

Mutuality

the voice of Christians for Biblical Equality

Walking in the spirit

**Breaking Up the
Good Old Boys' Club / 4**

Overcoming
gender biases

by J. Lee Grady

**Born to Lead;
Born to Equip / 8**

One couple's journey
to live out the
Holy Spirit's call

*by Matthew McKirland
and Christa McKirland*

**Stories Never Before
Told Outside of Africa / 12**

Spirit-led women who
are initiating change in
their communities

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**Paul, Led by the Spirit,
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A devotional

by Beulah Wood

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Your guide to new
and noteworthy
egalitarian books

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"Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (Rom. 14:19, NRSV).

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Eyes to See and Ears to Hear

While this may not be at all surprising to the CBE community, I loved discussing the question of women in leadership with my friends in college. We would stay up too late, sitting in the halls of our dorm, whispering reflections and arguments for our particular position on the matter while trying not to disturb our sleeping (and clearly far more responsible) roommates. The most frequent response I would hear during these sessions was, “Well, I think that God is probably okay with women in ministry, but I’m just not comfortable with it.” For many of my friends, this wasn’t a question if the Holy Spirit gifts women for leadership—it was simply a question if we could step outside of our comfort zone to recognize and utilize those women.

My college conversations gave me great insight into human nature: as fallen creatures, we are resistant to change. We prefer the familiar, the safe, the known. And because of this, I think we can be at risk for missing how the Holy Spirit is moving in our midst.

In a recent email, a good friend and CBE member, Emily Hennager, shared with me an insight on this very problem. She writes,

Even Samuel needed a little nudge from God to get over what his expectations were (1 Sam. 16:1). After God rejects Saul as king, we see God saying to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.” Can’t you hear just a little exasperation in God’s voice here? “Hey, Samuel, get over it, I’m doing something new here. Stop focusing on what you thought I was going to do because I’m trying to tell you what I’m doing *now*!”

Samuel was fixated on what was familiar, but God, in his incredible wisdom and grace, was ready with a new and better plan. Doesn’t this happen all too often today? We can get so caught up in traditions — in the status quo, in “keeping the peace,” in pursuing what is easy or comfortable — that we miss the work of God right

in front of us. We miss the Holy Spirit moving in powerful and unexpected ways! Perhaps, as the Lord said to Ezekiel about the people of Israel, we too often “have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear” (Ezek. 12:2).

We know from the passage in 1 Samuel that God’s new plan for Israel was the anointing of David, the youngest (and therefore, in that culture, the lowliest) shepherd son of Jesse. But Samuel still did not understand what God was doing. When he saw the appearance and height of Jesse’s son Eliab, Samuel was convinced that Eliab was the anointed one. God, however, had different plans: “The Lord does not look at the things human beings look at,” he told Samuel. “People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). What encouraging words for the many women who feel a call from the Holy Spirit and meet only opposition from their brothers and other sisters in Christ.

So how do women “walk in the Spirit” when they face such resistance from the church? I love what one of our authors, Christa McKirland, shares in her article that follows: “When I have faced the common ‘that can’t be your calling because you’re a woman’ mentality, I pursue my calling rather than an argument.” For Christa and her husband, Matt, faithfulness to the Holy Spirit’s call mattered most, even when they were required to step bravely into the unfamiliar. Walking in the Spirit takes enormous faith, courage, and perseverance, as each of our authors thoughtfully demonstrates. But the fruit of our work, and the God who is glorified because of our work, is what matters. May we have eyes to see and ears to hear that this work is commissioned, blessed, and enabled by our Advocate, the Holy Spirit. And may we truly understand and be encouraged that our God does not look at what people see but instead sees our hearts.

We hope this issue of *Mutuality* will be a great inspiration to you, as we celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit through brave and faithful women and men who understand that what matters is the God we serve and not our own comforts. Blessings to you as you read and reflect!

Megan Greulich is the editor of Mutuality. She may be reached at mgreulich@cbeinternational.org.



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Breaking Up



the Good Old Boys' Club

by J. Lee Grady

My Southern Baptist parents taught me to open doors for women. But in the polite culture in which I grew up, I didn't see too many pastors practicing that habit. Sure, they allowed women to teach children's classes, take care of babies, have prayer meetings and cook fellowship meals. But women weren't allowed near a pulpit unless they were singing a solo.

I never heard a woman preacher until I joined the charismatic movement in the 1970s. It took a while for me to get used to the idea, since the church I grew up in taught that women were most spiritual when they were silent. It wasn't long, however, before I realized that most women in charismatic and Pentecostal circles struggle to fulfill their ministries. I began to see evidence of discrimination — and even abuse — everywhere:

- One woman started a drug-rehab ministry and led more than 80 people to the Lord. She met with them twice a week doing discipleship and teaching as well as hours of personal counseling. When she asked the senior pastor if he would designate her as a staff pastor, he met with his elders and then announced that she would be called "half-pastor" — simply because she was female.
- In many churches the wives of pastors are expected to work long hours alongside their husbands doing ministry work, yet they are not paid. They are viewed as lesser-important appendages.

When the Spirit was poured out on the men and women gathered in the upper room, each of them received a holy flame. The Bible does not say the men had blue flames while the women had pink flames. The anointing has nothing to do with gender and everything to do with Jesus Christ, the one who baptizes us with His Spirit.

- I have talked to countless women who were labeled “Jezebels” because they simply asked their pastors if they could teach a class or have a ministry opportunity.
- I have stacks of letters from women who suffered in abusive marriages. When they went to their pastors to get help, they were told the abuse would stop if they would become more submissive.
- A pastor reprimanded one woman who was leading a women’s retreat because she served communion to the ladies without a man present.
- Another woman was told that the ladies in her Bible study would be deceived if a man did not sit in the back of the room to “cover” the meeting.

All these examples point to a “good old boy” culture that still permeates our churches. Much of it is simply rooted in a false understanding of New Testament passages about women. In some cases, male leaders are uncomfortable around women, either because of insecurity or a misogynous spirit.

It’s way past time for Christian leaders to move from male dominance to gender partnership. Here are seven truths we must ponder as we make this shift:

1. God has always empowered His daughters.

During Israel’s wilderness journey the five daughters of Zelophehad asked Moses if they could have an inheritance in the Promised Land. They made this bold request at a time when women had no civil rights and no hope for equality. Under the rules of the day, their family was denied land rights because all of Zelophehad’s children were female.

When Moses prayed about this dilemma, the Lord contradicted the male-dominant culture of the day. He said: “The daughters of Zelophehad speak what is right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father’s brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them” (Num. 27:7).

We rarely hear sermons about these daughters today, even though their names are listed in the Bible in five different places. Even in the old covenant period, God made it clear that His daughters were not to be relegated to second-class status. How much more are they to be considered “fellow heirs” (1 Pet. 3:7, NASB) under the new covenant!

Pastors today must learn the same lesson God taught Moses. In some churches women are offered nothing but limitations, discrimination and neglect. Yet God has placed in them a desire to possess spiritual territory. They want to partner with us in battle and share our victories. Will we open the door for them — or slam it in their faces?

2. Jesus included women on His team.

Traditionally minded Christians believe Jesus recruited only men to be His disciples. I want to shake these folks and ask, “Do you actually read the Bible?” It’s true that all other rabbis in Israel in the first century ignored women and viewed them as the source of all the evil in the world. But Jesus was a very different rabbi!

Jewish leaders believed it was wrong to teach a woman from the Torah, but Jesus allowed Mary of Bethany to sit at His feet and learn from Him. Other rabbis would not stoop to associate with women in public, but Jesus allowed a sinful woman to anoint His head with her perfume. Rabbis would not get near bleeding women because they were ceremonially unclean, yet Jesus healed a woman who had bled for 12 years.

And in the time of Jesus, women were not allowed to testify in a court of law because they were considered ignorant and untrustworthy. Yet Jesus’ women followers were the first to testify of His resurrection on Easter morning. Jesus broke every religious rule in the book when He allowed Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and His other women followers to be a part of His entourage (see Luke 8:1–3).

