

Mutuality

A Publication from CBE International



Jesus and Women – A Close Look at the Gospels

By Cynthia Muniz Soares

Page 4

The Empowerment of Brazilian Christian Women through Biblical Examples

By Viktorya Zalewski Baracy

Page 14

IN THIS ISSUE

4

Jesus and Women: A Close Look at the Gospels

A detailed look at the Gospels reveals women's involvement in Jesus's ministry from the beginning.

By Cynthia Muniz Soares

10

Difficult Passages in the New Testament and How to Understand Them

Certain passages are often used to defend a hierarchical relationship between women and men, but proper exegetical study shows this is not what they teach. (Abridged)

By Cynthia Long Westfall

14

The Empowerment of Brazilian Christian Women Through Biblical Examples

While best-selling books on marriage may not fit the reality of Brazil's context, Brazilian women and men everywhere can rely on the Bible for examples of what it means to be a biblical woman.

By Viktorya Zalewski Baracy

20

Finding Our Identity in the *Imago Dei*

Our identity doesn't rest on specific masculine or feminine cultural attributes, but on the very way that we were created in God's image.

By Kathy Myatt

24

Roundtable Q and A: Mimi Haddad, Cynthia Muniz Soares, Alan Myatt, Cynthia Long Westfall, Viktorya Zalewski Baracy

Questions and answers from CBE's 2023 International Conference Roundtable session.

Mutuality is published quarterly by CBE International, 122 W Franklin Ave, Suite 218, Minneapolis, MN 55404-2451.

We welcome your comments, article submissions, and advertisements. Visit cbe.today/mutuality.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the 2011 revision of the *Holy Bible, New International Version*®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Advertising in *Mutuality* does not imply organizational endorsement. Please note that neither CBE International, nor the editor, nor the editorial team is responsible or legally liable for any content or any statements made by any author, but the legal responsibility is solely that author's once an article appears in *Mutuality*.

CBE grants permission for any original article (not a reprint) to be photocopied for local use provided no more than 1,000 copies are made, they are distributed free, the author is acknowledged, and CBE is recognized as the source.

Disclaimer: Final selection of all material published by CBE International in *Mutuality* is entirely up to the discretion of the publisher and editor. Please note that each author is solely and legally responsible for the content and the accuracy of facts, citations, references, and quotations rendered and properly attributed in the article appearing under his or her name. Neither CBE, nor the editor, nor the editorial team is responsible or legally liable for any statements made by any author, but the legal responsibility is solely that author's once an article appears in print in *Mutuality*.

DEPARTMENT

3 From the Editor

Women and the World:
Biblical Equality in Brazil

26 Ministry News

27 Giving Opportunities

28 President's Message

Setting the Record Straight:
CBE's 2023 Conference
in Brazil

30 Praise and Prayer

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor: Carrie Silveira

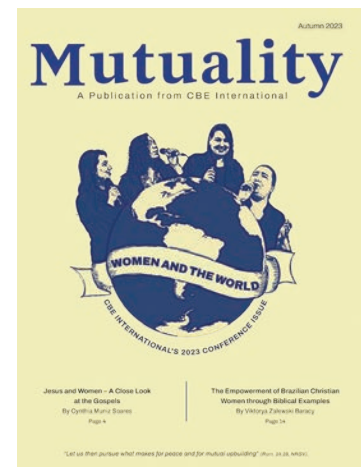
Graphic Designer: Margaret Lawrence

Publisher/President: Mimi Haddad

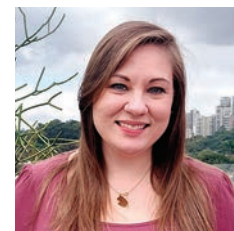
Mutuality vol. 30 no.3, Autumn 2023

Cover design by Margaret Lawrence

Mutuality (ISSN: 1533-2470) offers articles from diverse writers who share egalitarian theology and explore its intersection with everyday life.



CBE is compliant with the Evangelical Council of Financial Accountability, earned the transparency certificate from Excellence in Giving, platinum award from GuideStar, and four-star rating from Charity Navigator.



Women and the World: Biblical Equality in Brazil

The relationship between women and men and their leadership (or lack thereof) in the home, church, and world has been a subject of discussion in the American church for a number of years. CBE was founded in 1988 in response to the “biblical premise used by churches, organizations, and mission groups to exclude the gifts of women” and to be a resource that provides “education, support, and leadership about biblical equality.”¹ Thanks to the number of resources now available, English speakers have access to a wide range of materials that explore biblical equality for women and men. Material is so readily available that some may take the issue for granted, treating it as a secondary issue or the subject of purely academic pondering. Those who suffer under theological patriarchy, and particularly those that don’t have the resources or support in their own languages to follow their calling, however, find themselves in a different position.

In Brazil, the conversation on the biblical equality of women and men has, for years, been almost entirely one-sided. The best-selling books on marriage and family feature complementarian positions, and bookstores are full of books on “biblical” femininity, devotional studies, and programs for women which portray them as unilaterally submissive, often passive, focusing solely on marriage and family to the exclusion of all else.

While there are denominations and churches in Brazil that permit women to be in leadership, they do so without the robust support of biblical resources that are available in other languages. Thorough explanations of the egalitarian position and commentaries that provide in-depth studies of the passages that address submission or women’s participation in church have not been translated on a large scale into Brazilian Portuguese. When challenged, leaders from these groups often refer back to their historical tradition of shared leadership rather than exegesis. As a result, there are a lot of misconceptions about biblical equality and the full partnership of women and men in the home, church, and world.

This has slowly begun to change. A small number of Christian publishers have begun to invest in books that push back on patriarchy and promote biblical equality between women and men. The publication of the book *O Grito da Eva* (Eve’s Outcry),² a thorough study of domestic abuse within Christian homes, has brought

Brazil’s staggering problem of violence against women to the forefront of the church. More and more people are finding the traditional hierarchical position and focus on specific gender roles to be problematic, and are beginning to look for other options.

