
Women: Whom The Son Sets Free...

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There are serious gaps in our interpretation of scriptures that relate to women because we have not looked at them in the light of the culture of the time. Historically, and even today, women are often ignored, marginalized and exploited and the weapon of choice is often the Bible. False doctrine and misunderstandings restrain both men and women, keeping them from reaching their full potential and freedom in Christ. I want to challenge you to examine whether what you teach and believe is truth or simply tradition.

Exploring the Scriptures with a focus on women and in the social setting of the day was a life-changing experience for me. I will never preach the same again. In addition, newly discovered information and artifacts have given us a more accurate picture of biblical times. These discoveries either confirm our beliefs or send us to explore for the truth more deeply.

THE SOCIAL COMMUNITY

The early spiritual community was composed of Gnostics, Christians, Pagans, Cults, and many factions of Jewish believers. Proselytes were Gentiles who had become Jews. When Jesus arrived on the scene, the Jews considered his teachings to be a new religion that messed with their sacred writings.

Jesus addressed the issue of women and equality, and for many who heard his message, he appeared to be a cult leader. He stood in defense of the women and children. He loved and focused on those who were suffering and discriminated against. Jesus elevated women and children in a society where they were often treated as property, and when women were sometimes forced to discard their babies if they were born female. Into this social context Jesus proclaimed the value of a woman.

JESUS ESTEEMS AND EMPOWERS WOMEN

When Jesus started his public ministry, one of the first people to whom He revealed himself was the woman at the well. And she was not a woman of status, but a hurting, broken-hearted woman who shouldered an incredible weight of shame. Jesus singled out this woman in a very public place, and it was definitely not acceptable for a man in this culture to be talking to a woman like this in public.

Jesus knew her hurts and her heart and He spoke into her life with such power and authority that she ran, with new freedom, to eagerly tell her friends. This precious woman was empowered to become a carrier of the good news – that Jesus is the Christ.

Scripture tells us that Jesus repeatedly ministered to women; the woman with the issue of blood, Peter's mother-in-law, Tabitha, and many others. He healed the sick women, raised the little girl who was dead, and brought hope to the woman begging for bread. Jesus, the Son of God, encouraged women such

as Mary and Martha to sit at his feet and learn. This was unheard of in his day.

After the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, it was the women that were first at the tomb. It was for these women that God rolled away the stone, not so His Son could get out, but so these women could get in. Women were the first eye witnesses of the resurrection. Was that by chance? No. God planned it that way. He was affirming women.

It was not by accident that women had such a prominent place. This was a brilliant and calculated part of His plan. God himself was making a statement that he valued women. And after the resurrection it was the women to whom Jesus chose to appear and reveal himself as the resurrected Christ. And it was to women that He first gave the commission to go and tell. But who wouldn't believe them? The men. That was not acceptable to Jesus and he rebuked them.

To put it plainly, Jesus is still commissioning women today and there are still those who do not believe, and this is still not acceptable!

THE DAY OF FREEDOM

The second chapter of Acts describes the pivotal point of the public liberation of women on the day of Pentecost. They were all gathered together, the women *and* the men, and Scripture records that they were all endowed with power as the Holy Spirit came upon them. Why? So they could all do His work – evangelism, teaching, missionary work, preaching – using their spiritual gifts to proclaim the good news.

The Lord was calling and empowering both men and women to work together with Him. In a day when it was sometimes considered shameful to even mention a woman's name in public, the Holy Spirit released and empowered an army of women. These were courageous women who became ministers, bishops and deacons. They were leaders in the churches of the first century.

It is our responsibility today to explore these issues so that we may more accurately teach and preach the entire counsel of the Word of God. It's not always easy, nor is it always accepted. Revelation always causes us to have a paradigm shift in our thinking and sometimes our theology. But we must continue to ask the hard questions and be open to learn more about God's heart of equality to empower both women and men.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek...there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).