It is true that only men were among the 12 disciples. Those original apostles were also exclusively Jewish, yet we have never suggested that only Jews could be church leaders today. Why then do we point to the gender of those 12 disciples and insist that women should be excluded from leadership positions?

3. Pentecost broke the gender barrier.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was the inauguration of a completely new season in church history. God did a new and marvelous thing. He took the anointing oil that had been reserved only for Jewish priests of the tribe of Levi and poured it out on both men and women, young and old, rich and poor, and Jew and gentile.

When the Spirit was poured out on the men and women gathered in the upper room, each of them received a holy flame. The Bible does not say the men had blue flames while the women had pink flames. The anointing has nothing to do with gender and everything to do with Jesus Christ, the one who baptizes us with His Spirit.

This is why the apostle Peter quoted the prophet Joel in his Pentecost sermon, declaring, “Your sons *and your daughters* shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17, emphasis added). And this is why Paul later told the Galatians that in Christ “there is neither male nor female” (Gal. 3:28). Theologians have long referred to that passage from Galatians as the Bible’s great emancipation proclamation. Those who would deny a woman the anointing to preach might as well go back and live under the old covenant.

Equality in Christ does not mean that men and women should be androgynous. Empowering women is not about denying sex roles — nor is it about women overthrowing men. But if we want to be a truly Pentecostal people we must release women to take their place in this newly anointed priesthood.

No More Macho

Here are eight practical ways you can address gender discrimination in your church:

1. Evaluate your own marriage. How do you treat your wife publicly? Does she feel the freedom to use her spiritual gifts, or is she just a decoration? If you have abuse issues in your own life, be willing to seek counseling.

2. Change your lingo. Many pastors refer to leaders as “my men” or “my guys.” Stop using exclusively male terms when referring to your staff. And when you talk about the need for “fathering,” remember that God’s people need mothers as well.

3. Retool your women’s ministry. Many women’s groups are spiritually shallow and focus only on domesticity. Christian women today don’t want to focus on recipes, fashion shows or bake sales. Offer a diverse range of opportunities for professional women, divorced women and widows as well as stay-at-home moms.

4. Stop ignoring single women. Some of the most effective missionaries in the 1800s were single females. But today the church tells these women they are “ladies in waiting,” as if their only ministry possibilities lie in marriage and family. Help them discover their gifts and give them opportunities to serve in leadership positions.

5. Check your salary policies. Are you paying men and women equal pay for equal work? Also, make sure you aren’t financially exploiting a staff member’s wife by expecting her to lead or serve in ministry even though she’s not on your payroll.

6. Revamp your training programs. Who is being trained for ministry in your congregation? Jesus trained both men and women. Make sure you have skilled female mentors who can raise up women leaders.

7. Open your pulpit to women. Invite anointed women to teach and minister in your church regularly. This will not only inspire your women but also help your entire congregation know that the Holy Spirit’s anointing is not about gender.

8. Confront abuse. Domestic violence is happening more than you realize, and it is rampant in churches. Offer regular teaching on marriage, and don’t avoid the abuse issue when ministering to men. We cannot keep sweeping this issue under the rug.

4. The apostle Paul trained and released women leaders.

For centuries traditionalists have misread and twisted Paul’s words about women. Citing two difficult passages (1 Cor. 14:34–35 and 1 Tim. 2:12) they have forged a doctrine of female silence and subjugation that runs contrary to the rest of Scripture.

We don’t have room here to dissect these passages, but it should be noted that Paul was dealing with specific crises in Ephesus and Corinth when he made these statements. If we are to honor God in our Bible interpretation we must look at all Paul said about women, as well as how he worked alongside women.

When closing his letter to the Romans, Paul mentions several women leaders who served on his apostolic team — including Phoebe, a deacon; Priscilla, a skilled Bible teacher; Tryphena and Tryphosa, whom he described as “workers”; Persis, a Persian woman he labeled “hardworking”; and Junia, who obviously served in apostolic ministry (see Rom. 16:1–4, 7, 12). In other epistles he mentions women who led churches, such as Chloe (see 1 Cor. 1:11). He also tried to reconcile Euodia and Syntyche (see Phil. 4:1–3), female ministers who had some kind of ministry dispute.

Paul obviously saw women as a strategic part of God’s plan. When he ventured into Europe he went to the place where women prayed — and Lydia, a businesswoman, was his first convert (see Acts 16:13–14). The Paul who clamped down on female false teachers in Ephesus is the same Paul who supported his female ministry comrades. We need to stop making him out to be a chauvinist when he was the best model of a male leader who empowered women.

5. God’s family is made of both fathers and mothers.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments we see a constant theme of male/female partnership: Abraham and Sarah inherited their promise together; Deborah and Barak won a great military victory; Mordecai and Esther overthrew a genocide plot; Priscilla and Aquila laid apostolic foundations in the early church.

Solomon wrote: “Hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother” (Prov. 1:8). From the beginning God called male and female to reflect His image — and the biblical family was formed with one father and one mother. God needed both genders to accomplish His purpose.

Yet in many churches today a woman’s spiritual influence is minimized. We’ve either muzzled our women or simply displayed them like decorations on a shelf. When godly women are silenced the whole church suffers.

Many Christians are rightly concerned about the advancement of the homosexual agenda in our culture. We oppose the acceptance of same-sex marriage — as we should. But many of the same churches that argue for traditional marriage have adopted a policy of “same-sex ministry.” They only allow men to preach, teach, disciple believers and pastor the flock.

God is calling brave, passionate women of integrity today to step into the role of being a spiritual mother. Will we make fun of them like

Eli did when Hannah groaned in prayer at Shiloh? Or will we bless them and make room for their spiritual gifts?

6. The church cannot address social injustice against women without their involvement.

There was a time in our nation's history when women were not allowed to attend medical schools. In the late 1800s doctors perpetrated the idea that women didn't have the intellectual capabilities needed to perform surgery or treat disease.

When women finally entered the medical field, women's health immediately began to improve in the nation: the child mortality rate declined, advances were made in gynecology and obstetrics, and a host of other problems were addressed — all because women who understood their own bodies could now contribute to medical progress.

The same holds true in the spiritual realm. Certain things won't change until women get involved. As long as women are denied opportunities in pastoring, evangelism, missions and theology, we cannot move forward. When women are included, the church can authoritatively address important issues including sexual abuse, abortion, single-parent poverty, child slavery, gender discrimination and domestic violence.

7. We will reach more territory for Christ when both men and women are engaged in ministry.

Even before women won the right to vote in the United States, an army of women missionaries was sent from this country to China, India and Africa. Many of these women were single and

weren't allowed to pastor churches while they were on hallowed American soil. But when they got to the jungles and remote villages of the developing world they were transformed into apostolic ambassadors.

One Scottish woman missionary, Mary Slessor, single-handedly pioneered eastern Nigeria for Christ in the late 1800s and laid the foundations of the revival that still burns there today. Yet today, there are still churches in our country that would have told Slessor that she was only qualified to teach children in Sunday school or lead the women's prayer group.

This is the primary reason I have dedicated my life to raising up women leaders. I know that right now a large segment of the church has their hands tied behind their backs. Women have been bound, squelched, limited, devalued and denied — yet they represent a huge untapped potential. We need them on the mission field, just as we need them starting Christian businesses, defending the family, pastoring churches, evangelizing our cities, running for political office and pioneering social reformation.

It's time for us guys to drop our fears and our macho attitudes — and anything else we've used to stop our mothers, sisters and wives from claiming their spiritual inheritance. I challenge you to open as many doors for them as possible.

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J. Lee Grady is editor of *Charisma* and author of *10 Lies the Church Tells Women*. Through his ministry, The Mordecai Project, he confronts the abuse of women and helps churches train and release women leaders. Visit www.themordecaiproject.com for more information.