Thanks to a providential connection made at a previous conference, this year’s CBE International conference was held in São Paulo, Brazil. Our goal was to help “set the record straight” and restore the biblical view of women and a clearer reading of Scripture in the context of the Brazilian church. Following that theme, we invited a mix of Brazilian and American speakers to lecture on Scripture, worldview, identity, and abuse, among other topics.

Cynthia Muniz Soares starts this issue of *Mutuality* with a detailed look at the women in the Gospels and their oft-overlooked participation in Jesus’s ministry. Cynthia Long Westfall then takes us through a study of some difficult passages that seem to support gender-based hierarchy in the home and church, which is so thorough it had to be abridged for our print issue. Be sure to see the full article online! After this, Viktorya Zalewski Baracy demonstrates the problem of treating culture-based guidelines as universal and brings us back to Scripture as our best guide. Kathy Myatt then helps us to find our identities in the image of God. The 2023 Conference featured a roundtable session which gave participants the chance to submit questions for speakers to answer. As always, there were more questions and more discussion than there was time in the session, so we have adapted a selection of these for a Roundtable Q and A feature. Finally, Mimi Haddad shares the process that took CBE International to Brazil and her experience at the conference there.

As we seek to support and empower women throughout the world, connecting with them in their contexts and cultures is foundational. Biblical equality between women and men is not an American ideal, but a scriptural teaching—one that transcends cultural norms. May we hear the voices of our sisters and brothers affected by theological patriarchy throughout the world, whatever language they may speak.

1. “History of CBE,” CBE International, https://www.cbeinternational.org/primary_page/cbes-history/.
2. Marília de Camargo César, *O Grito da Eva: A violência doméstica em lares cristãos* (São Paulo: Vida Melhor Editora, 2021).

**What can we observe
about the women in each
of the Gospels?**

By Cynthia Muniz Soares

Jesus and Women

A CLOSE LOOK AT THE

Women in the Gospels

As a biologist and theologian, I value details. Often, what sets one species apart from another are subtle details that require a trained eye to identify. It is the same when we talk about women in the Bible; a detailed look at the texts is important. When we think about Jesus and his disciples, we may picture an image of Jesus surrounded by male disciples, what J. Lee Grady calls "The Good Ol' Boys' Club."¹ This portrayal influences the way we look at the biblical text. Grady goes on to say, "I've heard people say, 'If Jesus intended for women to serve in leadership positions, then He could have included at least one woman among the Twelve.'"² I, too, have heard this, and it is what motivated me to study the Gospel texts to explore the relationship between Jesus and women.

The Gospels are narratives or biographies (not in the modern sense) of Jesus's life. Each Gospel author carefully selected stories and teachings of Jesus, then skillfully arranged this material with well-defined theological goals. All four present the passion, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus as central events, but differ on what other events they include, like his miracles, dialogues and teachings, details of his birth and family, and his relationship with the disciples.

With this in mind, what can we observe about the women in each of the Gospels? Mark, widely considered the earliest Gospel, presents some significant accounts about women, some of which are found in the other Gospels. The story of the woman with the issue of blood (Luke 8:43–48), the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29–31), and the account

of Jesus being anointed by a woman (Matt. 26:6–13) are a few. Matthew adds to his narrative the names of some of the women of Israel with "unconventional" stories in Jesus's genealogy (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba), as well as the matriarch Rachel, connecting the narrative of Jesus with the narrative of Israel. Matthew also details the story of Mary's miraculous pregnancy and the birth of Jesus.

Of the four Gospels, Luke undoubtedly features the most women and their stories. It begins with an extensive nativity account that includes Elizabeth, Mary, and the prophet Anna, along with the beautiful Song of Mary. Luke also includes various pairings of women and men in his narrative,³ like the appearance of the angel to both Zechariah and Mary, and the presence of Simeon and Anna at Jesus's temple presentation in Jerusalem. In many cases, the women in each pair exhibit better attitudes or demonstrate more faith than their male counterparts. The Gospel of John also employs this pairing between women and men, albeit less frequently due to the extent of the narratives, as seen in Jesus's dialogues with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman.⁴ John also reveals Jesus's close friendships with the siblings Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Despite differences among the Gospels, all place women in crucial moments of the narrative of Jesus's life, witnessing his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, and indicate the presence of women as disciples. Let's begin with the detailed account provided by Luke (8:1–13) when it is said that Jesus traveled with the twelve and many women, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. There were women who participated in Jesus's itinerant ministry. Each of these women had transformative encounters with Jesus, being healed and liberated. In response, they devoted their lives and contributed with their resources in gratitude and devotion to Jesus.

The Gospels of Mark and Matthew do not provide us with much information about these women disciples until the moment of the crucifixion. At this point in the narrative, both mention the women who witnessed the event, describing who they were and their relationship with Jesus (Matt. 27:55–56 and Mark 15:40–41). These accounts reveal that women, some named in the text, had accompanied Jesus from Galilee and were with him in Jerusalem.

Another interesting text is Luke 10:1: "After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go."⁵ It is possible that the disciples may have been sent in pairs of men and women, which would be a good evangelistic strategy, considering that women would have easier access to exclusively feminine environments and contexts. We also see evidence of couples working together, like Priscilla and Aquila.⁶

The Gospels all place
women in crucial
moments of the
narrative of Jesus's
life, witnessing his
crucifixion, burial,
and resurrection, and
indicate the presence of
women as disciples.

The sisters Martha and Mary demonstrated on many occasions that they were familiar with Jesus's teachings (John 11). Mary sat at Jesus's feet alongside the other disciples to learn.⁷ John also records Mary Magdalene's expression upon encountering the resurrected Lord: "Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher')" (John 20:16).⁸

Most importantly, we have the presence of women witnesses in key moments of the narrative: the crucifixion (Mark 15:40–41; c.f. Matt. 27:55–56; Luke 23:49; John 19:25–27); the burial of Jesus (Mark 15:47; c.f. Matt. 27:61; Luke 23:55–56); the resurrection (Mark 16:9–11; c.f. Matt. 28:9–10; Luke 24:10–11; John 20:14–18). In a time when women's testimony held little value,⁹ it was women who witnessed the most significant event in history.

