the Lord and oversaw many churches. He taught men and women alike the word of God and many were saved, healed, delivered and raised up to go and do the same!

1 Corinthians 11:2-12

“2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. 3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ

is God. 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. 6 For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. 7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man is not from woman, but woman from man. 9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. 10 For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. 12 For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.”

Gentile women labored with Paul in the Gospel

Scripture records the stories of many women who served with Paul in his missions and within the churches.

Euodia and Syntyche

Philippians 4:2, 3

“2 I implore **Euodia** and I implore **Syntyche** to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.” (emphasis added)

Lydia

Acts 16:13-15

“13 And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. 14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” So she persuaded us.”

Acts 16:40

“40 So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.”

Priscilla - wife of Aquila

Acts 18:24-26

“24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

Phoebe the deaconess.

The historian Eusebius says she oversaw two churches and traveled extensively in ministry.

Romans 16:1-2

“1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, 2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.”

Junia the Apostle

Junia is a feminine name in Greek. This was changed to the male form - Junias, after the 1300's in Bible translations.

Romans 16:7

*“Greet Andronicus and **Junia**, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles who also were in Christ before me.” (emphasis added)*

Nympha

Nympha's name was changed to a male form, Nymphas, and they changed the verse to read, “to the church that meets in his house.”

Colossians 4:15

*“Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also **Nympha** and the church that is in her house.” (emphasis added)*

Philip's daughters prophesied

Acts 21:8-9

“8 On the next day we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.”

Elect or Chosen Lady

The Greek word for “lady” is “kuria”, which is the feminine form of “Kurios”, meaning “a respectful title”, “supreme in authority”. She may have been the senior elder or pastor of a church in her home.

2 John 1:1-5

“1 The Elder, to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, 2 because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: 3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. 4 I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. 5 And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another.”

In considering all the Bible has to say about women in the Kingdom of Jesus, it is clear that God intends for His daughters to carry His glory, preach His Gospel, administer His grace, and move in His gifts as led by the Holy Spirit. Women of God can be clearly identified in a variety of offices,

giftings, and ministries. Moreover, God's heart toward women is for them to fulfill their purpose and destiny, just as He intends for men to do the very same.

Nevertheless, in spite of all the Bible has to say about women of God and their essential roles and functions, there are still those who would limit the ways women minister, especially within the church body. These believers, many of whom are sincere and without any malicious intent, often rely on just a couple of Scriptures to support their viewpoint. The next section addresses these verses and explores how they fit with God's intent for His daughters.

The “Problem Scriptures”

Certain scriptures which are notoriously taken out of context or translated poorly have been used to limit the contribution of women to the Kingdom of God. It is important to consider the context in which these scriptures were written. For example, many who believe women should serve in official church roles cite *1 Timothy 2:12-15* which says:

“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then

Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.”

At first appearance, these verses seem to command women to keep silent in church, which would prohibit them from ministering. How can believers make sense of this in light of all the Bible says about women and their contributions to the church?

First, this is a personal letter from Paul to Timothy regarding the church in Ephesus. This church was in a notoriously pagan region. Paul addresses the widespread issue of error and heresy regarding that area as a whole in the opening of the letter to Timothy. This warning in *1 Timothy 1:3-4* is in reference to all people not just women: “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may [a]charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.” Ephesus was specifically known for cultic worship of the goddess Diana. Among many heresies, this cult taught that Eve was created first and women should rule over men. “These women priests promoted blasphemous ideas about sex and spirituality, and they sometimes actually performed rituals in which they pronounced curses on men in an attempt to spiritually emasculate them or to declare female superiority.”¹

¹ Grady, J Lee. *Ten Lies The Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Misused to Keep Women in Spiritual Bondage* (pp. 65-66). Charisma House. Kindle Edition.

Next, not only did Paul address the issue of women overpowering men through demonic lust for power, but he had to overcome longstanding tradition of the people as well. These new believers during early church times were of Jewish and Gentile ethnicity. The Gentiles had to overcome mindsets that devalued women in society based on previous pagan religiosity or a past history that had a low opinion of women within a male dominated society. The Jews were faced with a previous religious construct which generally elevated males within the scholarly capacities as well as synagogue leadership.