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*Christa was intelligent;
she was outspoken;
she was a leader.
These were traits I
learned to be hesitant
to affirm in women,
because I thought they
were out of place
and didn't belong.*



Born to Lead; Born to Equip

Sometimes the Holy Spirit's call is unexpected and unfamiliar

by Matthew McKirland and Christa McKirland

Born to Lead — Embracing a Calling *Christa's story*

Tomboy. This label still seems far too domesticated a term for my childhood as I loved tromping through creeks, making elaborate forts, crawling around in camouflage, and climbing up pine trees. My parents never discouraged my outlets of energy nor my desires to become a detective, a lawyer, or the president; they encouraged me to be all God made me to be. Interestingly, the message I received in Sunday school and gleaned from weekly sermons did not match my parents' encouragement. As a result, I found little support as I grew up to pursue my gifts in teaching and communication within the church. These were gifts that men were supposed to foster in order to lead. Not women. Thus, I abandoned pursuit of becoming all I might be in the body of Christ, be it a preacher, a pastor, or a minister. However, as I grew older and my love for God's Word began to soak down into my spirit, I noticed that the messages I had received in church seemed at odds with my reading and understanding of the gospel.

A few years later, I went on to major in philosophy and women's studies at a state university and began to think more

critically about the interpretations I had been taught my whole life. I also began to teach more regularly. I had an opportunity to serve at a local church near my university and, after a couple of years, had gained the trust of the leadership to teach the youth group on a regular basis. After five years, they allowed me to serve as an interim youth director and to oversee the teaching and spiritual direction of more than seventy students. While on staff at this church, I also had the opportunity to teach at a youth camp and speak at weekend retreats. During one of the summer camps, I had an intense confirmation from the Lord that I was made to teach and to lead. I saw him using me, and students' lives were changing. Analogies and illustrations often came to me while I was teaching, and I found myself explaining them with ease and clarity. Simplifying the complex was as effortless as breathing, and I knew it was not me, but the Holy Spirit. This is when I met Matt.

Growing up in a very large and very traditional church, I was steeped in the lingo and doctrine that stereotypically defines such believers. I knew the Romans road and the Sunday morning liturgy. I was even developing my own three-point sermons. I was an active participant in my youth group who was not satisfied with simply praying a prayer and responding to an altar call. Beginning to ask questions and dig deeper into the Word, I stood out among my peers as a leader and an example, or so I was told.

As a male, I was never discouraged from being whatever I had it in me to be, and I was frequently encouraged to be a pastor. I understood “pastor” to mean someone who spoke well, who could lead a large group, and who could come up with sermon points that rhymed or started with the same letter. No one asked me what my gifts were or encouraged me to discover and strengthen them. I was a “leader” in my youth group and, thus, encouraged to be a pastor, for all *real* leaders were pastors, and all pastors were men.

No one ever walked me through the doctrine of the roles of men and women, but I knew full well what each gender was supposed to do. I knew about God's order, male-female makeup, and positions within the church that each could hold. I never questioned these things. I did hold a relatively high view of women, however, and, as I entered college, I began to have difficulty reasoning through my beliefs on what men and women could and couldn't do. It wasn't until serving at a summer camp that I began to more thoroughly seek answers to the questions that arose within me.

At this summer camp, I met my future wife, Christa. However, if anyone would have told me at the outset that I would marry her, I would not only have laughed, but I also would have high-tailed it out of that camp as fast as my feet could run. I couldn't stand her. I refrain from saying I hated her because good Christians don't hate people. But I was close. She was a philosophy and women's studies major; she was intelligent; she was outspoken; she was a leader. These were traits I learned to be hesitant to affirm in women, because I thought they were out of place and didn't belong.

However, as the camp progressed, the Lord was working in me in ways I wouldn't understand until much later. I witnessed a woman who was gifted to teach and to lead, and she was really good at it. I saw the Spirit of God working in and through her in undeniable ways, and I slowly became an advocate for her. She was not someone who commanded attention by a loud voice or some feigned talents. It was a God-given gift within her that necessitated attention and accomplished kingdom-ends. By the close of the camp, I grew to respect Christa because of her giftings, and I later realized a miraculous work taking place within me because of God's gifts in her. The questions of what women could do and the doctrines I had adopted were now clashing with one another as I adopted a gifts-based service mentality. To me, it was simple: if God had truly gifted this woman to teach and lead, then she should teach and lead. Also,

if he had so designed Christa, he had surely done the same thing with many other women. She was not merely the exception to the rule; perhaps, I thought, the rule itself needed to be questioned.

Meeting Christa and seeing her serve in her gifts was God's way of beginning to answer my internal questions about men and women and their abilities to serve. The transformation of my perspective, however, was not solely experiential. As I took my experience back to Scripture, I began to see service in God's kingdom in a new light. The exclusivity of male-only leadership I had once betrothed as fundamental to the body of Christ was divorced from me as powerfully as when I had accepted it.

Recognizing Your Unexpected and Unfamiliar Call

YOU MAY BE RECEIVING A CALL FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT IF:

- You can't shake the thought and find yourself visualizing what the possibilities could be
- You have a sense of urgency about acting on the calling
- These thoughts and this urgency keep you up at night and often wake you up in the morning
- You've prayed about it and asked for God's clarity, and the vision/calling persists
- You have spent time in Scripture and have tested this calling in light of its kingdom impact
- You have a peace about devoting your time and energy to this calling, even if that means “failing.” (You can't really fail if this is what God is calling you to do, but from an external perspective, even if your dedication seems fruitless, are you willing to keep at it?)

Recognizing and Supporting Your Spouse's Call

If gradually your spouse's passion becomes your passion, and supernaturally your heart begins to turn in that calling's direction, this often means the calling is from the Lord. Even if this does not happen, pray for ways to encourage and complement this in your spouse. Keep in mind that the point of marriage is not simply our own happiness, but that happiness is a by-product of pursuing what God has called us to do for the sake of his kingdom

A year into marriage, we now eagerly live out our passions and callings together. My (Christa's) calling is teaching others who they are in Christ because if we know this incredible truth, then Christ can be all he wants to be in us to change the world to further his kingdom. This passion keeps me up at night and gets me up in the morning. For this reason, when I have faced the common "that can't be your calling because you're a woman" mentality, I pursue the calling rather than an argument. If God wants to change the opinion, he will. Often, I have discovered, our lives are the best argument.

Matt is a case in point. He is now my biggest supporter and I am his.

My most difficult struggle, however, has been learning to move past these opinions of dismissal and opposition in a loving way. While in college, it took years of persistently living out my passions to gain the trust of the all-male leadership at my highly conservative church. It took time to read and study what I believe the Bible teaches about men and women but also patience and discernment for when to share my beliefs. Finally, it took countless tears of frustration to finally let go and trust that God was actually using me. Now, looking back, I am so grateful for those opportunities to experience my blood-soaked right to serve. Christ died for it in love, and now, what a joy to live for it in that same love.

Before I (Matt) experienced the Lord changing my heart about men and women, I figured I would get married, but I had no idea what marriage was all about. Now, just over a year into marriage, I still have a lot to learn about what it is all about. But God has given us an awareness of his kingdom and that we can be a strategic force for its advancement together. I used to think marriage would help me accomplish my goals and that a wife would help me meet the plans I had, but now I know that God's purpose for us is to accomplish his goals and to discover the plans he has. Daily, God unravels his purpose for us a little bit more, and we are finding that our gifts coincide and that our passions collaborate.

Nothing thrills me more than to see people seek to serve God and others in their unique gifts and pursue whatever end God has for them. I love to see people step outside the box of human expectations and pressures and truly seek to follow God and make a positive difference in the world. Seeing people experience the practical outworking of faith has been a passion of mine for quite some time, and it was not until I met Christa that I realized the perfect complement to my calling. Christa's passion is identity while mine is practicality; she seeks a firm foundation in the transcendent, and I seek a life that truly makes a difference.

But, neither passion is most fully realized apart from the other. In order for a life of most practical and powerful impact to exist, it must come from one who is secure in her identity in Christ. An identity truly seated in God's transcendent reality must have functional and meaningful impact.