Kenneth E. Bailey states, “The place of women in the church has rightly received significant attention from global Christianity in recent years. Essential to this analysis is the way Jesus treated women.”¹⁰ The way Jesus treated and interacted with women and other marginalized groups was countercultural; he saw women, even those no one else saw. He healed women and allowed himself to be touched by them, like the woman with a twelve-year hemorrhage who was ceremonially impure. Jesus directed his teachings toward women, which can be seen in how he told parables (see Luke 15:4–10). Additionally, Jesus frequently used examples that included both women and men as he taught (see Luke 14:26). He used everyday scenes involving women to illustrate his stories (Matt. 13:33).¹¹ All of this leads us to think that Jesus, being an excellent teacher, always aimed to include his entire audience and captivate the hearts of both women and men.

Jesus cited women as examples of faith and virtue, such as the offering of the poor widow (Mark 12:41–44). Jesus demonstrated concern for women and their vulnerabilities. When some men questioned him about divorce (Mark 10:2–9), Jesus responded by pointing to God’s creational purpose in Genesis, where women and men have equal value.¹² Jesus also cared for widows, as seen in his compassionate encounter with the widow of Nain (Luke 7:13).

Jesus demonstrated the value of women when he healed the woman on the Sabbath (Luke 13:16) and then called her a daughter of Abraham. Similarly, when he healed the woman with the issue of blood,

**Jesus, being an
excellent teacher,
always aimed to include
his entire audience and
captivate the hearts of
both women and men.**

**Jesus chose women
as heralds of the most
important announcement
of all: the resurrection.**

he called her daughter (Luke 8:48), restoring her dignity, rehabilitating her physically and socially, and asserting her kinship.¹³

Jesus had significant dialogues with women, as in John 4, where he broke protocol by speaking alone with a woman—and a Samaritan at that. Jesus never belittled her, and after their conversation,¹⁴ the woman returns to evangelize the Samaritans with great success. Additionally, we have the dialogue with the Canaanite woman who recognizes Jesus as “Lord, Son of David” (Matthew 15:22). Jesus’s initial response could have been seen as discouraging, but she perseveres, responds to Jesus with great wisdom and faith, and receives a miracle. It’s also worth mentioning the dialogue between Jesus and Martha when Lazarus is about to be resurrected (John 11). He asks her, “I am the resurrection and the life . . . do you believe this?” (John 11:25–26). In response Martha declares, “‘Yes, Lord,’ she replied, ‘I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world’” (John 11:27). This was a declaration of faith similar to Peter’s response (Matt. 16:16). All these women were able to recognize Jesus’s messiahship.

Jesus also publicly praised the actions and faith of women, such as in the case of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:28 (“Woman, you have great faith!”) and the woman who anointed his head with expensive perfume, when he said, “Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her” (Matt. 26:13). The action of this woman is remembered even to this day!

And finally, Jesus chose women as heralds of the most important announcement of all—the resurrection. It was Mary Magdalene who could declare to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord” (John 20:18).

...it was the women
who remained with
Jesus until the
end, even when the
twelve failed.

Moreover, it was the women who remained with Jesus until the end, even when the twelve failed.

But now we come to an important question: why did Jesus choose twelve male disciples? First we need to understand that twelve is a symbolic and representative number (representing the twelve tribes of Israel and twelve patriarchs).¹⁵ It's worth noting that throughout his ministry, Jesus symbolically assumed the role of Israel, which is particularly evident in the Gospel of Matthew. Therefore, if Jesus's choice of the twelve was in some way restrictive for leadership selection, then only free Jewish men could be pastors and leaders in our churches. Although Jesus did not call women to be part of the group of the twelve, there is ample evidence in the Bible indicating that women were part of his circle of disciples, playing an important role in his ministry and learning from him.

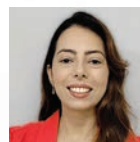
In fact, Jesus's attitude toward women laid the foundation that would guide the new community of believers in the values of the Kingdom of God. This can be observed in the early Christian communities, with the presence of women acting as leaders and serving with various spiritual gifts. Women were mentioned by Paul in several of his letters—the same Paul who declares, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

So, if you've come this far, I propose a challenge, something I did that helped me a lot. Take your Bible, gather colored pens and markers, and read the Gospels, making notes every time women are mentioned in the text. It may seem quite simple, but

this exercise will certainly help us see the details present in the narratives, fostering a more attentive perspective on the Gospels.

Recently, Pastor Rick Warren wrote an article defending women's ministry.¹⁶ A preacher who had engaged with the biblical text for many years, he altered his viewpoint not due to cultural pressure or theological liberalism but, in his own words, "What changed my mind was Scripture".¹⁷ He is just one among numerous theologians and pastors who changed their views upon recognizing these details in the biblical text. Therefore, asserting that Jesus had female disciples isn't about "feminism," "liberalism," or caving into culture; it's about taking a close look at Scripture!

Asserting that
Jesus had female
disciples isn't
about "feminism,"
"liberalism," or caving
into culture; it's about
taking a close look
at Scripture!



Cynthia Muniz Soares is a biologist and theologian specializing in New Testament theology. She is currently enrolled in a Master's program in New Testament Studies at Jonathan Edwards Theological Seminary (STJE) and has been teaching at seminaries for the past five years, with a special focus on women's work in theology and the church. She lives in São Paulo with her husband Fabio.