“By New Testament times women had been relegated to subservient, inferior, and un-biblical roles. In synagogues they were not allowed to speak or read. They were only to sit and listen in a special women’s section. Women were not allowed into the inner court of the Temple. Concerning the positions of women in the Body of Christ, it is important to consider the differences in culture and customs throughout time. Women during the first few centuries, when the Bible was written, did not participate in religious services. They didn’t sing, read the Scriptures or recite prayers. Generally, a section was set aside for women, where they would sit silently. The objection to participation of women in religious services and in the teaching of the gospel wasn’t based on the teaching of Jesus. Instead, it was carried over from Jewish customs. Jesus never discriminated against women, and He even broke away from the Jewish ways to minister to them at various times. Circumstances compelled Paul to discourage women from preaching and

reading in public because the customs were different. At that time, women in the East were looked upon as being unequal to men and were not offered the same opportunities. Even today in Eastern countries, the customs in existence vary from those in the West. This is why we base our lives on the Word, and not on customs. Hebrews 13:9 says, “Do not be carried [a]bout with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.” What’s important to remember is that, regardless of custom and time, women have the same amount of faith as men. And they can exercise it with the same results – because they are believers.” Kenneth Copeland <https://www.kcm.org>

In gross overcorrection of previous tradition, the women tended to flaunt their newfound freedom in Christ beyond His intended motives. Some women became outspoken and overly boisterous. Others simply became curious and inquisitive regarding this new access to religious matters. Another scripture that can be explained with this same understanding is *1 Corinthians 14:34-35*: “*Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.*”

Inappropriately, these women would yell at their husbands during the congregational meetings, asking questions or seeking explanations, ex-

pressing objections and maybe giving a prophecy or an interpretation, usually in a disorderly manner. They had not yet learned to restrain themselves or had not been trained or disciplined in their new freedom in Christ and were exploiting this freedom. Paul's emphasis on decorum among the women established order and dignity for a congregational gathering regarding this specific church.

In keeping with the warnings previously discussed regarding error, Paul was also guiding Timothy in how to preserve and defend the apostolic doctrine. The Greek word for teach in the passage from 1 Timothy is "didaskallo," meaning to "instruct or teach doctrine." Paul was making it clear that neither women nor men were authorized to establish the doctrinal standards. This was a function of the apostolic councils as seen in the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 and the early church meetings in Acts 2:42. They were not to teach contrary to the already established standard. An expanded translation of *I Timothy 2:11-12* would read like this: "*But I suffer not a woman to teach doctrine contrary to that established by the apostles, and thus usurp authority over them; but to remain undisturbed.*"

Remember that the whole counsel of scripture must be considered. For example, if taken on a stand-alone basis the reference to women being "saved through childbearing" would undermine the entire gospel as expressed in the rest of scripture. Consider what one author brings to light about potential misapplication of verses without considering scripture as a whole:

“Paul calls on women to learn the scriptures ‘quietly’ and “with entire submissiveness” (See *1 Timothy 2:11–12* above). They are also commanded to be ‘silent’ in *1 Corinthians 14:34* (above). Obviously, from what we know of the message of the entire Bible, this is not intended to be a universal command to keep women’s mouths shut at all times. We must remember that all Christians—both males and females—are told in *1 Timothy 2:2* to lead ‘a tranquil and quiet life’ (emphasis added). Does this mean men are supposed to refrain from speaking? Of course not.”²

Additionally, in *Titus 2:3-5* Paul actually instructs women to teach: “*But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.*” In this scripture Paul uses the Greek word “didaktikos” for the word “teach”. Paul is speaking here of order. In *1 Corinthians 11*, Paul had given clear instructions of how men and women should pray and prophesy. If Paul were saying in the other passages that a woman should never speak, this would be a clear contraction of what he had taught earlier.

Sometimes, as is the case with the verses we are examining, a deeper study of the particular words

² Grady, J Lee. *Ten Lies The Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Mis-used to Keep Women in Spiritual Bondage* (p. 68).

used and their precise meanings can be helpful. Here are some of the words used in the passage from *1 Corinthians 14*:

- Woman – Greek word ‘gune’ meaning ‘wife’, not just any female. The instruction was for wives.
- Speak – the Greek word ‘laleo’ meaning “an extended or random harangue [verbal long, and intense verbal attack], to boast or call out, without proper decorum or respect for others.”
- Saith – the Greek word ‘lego’ meaning to “lay forth (an idea or doctrine) in words usually of a systematic or set discourse.”
- “Lego” was encouraged and “laleo” was discouraged.

An expanded translation of *1 Corinthians 14:34-35* would read:

“Let wives abstain from (laleo) interrupting the meetings of the church with an extended or random harangue full of prideful boasting or calling out to others in a way that is without proper decorum or respect for others in churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak (laleo – interrupt with an extended or random harangue or calling out to others) but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith (lego – to set forth [an idea or doctrine] in words of systematic discourse) the law. And if they desire to inquire about anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is shameful for them to speak (laleo) in the church.”