The end result of our gifts and passions is yet to be completely realized. But, as we encourage one another to serve God the way we were created to serve, results even greater than we could have imagined are taking place. As the Spirit leads, we trust that the kingdom of God

will grow and expand because of his work in and among us. It is not because we are any more capable or gifted than the next couple, but because we seek to build up the body of Christ in the way he has created us to do so (Eph. 4). Each of us has something unique to offer, and each of us is called to offer it.



Christa and Matt McKirland are both pursuing MA degrees in Bible Exposition at Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, California. They love sunny California, disc golf, Halo 3, and having friends over to hang out and eat. They also love to read and write and can't wait to pursue more of this in the future.



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STORIES
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OUTSIDE OF AFRICA

Women Transforming Communities

by Esmé Bowers

For women in Africa, walking in the Spirit requires deep bravery, resilience, and perseverance.



My work on the African continent over the past fourteen years has afforded me the privilege to walk with many women from over forty African countries, seeing their work and hearing their stories. Many stories were of struggle, oppression, war, poverty, and abuse, but many were also those of God's grace, discovering God's Word, deep faith, and prayers and miracles. The oral tradition and storytelling remains locked up in such communities and therefore very little has been written about these exploits, as popular written literature by Africans is less than 60 years old. These stories are usually used to educate, inspire, and communicate acts of bravery that have benefited the community or they are used to warn against unacceptable behavior.

I do not have access to every village, slum, or township, but there are women everywhere in Africa who want their lives improved and will take responsibility for biblical community transformation together with the men. Christian women are concerned about:

- Education for their children
- Sanitation, water, health, and government services
- The rising price of food
- The disintegration of values in society
- Dysfunctional families
- Corruption and fraud
- How they can work together to bring shalom to their communities and country

I share these three stories to help you understand the diverse roles women in Africa are assuming to transform their communities through the power of the Holy Spirit. You will meet Arnett, a woman of God with a passion to empower women to change their country; Martha, a mother of four; and Maria, a restored alcoholic from the rubbish dump. I have changed some of the names to protect these women and will encourage them to write their own stories when they feel safe to do so.

MONROVIA, LIBERIA: RISING FROM THE RUINS

*The first African woman president lives here:
Ellen Johnson Surlief.*

Imagine a city with modern hotels, running water, electricity, beach mansions with palms gently blowing in the breeze, untold wealth of gold and diamonds, rubber trees, three crops a year, fertile soil, and tropical weather...all in ruins after twelve years of war. This city is now swarming with United Nations soldiers manning check points along the road to the city and airport, where citizens are constantly stopped and interrogated as to their purposes and destinations. The fifteen counties are disconnected from one another as the road system has been destroyed. Consequently, commuters have to walk great distances to connect with various forms of transport to reach the main city of Monrovia. It is a city that has lost hope: fields lie fallow, and people sit in the humid shade thinking about how things were, mulling over the pain of war, lost loved ones, and the destruction all around.

But there are women who have joined hands to transform their country, like Rev. Arnett Taylor. She is a past member of Parliament, an educationist, a business woman, a farmer, an executive member of the Liberian Evangelical Fellowship, a pastor leading an inner city mission, and a Bible teacher facilitating training and mentoring for about eighty young pastors.

FETISHES AND PRAYER IN VILLAGE SCHOOLS

In Liberia, the government does not provide free schooling and that which is available is of such poor quality that children do not want to go to school, because teachers are often not paid for months. In contrast, Christian schools are flourishing, and Arnett has established a network for such schools. I saw village schools under reed roofs with no walls where children are taught not only the normal school curriculum but also values and skills.

These children walk for up to two hours in the morning and arrive famished, so they are given a simple meal when they arrive. Parents who are unable to pay are encouraged to cultivate their land and provide food for the children and for sale to others. As the schools grow, parents come to assist in the building of new structures. The teachers are paid very little, but when questioned they indicate that they prefer working in a Christian environment where they are looked after and can see the results of their work. Fourteen young women are being trained as teachers at Arnett's

home, where she provides security, meals, accommodations, and a small stipend. Arnett's business contacts in the city provide the stationery for some of the schools and her farm produce sales pay the salaries for the teachers.

All children in the village are welcome to these schools. I am told that initially, parents do not send their children for fear of them being bewitched, but when they see the positive change in the children that attend, parents are drawn into these circles and environments of development. Productive, progressive villages with a strong Christian ethos result from this, and Arnett has established three small churches in the nearby villages where parents are also learning to read. In a country of fetishes and witches much value is placed on the supernatural, and great suspicion is on those who are successful. But Arnett attributes the success of these schools to the prayers of the students and teachers and envisions a future of well-educated Christian people leading the country in just twenty years.

MARTHA: TWO OUT OF FOUR

I met Martha at a women's leadership conference in Monrovia in 2006. At the commencement of the conference I asked women to share their stories and then added: "Tell us what happened to you during the war." The hall where fifty-two women from ten counties in Liberia were gathered became very quiet for about five minutes until Martha spoke up: "I will break the silence." This was the first time that she had spoken about the war and her turmoil.

Martha and her husband were farmers who often traveled to the nearby village to sell their crops and share the gospel. At the start of the war Martha's husband was taken into the army against her will. She was seven months pregnant. She was alone, had never seen anyone give birth, and had to make a plan for her baby. The people of the village nearby believed in fetishes, but she had no choice but to go to them because she would not be able to survive on her own. So she packed the wheelbarrow with what she thought she may need, including her Bible, and embarked on her journey to the fetish people. She arrived to wailing and weeping as the men had also been forced to join the army, but was warmly welcomed and accepted into the community of women and children.

At the time of her delivery she was surprised when the midwife said that there were two babies. The women looked troubled and began to whisper and avoid her eyes. The one baby was given to her to suckle but the other was taken away. She found out later that he was killed and burned to prevent bad luck from entering the community. As food was scarce and she was at the mercy of the women, she accepted that this is what life was offering her and, as she had so much other pain in her heart and body, she attempted to brush the death of the baby aside.

A year later the army came again to rape the fields and the women. Martha fell pregnant again, and again she delivered twins. This time things were taken more seriously. She was given the second baby to suckle, but the first one was killed in front of

her eyes, and Martha was made to eat the flesh with the other women. This they said would drive away the army and protect them. Martha became sick and her Christian faith was now undermined. She determined to never tell anyone about these dead children.

Her husband returned after the war. He recognized that the eldest child would be his and assumed that the other was the result of a war rape. But he was afraid to ask as she would fly into a rage for a few days, and he could see the pain of that memory was too much for her. They reestablished the farm, continued sharing the gospel with the villages, and planted a church in that village. Martha has also established a cotton farm and is teaching women how to weave and dye the cotton. This is bringing in much-needed income, and she has been elected as “mayor” of that community. Yet every time she sees the midwife, it is with great sadness that she greets her.

She cried out to the women at the conference, “Do you have similar stories?” An unnatural wail resonated around the hall as the women began to acknowledge their pain for the first time. Many of the women began to share some of the saddest stories of abuse that I have heard. We spent three days listening to the stories, praying, and forgiving the perpetrators.

Many of the woman declared that it was their faith that kept them going. None had ever shared their experiences with their spouses or loved ones, but they recognized that there were so many more women in Liberia with similar pain. These women left with new hope, joy, and a passion to bring healing and reconciliation to their nation. They have developed an unsophisticated process of creating space for women to tell their stories, grant forgiveness, and reconcile with the perpetrators.

NAMIBIA: LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR OUT OF A SHIPPING CONTAINER

Who needs lots of money to make a difference? Certainly not Maria who lives in the township of Kattatura, on the outskirts of Windhoek. She was living in a rubbish dump with her husband eking out a living when she met a group of women who cared enough to share the gospel with her and help her out of this existence. They invited her to travel with them to a leadership conference in Botswana in 2001. She was a new disciple of Jesus, eager to learn all that she could about changing her community. I watched her as she inquired what it would take to make a difference and someone said simply, “Love your neighbor.” She went back to her shack and initiated change. I visited her in 2003 and was amazed to find what she had done in such a short time with very little resources.