1. J. Lee Grady, *The Truth Sets Women Free: Answers to 25 Tough Questions* (Lake Mary: Charisma House Book Group, 2014), 119.
2. Grady, *The Truth Sets Women Free*, 124.
3. Totalling twenty-seven instances, according to Kenneth Bailey. In Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus pela ótica do Oriente Médio: Estudos culturais sobre os Evangelhos* – in English: *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* (São Paulo: Vida Nova, 2016), 191–192.
4. Dorothy A. Lee, *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament: Reclaiming the Biblical Vision for Church Leadership* (Ada: Baker, 2021), part 1, chapter 4.
5. The Bible quotations are all from the New International Version.
6. Nijay Gupta, *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2023), 66; Joan Taylor and Helen Bond, *Women Remembered: Jesus' Female Disciples* (London: Hodder, 2022), 32.
7. As stated by Witt, Mary is extolled as a model disciple of the Rabbi Jesus, a symbolic action that was subversive of the understandings of permissible roles for women at that time. In William Witt, *Icons of Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Theology for Women's Ordination* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021), chapter 6. <https://www.perlego.com/book/2088563/icons-of-christ-a-biblical-and-systematic-theology-for-womens-ordination-pdf>.
8. Rebecca McLaughlin, *Jesus Through the Eyes of Women: How the First Female Disciples Help Us Know and Love the Lord* (Bannockburn: The Gospel Coalition, 2022), 164.
9. Dorothy A. Lee affirms that any denial of the physical nature of the resurrection is a denial of the women's testimony, which is particularly striking in a context where the witness of women was given little or no credence. In Lee, *Ministry of Women*, chapter 1.
10. Bailey, *Jesus pela ótica do Oriente Médio*, 191.
11. Bailey, *Jesus pela ótica do Oriente Médio*, 196–197.
12. As Lucy Peppiatt points out, Jesus refers to the creation story in relation to marriage when he is questioned on divorce (Matthew 19:1–9). Here, though, rather than remind the Pharisees that a man can do as he pleases because he is the head of his wife, he cites Genesis 1:27b (male and female are both made in the image of God) and 2:24 (a man must leave his family and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh). Jesus's use of the creation story is specifically aimed at highlighting the responsibility of husbands and the dignity of wives and directed toward protecting women from men's capricious behavior. In Lucy Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women: Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2019), chapter 2. <https://www.perlego.com/book/983601/rediscovering-scriptures-vision-for-women-fresh-perspectives-on-disputed-texts-pdf>.
13. Lee, *Ministry of Women*, chapter 2.
14. As highlighted by Kenneth Bailey, when he asserts that Jesus treated the Samaritan woman as a serious theologian, he unveils the most crucial teaching on worship in the New Testament. In *Jesus sob a ótica do Oriente Médio*, 212.
15. Regarding this, William Witt states, "Jesus chose male apostles for the same reason he chose twelve apostles and Jewish apostles. Insofar as Jesus' followers represent the new Israel, Jesus' twelve apostles typologically represent the twelve tribes of Israel, and specifically the twelve patriarchs (sons of Jacob/Isaac) from whom the nation of Israel descended [...] The twelve had to be free Jewish males, and not slaves, women, or Gentiles, in order to fulfill the symbolic function of their typological role." In Witt, *Icons of Christ*, chapter 13.
16. Rick Warren, "Rick Warren: Why I changed my mind on women in church leadership," *Premier Christianity*, March 15, 2023, <https://www.premierchristianity.com/opinion/rick-warren-why-i-changed-my-mind-on-women-in-church-leadership/15108.article>.
17. Warren, "Rick Warren: Why I changed my mind."

Difficult Passages in the New Testament

and How to Understand Them

By Cynthia Long Westfall

Whenever the subject of the biblical equality of women and men arises, certain difficult passages in the New Testament are brought up. These have been consistently used to prevent the full partnership of women in the home, church, and society. How do we understand these passages in a way that rightly explains the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15)? My goal as a New Testament scholar has been to find coherence in my interpretation of passages, books in the Bible, and the Bible as a whole. ("How does Scripture make sense?") This is more than an academic project for me; I have been convinced that obedience to the Word of God is indispensable in order to have a life that is worth living (1 Tim. 3:16). In order to obey the Bible, it has to make sense.

Some of the classic passages that have been used to prevent the full partnership of women are in the books written by Paul: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16; Ephesians 5:22–32 (c.f. 1 Pet. 3:1–7); 1 Corinthians 14:34–35; and 1 Timothy 2:8–15.¹ Each of these has interpretative problems recognized by virtually all biblical scholars, regardless of their convictions about the role of women. This is important, because one of the first principles of interpretation is to never base a major theology or practice on a passage with an interpretive problem. This principle has not been observed when these passages have been the primary texts that have been used to prevent the full partnership of women.

Why These Texts Are Confusing

There are a number of reasons why these passages are confusing for scholars and readers alike. The traditional interpretations that most of us are familiar with and that have influenced translations have created some of the confusion. They are confusing when they do not account for the details of the text and when they contain a verse or passage that does not seem to fit





in the context. They are confusing when they do not correctly reflect the meaning of the original Greek words or grammar and when they create contradictions with other parts of Scripture.²

Sometimes traditional interpretations neglect the literary context—how the other verses in the book explain or interpret the text. Sometimes they miss the context of culture, or, when Paul is confronting or critiquing Greco-Roman culture, they assume that he is adopting or endorsing it. Sometimes the assumptions and explanations of what is going on (their story behind the text) create contradictions. One of the most important recent contributions to the interpretation of these texts are word studies that challenge the meaning of key words that traditional interpretations rely on. Finally, they miss other texts that should be considered, such as Jesus's and Paul's theology of servanthood and submission, and God's choice of the weak, foolish, and those with low status in order to shame the powerful, wise, and those with high status, as in 1 Corinthians 1:27–28. These issues lead me to find the traditional interpretations of these texts to be implausible.

To make sense of these passages, we have to look at the Greek syntax and grammar, determine the meaning of passages and words within the context of the passage, and research the context of culture and what insights it might give us.

Women in the Home

One passage that is used to subject women to men in the church and home is Ephesians 5:22–32, used to subject wives to husbands. This passage presents submission as a Christ-like attribute that is meant to characterize all of God's people (c.f. Phil. 2:1–11), and women are used as models for this Christ-like attribute.