With this in mind, it is clear that Paul was not telling women to keep quiet but giving guidelines

for the effectiveness of ministry in the context of culture. Paul was not excluding women from service but preparing them for it.

Conclusion

Holy Spirit bears witness with us as we read God's Word, The Bible. Jesus explained the scriptures in such a way that it liberated His people rather than oppressed them. When believers read and study it must be with a teachable heart and in submission to our God. As history proves those who read God's Word with the wrong motives or spirit do the opposite of empowering His people. As you continue in the study of His Word pay attention to the fruit in your life and the lives of those to whom you submit. Love, holiness, and conviction always trump control, sin, and condemnation. By reading this section of the mini-book it is our desire that you follow the Spirit of Truth and press into His spirit, seek godly counsel, and look for the evidence of what the teachings produce when things seem unclear.

Resources used in this teaching:

Joan Melrose, Christian Life Teachings

Recommended Resources:

Cd's - [Honoring Our Women](#), Danny Silk @ [www.](#)

ibethel.org

Ten Lies The Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Misused to Keep Women in Spiritual Bondage, Grady, J Lee.

25 Tough Questions About Women and the Church, J. Lee Grady

Rise to Your Destiny Woman of God, Barbara Wentroble

Fashioned to Reign, Kris Vallotton

Prayer for Salvation

If you have not made Jesus Christ your personal Lord and Savior, and you desire this with all your heart, then please, join me in prayer:

“Heavenly Father, I choose to believe with all my heart, Your love for me. I believe that Jesus Christ is Your Son, the Son of God, and that He is God in the flesh. I believe that You sent Him to this earth to save me. Thank You. I believe He died on the cross for my sins and He was dead and buried three days, and then rose again from the dead and that He ascended to Heaven and is now seated at Your right hand and is returning again.

Father, please forgive me for all my sin and iniquity and I choose to forgive others who have sinned against me. I give You all my heart and choose to live with You forever. I believe I have been born again according to Your Word and that I have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. I declare I am forgiven and healed! Now, I ask for Holy Spirit to fill me. Jesus, baptize me in Holy Spirit and fullness in order that I may know You intimately and serve You all my days.

Thank You, Lord, for loving me. Amen.”

Scriptures:

John 14:6

“6 Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”

Romans 10:8-13

“8 But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’ 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”

John 3:3-8, 16-18

“3 Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ 4 Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ 5 Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said

to you, *“You must be born again.”* 8 *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

“16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 ‘He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

II Corinthians 5:17

“17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

I Corinthians 15:3-5

“3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.”

II Corinthians 5:21

“21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Colossians 1:13-14

“13 He has delivered us from the power of dark-

ness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

Luke 11:9-13

“9 So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

Acts 1:8

“8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

I Timothy 3:16

“16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

*God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.”*

Fresh Infilling of Holy Spirit

Acts 1:8

“8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

If you have been born again and filled with Holy Spirit and you desire MORE and want to encounter the Lord's presence afresh and anew, please join me in prayer:

“Father, in the name of Jesus, I thank You for loving me and I ask according to Ephesians 1:17-19, that You would give me the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, Jesus, and the eyes of my understanding would be enlightened; that I may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power towards us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. Amen.

Father, according to Colossians 3:9-12, I ask in Jesus name, that I would be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that I would walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power. Amen.

I surrender and yield my life to the fullness of Holy Spirit; His power and anointing; the spirit of wisdom and revelation; counsel and might; the spirit of the fear of the Lord and knowledge according to Isaiah 11:2, in Jesus' name. Amen."

The Garden Training Center, Inc. The Apostolic School of Ministry

The Garden Apostolic Training Center is a place that fosters spiritual growth. The center provides training to equip believers in Jesus Christ for the work of the ministry and to be victorious and free in all areas of their lives through the supernatural empowerment of the Holy Spirit. For more information check out **thegardenstc.org**.

The Garden Gathering Church

The purpose of The Garden Gathering Church is to encourage believers in Jesus Christ: to fully embrace the love of God; to walk in freedom; to carry His presence and glory; and to be equipped and trained for the work of the ministry through worship, teachings, and impartation.

“It’s all about Love. When you see His eyes of Love for you, nothing else matters. That’s it. That’s all you need to know.”

-Brandy Helton