She has a basic two-room shack with a sand floor and no electricity or running water. Attached to the shack is a canvas tent and a shipping container which is used for daycare, an afterschool program, and a counseling center.

Despite her circumstances Maria has started the following:

- **A soup kitchen.** With a three-legged pot cooking outside over an open fire she feeds all the children who visit her home after school. Initially she asked a nearby small shop for any old vegetables but now other shop owners who have seen her project deliver greens each day.
- **A daycare program for twenty-six children.** More mothers can now go to work and leave their children safely in her hands.
- **An afterschool care program.** Many girls were being raped by their older relatives after school so Maria provides a safe place until the parents come home. These girls help with the babies, assist with the cooking, and get assistance with their homework.
- **An HIV/AIDS counseling clinic** every Thursday. A community nurse uses Maria’s shack to operate from and dispense advice. Free soup is offered to all who come.
- **A small church** of fifty people that she runs with her husband.

Maria has very little education. Her husband works with her in all the projects but she is the driving force. I interviewed the neighbors on either side of Maria’s house. An eighty-two year old man said that since 2001 there have been no child rapes in the community, and that men are afraid to abuse their wives because the women have come together and provided safe houses where those who are being abused can flee with their children.

There is a renewed community spirit with a zero tolerance to crime, and no public drinking is allowed. Children are improving in school because they feel safe and are being fed, explained a young woman.

CONCLUSION

Women in Africa are not always looking for outside assistance but are digging deep within to find the moral and spiritual resources to transform their communities. The changes these women work toward happen slowly but consistently as they give themselves to God in prayer and to their communities in love.

Where men shrink from leaving the holy edifices, women live out their faith practically as they understand it in the Word of God. There are many stories of Christian women who, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are working together to transform their communities through holistic ministry and evangelization. I am so grateful to be working with them.



Esmé Bowers is the continental chairperson of the Pan-African Christian Women’s Alliance. She works in the field of leadership development and community transformation, partnering with women in Africa who are civic, governmental, and church leaders. This article highlights three of the stories she shared at the 2008 CBE conference in Toronto, Ontario.

Led by the Spirit, Paul Risked his Ministry — and for Whom?

by Beulah Wood

Acts 16:6-25 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. **7** When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. **8** So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. **9** During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” **10** After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. **12** From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district [a] of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. **14** One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. **15** When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female

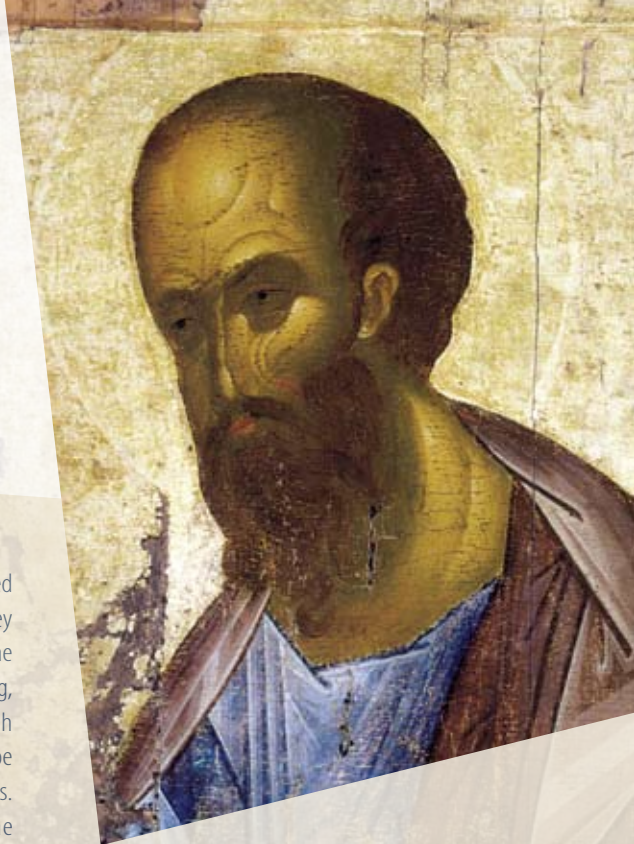
slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. **17** She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” **18** She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her.

19 When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

20 They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar **21** by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”

22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. **23** After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. **24** When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. **26** Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose.



TUCKED AWAY in the story of the growth of the church, a few verses in Acts 16 detail how a top Christian leader endangered both himself and his ministry for the sake of a person with all the counts against her. Who would think his action was worth it? She was:

- A female
- A slave
- A Gentile
- Possessed by an evil spirit
- In bondage to the city’s powerful men
- Abused
- Bad mannered

Yet, Paul modeled for us courage and a strong sensitivity to the Spirit. Let’s examine the evidence.

Led by the Spirit

First we should note the signs in this passage that Paul was led by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit guided Paul and his companions (v. 6) not to preach in Asia (Ephesus). They planned to enter Bythnia to the north, but again the Spirit would not allow them (v. 7). Paul received a vision of a man across the Aegean Sea in Europe begging him to come and help (v. 9), so they went there, “concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them” (v. 10). The Spirit-led journey became one of the hinges of history — the extension of the gospel of Christ to Europe.

Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit must have continued as the party reached the place and person, Lydia, who was ready to welcome the Savior. The Spirit was working, for “the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message” (v. 14). And surely it was the Holy Spirit still at work when Paul and Silas had the moral fortitude to, from their prison chains, pray and sing at midnight, an act that was followed by an earthquake, a shout that led to salvation, and a whole household entering into the kingdom of God.

Outnumbered in the City

So, knowing Paul was led by the Holy Spirit, what do we find he did? Perhaps the people of Philippi were at first neutral to Paul and his team, for they walked about without hindrance. That Lydia’s prayer meeting was held outside the town at a riverside may be a sign, though, that new religious teaching was not welcome.

There were few Jews in the city, not even the standard ten men necessary for a synagogue. There would be little support. But it was worse than that. Anti-Jewish feeling hung over the forum and could be called on to excite a crowd. Later the slave-owners would accuse Paul, “These men are Jews and are throwing our city into an uproar.” But Philippi was also highly Romanized. Excavations have found eighty percent of its stone inscriptions written in Latin, the language of the Romans. The accusation leveled at Paul and his friends was, in part, that they were “advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice” (v.20–21).

Offending against anti-Jewish and pro-Roman social stances could lead to riots and possible lynching. Paul, sophisticated, educated, and well-traveled, would have seen this danger in the first few days in town.

Ministering at the Bottom of the Heap

The slave woman whom Paul freed from demon possession was at the bottom of all social scales. Slaves made up about one third of the population in cities like Philippi, and a slave was property. To act for the advantage of a slave looked like interfering with another’s property. Paul knew this too.

Female and probably young, her place in society was nothing. On top of that, she was a member of a different race and nation. Why would a supposedly proud Jew like Paul care? This unfortunate woman was abused, powerless, useless to everyone except for her fortune-telling, and so bad-mannered she tracked the visitors, shouting relentlessly. Two persuasive arguments could prevent Paul from doing anything for her: she was considered of no value to society; and, if he did help her, he took the enormous risk of bringing sure and serious retribution on his own head. Is it any wonder he did nothing for days when her pestering annoyed Paul and his party! Perhaps he hesitated to get involved in a private matter. Besides, there was money involved. Tempers flare when people lose money.

Annoyed

There is a possibility that we have jumped to conclusions when we read that Paul was “annoyed” (v. 18). We suppose that he was annoyed with the young woman for following their itinerant band and shouting loudly after them. But there is another interpretation. What if Paul was annoyed with the circumstance that permitted manipulative and wealthy men to take advantage of a troubled and powerless young woman? What if Paul kept his cool for days, knowing that he and his friends were outnumbered, Jews in an easily aroused anti-Jewish environment, surrounded by a mob that was pro-Roman and eager to worship Caesar’s idols? What if to him it was blatantly obvious that this was unjust, but he felt hampered by the jeopardy to himself, his friends?