Ephesians 5:(18) 22–32

Ephesians 5:22–32 has been understood in traditional interpretations to explicitly teach the unilateral submission of wives to husbands. The verses are clearly concerned with how husbands and wives relate to each other, but is unilateral submission the point of the passage? The reason I include v. 18 in parentheses above is because that is where the passage actually starts in the original Greek, which makes a big difference! We will see that submission does not mean unilateral subjugation, but mutual submission. And again, “head” does not mean authority, but refers to the husband as

Women are a model for mutual submission that is associated with all believers who are filled by the Spirit.

“source of life” of the wife in the creation account, which Paul exegetes literally as a head-body relationship.

The big news is the issue with the grammar: **Ephesians 5:18–24 is one sentence.** It starts in 5:18 with the general command “Be filled with the Spirit,” followed by participles in vv. 19–21 that are either the means of being filled with the Spirit or the result: psalming, singing, making melody, giving thanks, and submitting to one another. In v. 22, the sentence continues with “wives to husbands.” There is not a participle or a command for wives to submit, so the submission of the wife must be understood as the same action as the mutual submission referred to in v. 21. This can indicate that the cultural expectation of the submission of wives is now a model to all believers of how to mutually submit, in the same way children are models of faith. This is consistent with other pairs of unequal relationships in Jesus’s teaching and Paul’s letters—God chooses the weak, the foolish, and those with low status as models of faith and Christ-like behavior.

Given that vv. 18–24 forms one sentence, the grammar does not support a break with a new section in v. 22 called “Wives and Marriage,” which we see in most translations influenced by traditional interpretation. These begin and end the section they have created with emphatic commands to wives to be subject to their husbands, making wives’ subjection the point of the passage. In the Greek, wives are never given a single command; all the commands in the passage are given to the husbands with particular emphasis in v. 32 on loving their wives in order that (*hina*) the wives may respect their husbands.

Rather than unilateral subordination of wives to husbands, the passage is about mutual submission that is reciprocal between a husband and wife. As a model of submission, the wife submits to her husband as her head who is the source of her life, which is what is expected of her in the culture. If the husband is his wife’s head, then she is his body. The husband is therefore commanded to treat his wife like she is his

(male) body, which reverses their roles: he is to nourish and nurture her, which is a stereotypical description of women’s work, and is reinforced by Paul’s description of similar types of actions done by Christ on behalf of his bride, the church. The Greco-Roman household codes are addressed, altered, and subverted in a way that maintains the cultural demand of the submission of wives, but places the focus on the husband’s equally submissive love and care for his wife.

The main point for us is that women are a model for mutual submission that is associated with all believers who are filled by the Spirit. The husband is to treat his wife the way that he wants to be treated, which is with reciprocal care.

Women in Ministry

Although the teachings on spiritual gifts would indicate both that a person’s gifts determine one’s function in the church and that every person is obligated to exercise his or her gift(s), one of the passages used to restrict women’s full participation within the church is 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, which has traditionally been taken to prevent women from speaking in church.

1 Corinthians 14:34–35

The traditional understanding of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is confusing because (1) it seems out of context at the end of Paul’s teaching on spiritual gifts and (2) ordering women to be silent in the church contradicts what has just been said in the previous four chapters. Most scholars and churches do not understand this as absolute silence; typically women have not been forbidden to sing, but there is no biblical basis for where they draw the line. The implementation of the traditional interpretation has fostered an approach that is both legalistic and arbitrary in application. There is also a “text critical issue”: the earliest texts mark this passage as having textual variants—that is, it was omitted or in a different place in some manuscripts—indicating that the early readers also found these verses confusing. Gordon Fee and Philip Payne argue that the evidence indicates this passage should be omitted from the Bible, but we will attempt to interpret the text as it stands.

The context of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 constrains the meaning of the command for women to be silent in the churches. In 11:5, women pray and prophesy in the church; in 1 Corinthians 12, women have gifts given

by the Spirit for the benefit of the church, and most of them require speaking. In 14:27–33, right before these verses, those with the gifts of prophecy and tongues are told to be silent while others speak, because talking over each other creates disorder. The content in v. 35 clarifies that women are being told not to talk while others are speaking, and instead ask their questions at home. Women would have been disruptive with questions because in the first century they typically had less education and were not socialized in group learning. Asking questions is neither the exercise of a spiritual gift nor a ministry.

The main point for us is that this command in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 does not negate the functions that the previous text distributed by the Holy Spirit to all believers, nor does it prohibit women from leading in prayer; it addresses women who are attempting to talk or ask questions at the same time that others are exercising their spiritual gifts, praying, and ministering in other ways.

Conclusion

The traditional interpretations of these passages were not reached through the process of exegesis that attempts to understand texts in their linguistic, cultural, and literary contexts. As a result, people who argue for these traditional interpretations are locked into more of an apologetic approach, where they assume they are correct and marshal flawed arguments to defend them.

Our challenge in handling these passages is to examine Scripture, be consistent in interpretation, and rightly explain the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

1. Due to space, we will only examine two passages here. To read the analysis of 1 Corinthians 11:2–16, 1 Peter 3:1–7, and 1 Timothy 2:8–15, please see this article in digital format on CBE's website, cbeinternational.org.
2. For example, Paul instructs women on how to dress when praying and prophesying in the church service (1 Cor. 11:5), but has been interpreted as commanding women not to speak in church three chapters later (1 Cor. 14:34–35).



Cynthia Long Westfall, PhD is assistant professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. She is the author of *Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship Between Form and Meaning* (T. & T. Clark, 2006) and *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Baker Academic, 2016). She has done urban mission work in Denver and Toronto and is also a 2017 recipient of CBE's Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Our challenge
in handling
these passages
is to examine
Scripture, be
consistent in
interpretation,
and rightly
explain the
Word of Truth
(2 Tim. 2:15).**

The Empowerment of Brazilian Christian Women Through Biblical Examples



By
Viktorya
Zalewski
Baracy



The world of Brazilian women is highly diverse and faces certain challenges depending on their social and geographic contexts. When we talk about Brazilian evangelical women, we include a wide range of contexts: women from urban and rural areas, river and quilombola¹ communities, women from high and low social classes, housewives, entrepreneurs, domestic workers, university students, black, mixed-race, indigenous, white, and Asian women. However, in terms of predominance, when we analyze these demographics, we find that black women form the majority among evangelicals in Brazil, giving the Brazilian church a "black, female, Pentecostal face."² Another study indicates that nearly half of Brazilian homes are led by women.³

Nearly half of Brazilian homes are led by women.



that women make every effort not to work outside the home: "Staying at home and organizing a clean and well-managed household is the most biblical emphasis of the ministry God has given to a wife," and "the occupation of a wife should be defined as maintaining an orderly and clean home and being organized in relation to grocery shopping and meals."⁴ In some cases, if the husband dies, the author's first recommendation is for the church to support the woman so that she can continue to stay at home with the children. Does this recommendation fit the reality of the Brazilian context described above?

