

Some Men Are Our Heroes

by KeumJu Jewel Hyun and Cynthia Davis Lathrop | reviewed by Matthew D. Kim

As we journey through life, many of us will be able to recount key individuals who noticed our God-given gifts and potential. Those same individuals not only showed an interest from the sidelines, but they also took proactive measures to mentor us and abet us in pursuing God's dreams for our lives. In *Some Men Are Our Heroes*, editors KeumJu Jewel Hyun and Cynthia Davis Lathrop have assembled a uniquely talented group of evangelical women from across the globe—South Africa, Kenya, Congo, Germany, Ireland, Dominican Republic, the United States, and South Korea—to share their testimonies about the male figures in their lives who have had a significant hand in helping them become the women of influence that they are today. Included are reflections from Alice Mathews, William David Spencer, and John Lathrop.

In the foreword, Mathews sums up the central message that the editors seek to promote through the release of this important work. She writes, “God expects women as well as men to use the gifts he gives them (xi).” However, oftentimes, especially in evangelical denominations and churches, female congregants have been limited in terms of the influence and contributions they can make to the wider church. That is, many congregations prohibit women from teaching and preaching God's word and serving the church in leadership capacities as pastors and elders. Women are told they are equal in value, but different with respect to gender roles in the church. This constraint in ecclesial contexts has forced copious women to question their worth, identity, intellectual prowess, leadership abilities, and the impact they could have on others' lives for the sake of Jesus Christ.

What we have in *Some Men Are Our Heroes* is the antithesis of this common ecclesial problem that numerous female Christians encounter in evangelical congregations today. In each heartfelt chapter, KeumJu Jewel Hyun, Médine Moussounga Keener, Judy Mbugua, Nancy Hudson, Gwendolyn Joy Dewey, Elke Werner, Cynthia Davis Lathrop, and Aída Besançon Spencer name and present real-life examples of men who spotted tremendous gifting in them, unearthed those veiled talents, and spurred them on to exercise those gifts for the benefit of God's kingdom.

Many of the influential men written about in this book are grandfathers, fathers, pastors, church leaders, and husbands who did not allow the opportunity slip by to embolden a timid but talented young woman, wife, mother, leader, counselor, evangelist, teacher, and preacher to minister in schools, churches, mission fields, and parachurch organizations and to touch lives through their ministry skills. Especially stirring are the stories of husbands who sacrificed extraordinary amounts of time and financial resources to ensure that their wives could receive academic degrees and training to serve God at the highest level. I mention this because I have

noticed in pastoral ministry how frequently husbands can obstruct the ministerial pathways of their wives and hold their spouses back from serving in various leadership roles in the church.

As a student at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, I was privileged to know and learn under Drs. Bill and Aída Besançon Spencer, two prominent voices in Christians for Biblical Equality. In reading Aída Spencer's penultimate chapter, I could not help but reminisce about how I witnessed firsthand a husband and wife ministering "together as equals" and the example of Bill who valued his wife tremendously and who did everything in his power to help her achieve God's dreams. Today, this instrumental couple has placed their fingerprints on so many of God's servants around the world, including editors KeumJu Jewel Hyun and Cynthia Davis Lathrop. In response to the Spencers' life testimony, I have sought to empower and encourage my wife, Sarah, to reach her full potential in counseling others and leading men and women in their processes of spiritual growth and leadership development. Throughout this book, I was grateful to read time and again how these Christian men similarly treasured their wives and encouraged them to become their best for God and for the service of God's church.

On the whole, Hyun and Lathrop have enriched the church through their offering of this much-needed volume. The essays from every author remind us that men and women are both created in the image of God, receiving numerous talents and skills from God, to be exercised with grace in the context of the local church and beyond. I would highly encourage all pastors, elders, deacons, church leaders, small-group facilitators, Christian counselors, leaders of parachurch organizations, and mentors to read this book with care and to empower every woman in their sphere of influence to pursue and actualize God's unique design for their lives. They will be glad they did—and so will the women in their lives who want to make a greater impact on God's kingdom.

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