Speaking for Justice

Among the issues of exploiting a woman, a slave, a troubled person, there were, as so often today, religious issues and money issues. Further, for Paul, was the question of his freedom to share the gospel. If he made himself unpopular on the street, he would lose the chance to talk of Christ. Surely that would be the strongest argument of all.

But no. Led by the Holy Spirit, Paul healed the girl and went to prison for it.

Did he regret his action? No. He was so comfortable with what he had done that he and Silas sang in prison.

Would Christ have agreed with this action that severely curtailed an evangelist’s ability to preach the gospel? Emphatically yes. We can know so by Paul’s words and the resulting miracle: “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her” (v. 18)!

So What about Today?

In today’s world, will God hear and act if we ask for justice to be done “in his name”? Surely yes. Is it right to speak for women? Should one step in even if there are moneyed interests? Yes, with the help of the Holy Spirit, as Paul had.

There is a remarkable model here. The leading male Christian of the time was the one who risked his life and ministry to act for justice for an unimportant, economically disadvantaged, and abused female.

May we act for the right, knowing God is in control. And may we call on all Christian leaders to walk in the steps of Paul, by the power of the Holy Spirit.



New Zealander Beulah Wood, (D.Min, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary), writes and teaches in Bangalore, southern India. She finds that justice for women needs champions both in the West and in the East.

Q: Who are the women prophets in the Bible?

by John DelHousaye

A: My faith in Jesus Christ was nurtured in a conservative evangelical tradition, which partly defined itself in reaction to cultural liberalism and Pentecostal enthusiasm. As a result, we did not recognize women prophets. Looking back, however, I believe they were among us. Scripture explains their enduring presence as clearly as church history explains their marginalization. Here is some of the biblical evidence.

Women Prophets in the Old Testament

The label “prophetess” or “woman prophet” (*nēbī’āh*) is attributed to five women in the Old Testament: Miriam (Exod. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chron. 34:22), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), and “the prophetess” (Isa. 8:3). Its significance is clear. Miriam claims the Lord “has spoken” through her (Num. 12:2). Deborah says to Barak: “Look, the Lord, the God of Israel, has commanded” (Judg. 4:6). Huldah similarly uses the prophetic introductory formula: “Thus says the Lord God of Israel...” (2 Kings 22:15). Scripture, then, describes a woman prophet as someone through whom God speaks to his people. In this regard, a “prophetess” is no different than her male counterpart, the “prophet” (*nābī’*). For this reason, I prefer the translation “woman prophet.”

Women Prophets in the New Testament

Luke presents Anna as a “woman prophet” (*prophētis*), which is the same Greek word the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses to translate the Hebrew *nēbī’āh* (Luke 2:36). Like the prophet Simeon who is paired with her (2:25–27), Anna is led by the Holy Spirit to speak about Jesus “to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem” (2:38). The masculine gender of the signifiers describing her intended audience suggests Anna prophesies to both men and women. Elsewhere, Luke uses the feminine signifier to define an audience of women only (15:9).

Luke’s depiction of Anna as a prophet anticipates Pentecost, when Mary the mother of Jesus and other women prophesy (Acts 1:14; 2:17). Luke makes another link between Anna and early Christian women prophets when he introduces Philip’s daughters as “virgins who prophesy” (Acts 21:9).



In Revelation, specifically in the letter to Thyatira (Rev. 2:18–29), Jesus criticizes a woman who calls herself a woman prophet—the same word Luke uses for Anna—for “teaching and deceiving my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols” (v. 20). The woman is clearly a leader in the church of Thyatira. But is she a genuine prophet? The prophet Jeremiah makes personal holiness and purity a litmus test for genuine prophecy (Jer. 23:9–40). Jesus, similarly, advises his disciples to expose false prophets by drawing attention to their behavior (Matt. 7:15–23). Unfortunately, the character and behavior of the woman from Thyatira did not meet the litmus test of a genuine prophet. Yet what is often missed is that Jesus does not attack the woman for being a leader, but for being an immoral one.

Note: Scripture references are the author’s translation throughout.



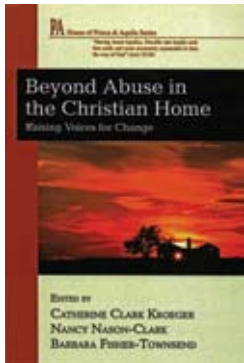
John DelHousaye is assistant professor of New Testament at Phoenix Seminary and serves as a volunteer pastor at New Day Bible Church. He is married to Tiffany, a speech therapist, and has two daughters, Livia and Joslyn. John did his doctoral work on the historical Jesus at Fuller Seminary.



Summer Reading Essentials

New and noteworthy egalitarian books.

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Beyond Abuse in the Christian Home

By Catherine Clark Kroeger, Nancy Nason-Clark, and Barbara Fisher-Townsend

Born out of the cries, confusion, and frustration of the people of God, *Beyond Abuse in the Christian Home* is an edited collection of papers, presentations, and discussions from a group of therapists, sociologists, domestic violence experts, clergy, biblical scholars, and survivors.

A CBE reviewer wrote: “Everyone should read this book. It is a must for pastors, because it will awaken us to the reality and pervasiveness of abuse in our culture, especially in our Western culture. It could not be more timely and helpful!”

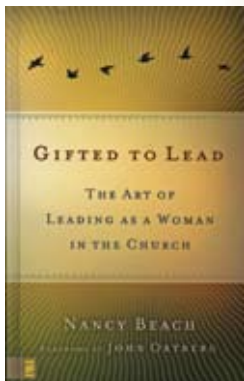


The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible

By Scot McKnight

In *The Blue Parakeet*, McKnight challenges today's Christians to consider how to read the Bible, seeing it as a story that we're summoned to enter and carry forward in our day. He calls his bold new approach to the Bible the “Third Way,” a path that walks confidently — and joyfully — between theological extremes.

A CBE reviewer wrote: “The book itself functions as an argument for mutuality. His illustrations are clear and precise, his stories fundamentally grounded in an understanding of mutuality, and his arguments for women in ministry are interesting and well developed. I highly recommend this book!”

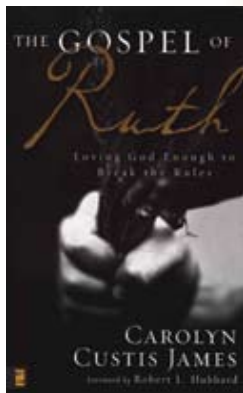


Gifted to Lead

By Nancy Beach

You were created to lead and your calling is unmistakable. You know how hard it is to live out your calling and tackle the difficult challenges unique to women who lead in the church. Nancy Beach understands what it's like. In this practical and inspiring book, she shares the challenges and joys of her own thirty-year journey as a leader and teacher in the church. She offers guidance on such issues as: earning respect, finding your unique voice for leadership and teaching, managing work and personal life, forming an intentional support network, and more. Rich in wisdom and humor, Nancy's message offers heartfelt encouragement that you are not alone, your gifts are not a mistake, and that God has exceedingly important work for you to do.

A CBE reviewer wrote: “Very practical and insightful for both men and women. In fact, chapter seven is ‘An open letter to male pastors and church leaders.’ This book can and will help women become more effective leaders alongside male and other female colleagues.”



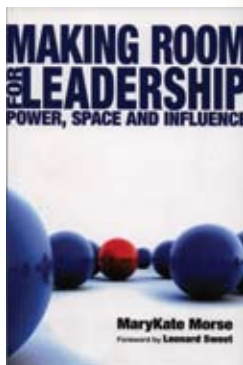
The Gospel of Ruth:

Loving God Enough to Break the Rules

By Carolyn Custis James

Three lives converge in a powerful alliance that transforms their lives and changed the world. Naomi, Ruth and Boaz discover God makes much of broken lives, that he calls men and women to serve him together, and that he's counting on his daughters to build his kingdom.

A CBE reviewer wrote: "Carolyn is such a gifted writer, and this book is no exception. Her insights into the book of Ruth are surprising and inspiring."