Brazilian evangelical writer Jacira Monteiro, in her book *Estigma da Cor* (*The Stigma of Color*), goes into detail about this disconnect: "[...] black women have always had to work. During slavery, while white women could stay inside their homes, taking care of their children (with the help of black nannies), black

Specific characters and texts have played a crucial role in inspiring and instructing evangelical women.

women had to work in agriculture. After the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888, women had to work in the city—in any job they could find—to help support the household."⁵ Monteiro criticizes the emphasis of so-called biblical womanhood that restricts women to the home and marriage. This theology of biblical womanhood portrays women who work outside the home as less biblical, even though many women have never had the option to not work. She sees the "culture of rich, mostly white women" communicated through books and Christian media as an "elitist femininity, imported from the United States." Monteiro concludes: "Women can indeed study, work, and contribute their gifts to the flourishing of society."⁶

While conservative Christian literature imported from other countries may seek to remove women from the public sphere, the reality of evangelical practice in Brazil shows something different. Brazilian anthropologist Juliano Spyer, who spent eighteen months in a low-income neighborhood in Salvador, Brazil, for his doctoral field research, observed that the adoption of evangelical Christianity in impoverished areas empowers women: "... the adoption of evangelical Christianity generally expands the sphere of action for women beyond domestic life and child-rearing responsibilities to also include formal work and participation in public spaces. Formal work offers the kind of financial security that traditionally depended on the presence of a partner."⁷

Although the literature that reaches Brazil may not always provide realistic or healthy support for women in their daily lives, women continue to find guidance and great role models in the most read book in Brazil and the world—the Bible. Specific characters and texts have played a crucial role in inspiring and instructing evangelical women. I believe that we

should continue to emphasize the diverse characters and texts to remind women of the different roles they can find in the divine history of Scripture. We need *fewer* books on “biblical” womanhood and *more Bible*.

Entrepreneurial Women in the Bible

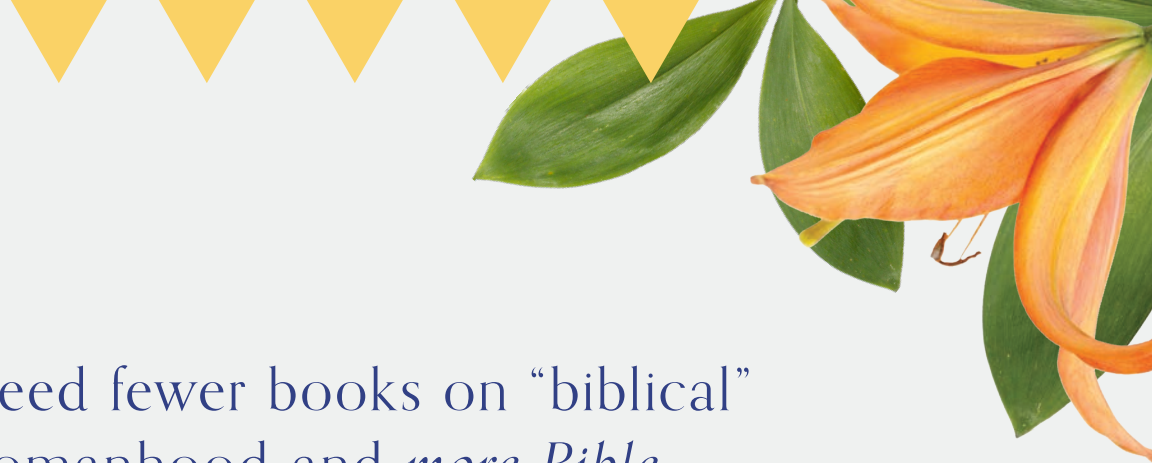
Around half of Brazilian “micro-entrepreneurs” or small business-owners are women.⁸ The majority of these women become entrepreneurs out of necessity,⁹ with 87 percent¹⁰ of them motivated to seek financial independence in order to have more time to spend with their children and family. This desire to manage businesses arises from their aspiration to break the long-standing paradigm between home and employment. These women are not alone, and their experiences are reflected in the Bible.

Consider Lydia, popularly known as the first convert in Europe.¹¹ The Bible describes her as a seller of purple cloth (Acts 16:14). After her conversion, she invited Paul and his travel companions to stay at her house. Researchers debate her social status, and many believe that Lydia was a freedwoman (former slave). Craig Keener suggests that Lydia was not an artisan but a merchant, and that purple dyes or dyed fabrics could have been shipped to sell in Philippi for her business. She was likely part of an upwardly mobile urban class.¹² Regardless, Lydia’s occupation allowed her to have a house large enough

to accommodate Paul’s group. Purple was a luxury item, obtained either from crushed mollusks or from the madder plant. It is possible that Lydia was a freed slave who worked as a representative for her former owners.¹³ In Brazil, where names inspired by biblical characters are extremely common, more than 88,000 women have been named Lydia since before the 1930s.¹⁴

Priscilla, alongside her husband Aquila, is another significant entrepreneur. Luke explains that Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila “had the same occupation” and were “tentmakers” (Acts 18:3). Keener suggests that the term “tentmaker” may be more encompassing, involving work with leather in general. It was not uncommon for women to be artisans, and many worked in small shops with their husbands.¹⁵ James Dunn believes that Priscilla and Aquila’s family enterprise provided them with great opportunities to travel and use their residences (in different places) as meeting places for Christians. Verses like Romans 16:3–5 and 1 Corinthians 16:19 indicate that the couple had churches in their homes, in Ephesus (Acts 18:18–28), and later in Rome (Romans 16:3–5), where they were likely the leaders. Therefore, their entrepreneurial venture directly contributed to missionary work. In Brazil, more than 220,000 women have been named Priscilla since 1930.¹⁶ Just like Lydia, Priscilla from Scripture may have influenced the use of her name.