Making Room for Leadership:

Power, Space and Influence

By Mary Kate Morse

You don't just lead with your voice and your decisions. You lead with your body. The way you take up space in a room and the way you use or don't use your body in group settings influences others. Morse looks at Christ's use of power as a guide for how to lead in ways that are empowering to others.

A CBE reviewer wrote: "Insightful about the use and abuse of power. It offers very practical information for individuals to evaluate and change their own use of power to build and empower the body of Christ."



Mama's Got a Fake I.D.

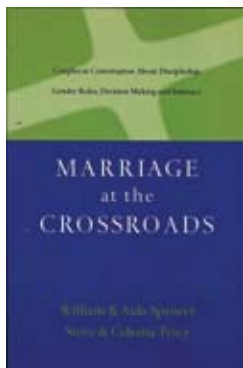
By Caryn Rivadeneira

No one begins life as a mom. Before you have children, you are an amazing combination of friend, daughter, confidant, visionary, encourager, and thinker. You start out in life using your gifts and abilities in a surprising variety of settings.

Then you have children and the role of mom — as wonderful as it is — seems to consume you. It's easy to lose your identity when others see you as a mom and little else. What happened to the artist, the team-builder, the organizer, the entrepreneur, the leader — the person you've lost touch with?

Caryn Dahlstrand Rivadeneira helps moms like you reclaim the person God has made you to be. God still wants to use you in ways that let your gifts, passions, and personality shine.

A CBE reviewer wrote: "Easy to read, fresh, and honest!"



Marriage at the Crossroads

By Aida Besancon Spencer, William D. Spencer, Celestia Tracy, and Steven R. Tracy

A team of couples has joined forces to discuss their views about what a biblical marriage looks like. This book offers a wealth of solid, biblically sound, hard won counsel from couples. As a bonus, you'll derive insights from differing cultural perspectives from Hispanic, Asian, and African American couples. They tell their own stories of trial and error, growth and pilgrimage, and discover that they have far more in common than their differences might suggest.

A CBE reviewer wrote: "Written in a very gracious and accessible manner. Offers truly thoughtful reflections into the ways that couples work out God-honoring marriages."

MINISTRY NEWS

CBE Publications Win Five Evangelical Press Association Awards



Christians for Biblical Equality is pleased to announce that its three publications — *Priscilla Papers*, *Mutuality*, and *E-Quality* — garnered critical acclaim at the annual Evangelical Press Association (EPA) convention, which took place in Indianapolis, IN on May 6-8, 2009.

EPA is the largest professional organization for Christian periodical publishing in the world, and its members include many prominent publishers, such as Christianity Today International, Focus on the Family, and Sojourners. As a relatively small organization, CBE is particularly honored to receive a record-breaking five awards.

Mutuality, CBE's popular magazine, received three awards, including CBE's first Award of Merit. This prestigious award was a second place honor in the Most Improved category, thanks to a layout redesign, higher quality printing and paper, and the editorial leadership of Megan Greulich.

Mutuality also received a fourth place Higher Goals award in the Critical Review category for "Girls, Guys and God: Responding to Current Trends in Dating Books for Teenagers" by CBE staff members Liz Beyer and Megan Greulich. Julie Amos' poem "Epitaph (to a Woman of Noble Character)," published in *Mutuality*, took home the third place award in the Poetry category.

Priscilla Papers also published an outstanding poet last year; "Renunciation and Jeanne d'Arc" by Jennifer Stewart won fourth place in the Poetry category. CBE is especially grateful to *Priscilla Papers* editor William Spencer and the editorial team of Deb Beatty Mel and Aída Besançon Spencer for their hard work on CBE's academic journal dedicated to ground-breaking biblical scholarship on gender and faith.

CBE's online journal, *E-Quality*, was edited last year by two college interns, Bethany Nelson and Jessica Colund. Richard Hess's article, "Evidence for Equality in Genesis 1-3," published in *E-Quality*'s autumn issue, received a third place Higher Goals award in the Biblical Exposition category.

Read the award-winning articles by visiting www.cbeinternational.org and clicking on "Free Articles" under the "Resources" tab.

PRAISES AND PRAYERS

PRAISE GOD WITH US FOR...

- The launch of our brand new website!
- The arrival of our talented and dedicated new student intern, Kriste.
- Great interest in our student paper competition! Three winners will read original research at our conference this summer.
- Our Australian CBE chapter hosting a conference in Melbourne next summer.

PRAY TO GOD WITH US FOR...

- Much-needed contributions in this difficult economy.
- 100 more registrations for our July conference in St. Louis.
- More individuals who are willing to volunteer time in helping CBE with many diverse projects.
- More students to serve as CBE interns.
- Good decisions and funds to implement our new online shopping cart.
- Denominations as they study and determine the scriptural basis for women in leadership.
- Wisdom as CBE develops a third strategic plan.

REFLECT WITH US...

by Susan McCoubrie (with special thanks to Jo Ellen Heil)

"The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things" (John 14:26).

In addition to being our Advocate, the Holy Spirit is also described in Scripture as our Comforter, Helper, Counselor, and Strengthener. I was first introduced to the Holy Spirit as a teenager and have enjoyed a close companionship with this dear Counselor since then.

When I was thirteen, I accepted Christ as my Savior at a two-week summer youth camp. At the end of camp I returned home to no church fellowship, no like-minded friends at school, and loving but uneasy parents (they were afraid I had become a "holy roller"). This doesn't begin to describe those teen years. It was the Holy Spirit, my constant companion, who held me together.

This Counselor still holds me together. It is hard to convey the depth of our relationship. Prayer is one special aspect of our walk together. As Romans 8:26 says, "The Spirit comes to help us... And God, who sees into our hearts, knows what the thought of the Spirit is" (Good News).

My friend R. Donald Mostrom puts it this way: "We do not have to plead and plead with the Spirit to take an interest in our prayer lives. The Spirit is already in motion...deep inward fellowship with the Holy Spirit is one of the hallmarks of the New Covenant, and nowhere is that stronger than in prayer."

This is my story and I'm sticking to it

by Donald Guffey, Jr.



When I think about my journey as a Christian I cannot separate it from my views on equality. As I have read personal stories of some on the CBE website I've noticed that most are about how those individuals came from a patriarchal viewpoint to an egalitarian one. My story is a bit different. I have always been an egalitarian. I am now 20 years old and can make that statement with certainty. As I grow older and I reflect on my past I always come to the same conclusion: prejudices and stereotypes have to be taught — they are not inherent. Such was the case with me.

I became a Christian when I was four years old. My great-grandmother took me to church and taught me about God and Jesus' love for me. She was also in leadership within the church; she was the clerk of the church for thirty-three years. Our church welcomed women Sunday school teachers, who taught both men and women. We also had female evangelists; my cousin Brenda, for example, was a great preacher.

I'm a Pentecostal Christian. I attend the same church that I was dedicated in when I was a year old. My denomination, which is headquartered in Cleveland, Tennessee, has from its inception allowed women in ministry. The Church of God now ordains women as pastors and hopefully soon will ordain them as overseers (bishops). From my childhood, egalitarian principles were instilled by example and not by instruction; that is to say "women in ministry" was never a topic of sermons or Sunday school lessons. If someone had come to me as a child and said that women shouldn't teach or preach, it would have been a concept totally foreign to my experience of church. Patriarchy is not always the default view that people come to when they first begin to study the Bible.

Women have always been positive role models in my life. My mother is strong, assertive, and a born leader. She also has a disposition that I find humorous, but let's just say my mother is a woman who knows what she wants and is definitely not a push over (she'd be the one pushing over). My aunt is a woman of grace and poise and knows how to "get the job done." My grandmother is a woman who is also assertive and has no trouble speaking her mind. No one inside or outside of the family would succeed in changing her mind. The men in my family are extremely laid back and prefer to simply go with the flow. They do not try to rule their wives, but instead both the men and the women complement one another and work together.

I began recognizing my egalitarian perspective in my freshman year of high school. It wasn't long until I realized that everyone in general didn't exactly hold my views on God and life. Living in the deep south and in an area largely dominated by various forms of Baptist churches, I found that my views on equality were not very well accepted. Students who did not even profess to be Christians would want to argue that a woman had no place in the pulpit. Yet my views remain strong and unwavering.

I would have to say that this issue of gender equality in the church is one of my major "soapboxes." For some reason the Lord has put a passion within me to see women have full rights restored to them within the church. I often have asked myself: could this passion really be from God? Then I think to myself: what have I got to lose? I'm a man; all venues of ministry are open to me. Yet it burns within me like a fire shut up deep down in my bones. It breaks my heart when I think of women who may have a calling to impact the kingdom and are told by churches that the Bible says that they can't preach, lead, or do anything of substance when men are involved.

I hope in my lifetime that we will see the patriarchal viewpoint die and that biblical equality will one day prevail. In the meantime I will continue to share my views and to use the platforms God gives me to fight for this cause; a cause to rally all troops in God's army — men and women, side by side, together. Deborah's arise, Esther's arise, Huldah's arise, Phoebe's arise. Women and men arise into your callings—go forth and conquer together. Yes, I am truly blessed to know biblical equality and I'm truly blessed to see that my generation is moving away from patriarchy and into true biblical relationships and ways of life in both the church and elsewhere. This is my story and I'm sticking to it.

CBE is an encouraging and empowering community for the next generation of passionate Christian leaders like Donald. Will you join us in these efforts by making a generous contribution today? Your support makes it possible to send quality, biblical resources around the world to those who long for hope and healing.

To donate, visit www.cbeinternational.org and click on "Give to CBE" under the "Take Action" tab. Thank you!



Scripture Affirms Women's Leadership in All Spheres

The presidential elections last year provided a unique opportunity to observe the gains women have made politically in the United States. While the Republicans selected a female vice-presidential nominee, the Democrats nearly nominated a woman as their presidential candidate. Both parties made history.

But for those of us steeped in the history of early egalitarians, the political prominence women enjoy today can be understood as a direct extension of the gains earned for women by early evangelicals and their biblical support for women's suffrage. Christians like A.J. Gordon, Frances Willard, Sojourner Truth, and others argued more than one hundred years ago that God gives gifts of leadership not because of gender, education, skin color, or class, but because of God's own choosing. Because of this insight, the early evangelicals advanced some of the most sweeping social reforms in all of history, including women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery.

But what about our friends who believe that God's plan is that only men should hold positions of leadership? Can a person with these convictions in good conscience vote for women in high political office? Several years ago, a prominent theologian presented his case for male leadership in the church and the home. During the question portion of his lecture, a woman raised her hand and asked why he would limit women's authority only in the church and home? Why not also insist upon male authority in all of society as well? Her question was aimed at a core inconsistency in his position. After all, if God really intends for men, rather than women, to be "heads" or "leaders," then it is only logical that women should not hold any positions of leadership over men, in any sphere. How did this particular theologian respond?

He said he was having a hard enough time keeping women submissive in the home and church, never mind society — secular professions. His remark was intended to be humorous, and while many chuckled, his implication was clear. Because he maintains a male-only model of leadership, he does not wish to grant women positions of leadership over men, at any time, in any situation. To be consistent, if you hold this patriarchal view, women should be excluded from any leadership over men in any field including medicine, science, finance, business, education, and so on. Of course, to uphold this view, you will need to overlook many passages in Scripture that show how women had God's blessing in their service in faith communities, as well as in secular fields.

Prophets like Deborah brought leadership, exhortation, and correction to the highest levels of Israel's leaders.

Consider Deborah, who served Israel as a prophet and judge. Deborah held court under the palm of Deborah in the hill country of Ephraim. The Israelites — both men and women — appealed to her authority as a judge, and she made binding decisions regarding their disputes (Judg. 4:4-5). Deborah's leadership as a judge and prophet influenced all of Israel. As a prophet, Deborah offered leadership over God's covenant people. Whereas priests pleaded on behalf of the people to God, prophets were used by God to guide the covenant community — especially the priests and kings. Because of this, prophets like Deborah brought leadership, exhortation, and correction to the highest levels of Israel's leaders. What is more, Israel refused to go into battle without her (Judg. 4:6-9), again underscoring the respect her community held for her leadership.

Like Deborah, Huldah was a female prophet who had the respect of all of Israel. During the reign of King Josiah, when the book of the law was discovered (2 Chron. 34:14-33, 2 Kings 22), King Josiah (622 BCE) and his committee went directly to Huldah for advice, rather than to either Zephaniah or Jeremiah — both of whom were prophets during this time. Huldah's exhortation to obey the Torah led to some of the most sweeping reforms in Israel's history for nearly 1,000 years. If this isn't both spiritual and societal leadership, I don't know what is!

And there is more! Consider the leadership of women like Rahab, Jael, Miriam, Ruth, Esther, and the women who were leaders at the city gates of Jerusalem. Given the patriarchal culture of the times, the fact that there were women leading Israel's army; judging disputes; exhorting and advising Israel's prophets, priests, and kings; declaring the ways of God to the people; and bringing fruitful, badly needed reforms reveals that God placed women in positions of leading secular leaders (kings) and also religious leaders (priests). Scripture makes clear that God delights in using whomever he wishes, despite the gender prejudice of ancient or modern people. Because prophets and judges influenced all of Israel, women like Deborah held authority and brought guidance to the life of God's people and to their leaders.

While some believe a woman can lead a country but not a church, egalitarian evangelicals have never made the distinction between women's leadership in the secular world and women's equal service in the church. Why not? Because Scripture does not make such distinctions. Why would anyone want a world in which all God-given talents are not given wide and deep opportunities for service — in churches and also in secular spheres?

Christians for Biblical Equality

Christians for Biblical Equality is an organization of Christian men and women who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of believers of all racial and ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings of Scripture as reflected in Galatians 3:28.

Injustice is an abuse of power, taking from others what God has given them: their dignity, their freedom, their resources, and even their very lives. CBE also recognizes that prohibiting individuals from exercising their God-given gifts to further his kingdom constitutes injustice in a form that impoverishes the body of Christ and its ministry in the world at large. CBE accepts the call to be part of God's mission in opposing injustice as required in Scriptures such as Micah 6:8.

CORE VALUES • *We believe* the Bible teaches the equality of women and men. *We believe* God has given each person gifts to be used for the good of Christ's kingdom. *We believe* Christians are to develop and exercise their God-given gifts in home, church, and society. *We believe* the Bible teaches that Christians are to oppose injustice.

MISSION STATEMENT • CBE equips believers by affirming the biblical truth about equality and justice. Thus all believers, without regard to gender, ethnicity, and class, are free and encouraged to use their God-given gifts in families, ministries, and communities.

CORE PURPOSE • To communicate broadly the biblical truth that men and women are equally responsible to act justly and use their God-given gifts to further Christ's kingdom.

ENVISIONED FUTURE • CBE envisions a future where all believers will be encouraged to use their gifts for God's glory and missional purposes, with the full support of their Christian communities.

Statement of Faith

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.

We believe in the unity and trinity of God, eternally existing as three equal persons.

We believe in the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ.

We believe in the sinfulness of all persons. One result of sin is shattered relationships with God, others, and self.

We believe that eternal salvation and restored relationships are possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.

We believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, and in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.

We believe in the equality and essential dignity of men and women of all ethnicities, ages, and classes. We recognize that all persons are made in the image of God and are to reflect that image in the community of believers, in the home, and in society.

We believe that men and women are to diligently develop and use their God-given gifts for the good of the home, church, and society.

We believe in the family, celibate singleness, and faithful heterosexual marriage as God's design.

We believe that, as mandated by the Bible, men and women are to oppose injustice.

CBE Membership

CBE membership is available to those who support CBE's Statement of Faith. Members receive CBE's quarterly publications, *Mutuality* magazine and *Priscilla Papers* journal. Members are eligible for discounts on items from CBE Bookstore, including books, articles, tapes, and videos. Members are also offered discounts on all international CBE conferences. Learn more by following the Membership link on our homepage.

CBE Membership Application

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