We should continue to emphasize the diverse characters and texts to remind women of the different roles they can find in the divine history of Scripture.



We need fewer books on “biblical” womanhood and *more Bible*.

The woman of valor (often translated in Portuguese as “virtuous woman”) described in Proverbs 31 has been consistently held as a standard of biblical womanhood in various Brazilian churches that women should strive to achieve despite Tremper Longman III’s warning, “The description is an ideal and should not be used as a standard by which to measure and critique women.”¹⁷ The idea is precisely that: “A woman of valor, who can find her?” (Prov. 31:10). No one can because she does not exist. The book of Proverbs, originally addressed to young men, places the woman of valor in contrast with the “strange woman” to be avoided.

Longman explains that much of this passage is devoted to the woman’s business abilities. She is an artisan (v. 13, 22), “like the merchant ships” (v. 14). She “considers a field and buys it; with her earnings, she plants a vineyard” (Prov. 31:16). It is interesting how the entrepreneurial ability of the woman of valor is highly praised in this passage, serving as an inspiration for many Brazilian women who depend on their ventures and creative strength to survive.

Women Musicians

Praise is an essential field of religious involvement for women in Brazil. When I was part of a Pentecostal church, my greatest aspiration was to be a worship leader. Many of the women I aspired to be like were involved in gospel music. In fact, the influence of music is so significant that among the top ten Brazilian Christians with the most followers on Instagram, there are only two women—the pastors and singers Cassiane and Ana Paula Valadao.¹⁸ In these spaces, women found a place where they can teach and preach through their music ministries. According to Elsen Portugal, music ministries encompass “primarily verbal actions, performed to exhort or reprimand the congregation, explain the reason for using a specific

song, lead the congregation into the presence of God (and thus into ‘true’ worship), or even to make the Spirit of God fall upon the congregation in power.”¹⁹

Many women have a role of spiritual leadership in Brazilian Pentecostal churches, where the worship is understood as one of the primary means of “bringing the presence of God” to the worship service. In these spaces, women are seen almost as prophetesses.

These women are not alone. In the Bible, another important leader was Miriam, the prophet and sister of Moses. The prophets were considered spokespersons for God, acting as intermediaries. Miriam was also involved in music. The Bible describes: “Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron’s sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing” (Ex. 15:20). In Micah, she is mentioned alongside her brothers as those sent by God to lead their people in the desert: “I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam” (Micah 6:4). In Brazil, more than 70,000 women have been named Miriam, and more than 12,000 women have been named Miria, most likely as a direct reference to this Miriam.

Another significant character is Deborah, a judge and prophetess who led the people during a difficult time. Although she does not play instruments, her song with Barak takes up an entire chapter in the Bible: “Awake, Deborah, awake! Awake, awake, break out in song!” (Jdg 5:12). In Brazil, more than 313,000 women have been named Deborah.

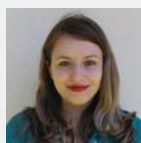
Other Women

There is not enough space here to talk about other inspiring women, some of whom lived in extremely



difficult times, like Anna (Luke 2:36–38), Mary (Matt. 1:18–25), Ruth (Ruth 1:4), and Shiphrah and Puah (Ex. 1:15). Others held public leadership positions, such as the wise woman from the city of Abel-Beth-Maacah (2 Sam. 20:16).

The diversity of women in the Bible, who were mothers, queens, traders, wise women, and midwives, reminds us how God can use us, Brazilian women and women everywhere, with our different gifts and even in the most challenging circumstances—not because of who we are, but because he is a wonderful and kind God who created us for his praise and takes care of the needy. May we always turn to the Bible for references of what it means to be a biblical woman, whatever our context.



Viktorya Zalewski Baracy is a professor, Master of Linguistics and Literature (UFPR), and licensed in Linguistics and Literature: Portuguese/German. She lives in São Bento do Sul (Santa Catarina, Brazil), and is currently studying theology at the Lutheran College of Theology along with her husband, Nicksson. She has worked to bring Christian egalitarian research to the forefront in Brazil.

The diversity of
women in the Bible,
who were mothers,
queens, traders,
wise women, and
midwives, reminds
us how God can
use us.

1. A *quilombola* is an Afro-Brazilian resident of communities established by escaped slaves in Brazil. They are the descendants of slaves who escaped from slave plantations that existed in Brazil until abolition in 1888.
2. “Mulheres negras são maioria entre evangélicos, aponta Datafolha,” Instituto Humanitas Unisinos, 14 January, 2020, <https://ihu.unisinos.br/categorias/595566-mulheres-negras-sao-maioria-entre-evangelicos-aponta-datafolha-2>.
3. Ana Vaz, Clarissa Batistela, “Pesquisa revela que 48,7% das famílias são chefiadas por mulheres: ‘Mãe empreendedora’, diz moradora de SC”. G1 Santa Catarina, 23 January 2022.
4. Martha Peace, *Esposa Excelente: Uma Perspectiva Bíblica* (São Paulo, SP: Editora Fiel), 100-102.
5. Jacira Monteiro, *O Estigma da Cor: Como o Racismo Fere os Dois Grandes Mandamentos de Cristo* (São Paulo: Quitanda, 2021), 74.
6. Monteiro, 86.
7. Juliano Spyer, *Povo de Deus: Quem São os Evangélicos e Por Que Eles Importam* (São Paulo, SP: Geração Editorial, 2020), 133.
8. “Mulheres são 46,7% dos MEIs do Brasil, segundo pesquisa do Sebrae,” Portal Norte, 09 December 2022, <https://portalnorte.com.br/noticia-mulheres-meis-brasil-pesquisa-sebrae/>.
9. Vinícius Botelho, “Empreendedorismo por necessidade dificulta crescimento de negócios liderados por mulheres.” *Jornal da USP*, 28 April 2022, <https://jornal.usp.br/atualidades/empreendedorismo-por-necessidade-dificulta-crescimento-de-negocios-liderados-por-mulheres/>.
10. Cecília Soter, “Mães são maioria entre as mulheres empreendedoras no Brasil.” *Estudo da Rede Mulher Empreendedora (RME), Correio Braziliense*, 12 May 2023, <https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/euestudante/trabalho-e-formacao/2023/05/5093556-maes-sao-maioria-entre-as-mulheres-empreendedoras-no-brasil.html>.
11. Larry Richards, Sue Richards, Angie Peters, *Every Woman in the Bible*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. 1999), 203.
12. Craig Keener, “Excursus: Acts and First Person Usage in some Ancient Historians, 3.V.4,” *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. 3, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).
13. Craig Keener, *Comentário Histórico-Cultural da Bíblia: Novo Testamento*, (São Paulo, SP: Vida Nova, 2020), 441.
14. All data on names throughout this article derive from the research performed by IBGE, beginning in 1930: <https://www.ibge.gov.br/censo2010/apps/nomes/#/search>.
15. Keener, *Comentário Histórico-Cultural da Bíblia: Novo Testamento*, 452.
16. <https://www.ibge.gov.br/censo2010/apps/nomes/#/search>.
17. Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs: Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 516.
18. It is important to note that although they are pastors, they are not egalitarian. In this instance, the pastorship is understood as something pertaining to the couple (each of their husbands are also pastors). Ana Paula Valadão in particular is outspoken about her constant unidirectional submission to her husband.
19. E. Portugal, “O Louvor Musical: O Novo Sacramento?” *Revista Batista Pioneira*. 7, no. 2 (2018): 299.



Tell Her Story: Women in Scripture and History

July 26–28, 2024 | Denver, Colorado



A donor advised fund (DAF) is like a charitable investment account for the purpose of supporting charitable organizations.

- **Easier to manage** because you donate cash, stocks, real estate, or appreciated assets into a single account as often as you like.
- **Immediate tax deductions** are received at the time you donate to your DAF.
- **Avoid capital gain tax** on contributions of long-term appreciated assets.
- **When you decide**, advise how and when you wish your gifts to be distributed.

If you have a DAF, please consider including CBE in your distributions so we can spread the message that God calls women and men to share authority equally.



Scan to
learn more.

Through CBE's partnership with the Barnabas Foundation, you have access to free estate planning services and their DAF fund. Call the Barnabas Foundation directly at 888-448-3040 or email them at planning@BarnabasFoundation.com

Finding Our Identity in the *Imago Dei*

What the Image of God Tells Us
about Who We Are

By Kathy Myatt

“What does it mean to be a woman?” I asked my friend Beth. Astonished by the question, she pointed to herself and said, “It means to be me—I am a woman!” Evidently it had never crossed her mind to doubt her femininity or her essential identity. To her, being female was not a role, a look, or a style. It was not a set of confining attributes. It was a joyful freedom. I was envious of her.

The question of identity has become a hot social and political issue. New terms and definitions have muddled the already-murky water as the debate over women and men’s roles and identities continues to reverberate throughout the church. One common accusation is that going against traditional roles for women and men constitutes a violation of sound biblical teaching, which will lead to the denial of biblical authority, followed by a rapid descent into theological liberalism. But are gender-based roles biblical? Do they define what a woman or man *is*? If a

woman does not fit within a particular role, is she less of a woman? A look at the original *imago dei*, or the image of God, may make things clearer.

First, how can we approach the Bible with integrity and “handle accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15)? We know the Bible is an ancient book, written and compiled over 1500 years in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) by multiple authors. The miracle is that it hangs together in a unity of thought that is supernaturally inspired by God. The challenge is that many of us are not conversant with these ancient languages, nor are we aware of the cultural norms surrounding God’s interactions with the Jewish nation thousands of years ago. Many of us may also not understand the influence of Gnostic thought as it began to pervade the church and infect those who assembled the books of the Bible, numbered its verses, and eventually translated it into modern English.



As missionaries in Brazil, my husband and I have noticed differences in the way certain verses have been translated into Portuguese compared to their translation into English. One example is the simple switch from Jesus being described as the “Word of God” in English translations, to being called the “Verb of God” in Portuguese translations. It gives a different slant, doesn’t it? When the term “inerrancy” is used for the final authority of Scripture, it refers to the original texts and the way those who heard its teachings would have understood them *in their time*. It does not refer to translations or modern cultural norms which are often superimposed on them. In order to respect inerrancy, we must be meticulous in our study of the Word as it was written and not look to use it to support an opinion we already hold or prefer.

With that in mind, let us answer the question: where do we derive our identity? The short answer: from

God. In the beginning God created us, male and female he created us in his own image, “in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). We are being described as having been made “in” God’s image; here we find the preposition “b” in Hebrew, which is translated to “with regard to, or as” in English, describing the capacity in which one *behaves*.¹

Further, “Then the Lord God said, “it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper corresponding to him” (Gen. 2:18). The word “helper” here is “*ezer kenegdo*” in Hebrew; *ezer* refers to someone who brings aid that the recipient badly needs but is unable to provide for himself. This can be military aid, or someone with superior knowledge or ability, as in God’s aid to Israel.² Of the twenty-one times that the word appears in the Old Testament, it is used sixteen times to refer to God himself.³ It

does not describe someone of subordinate or inferior status. The notion that women were created to assist men with their agendas, or their exclusive callings, is to misunderstand what is being said here. God directed the man and woman to rule over creation and to be fruitful and multiply, and the man could not accomplish these tasks without the woman equally contributing.

Psalm 118:7 ties it all together: “The Lord is on my side as my helper.” We are to view ourselves (female and male) powerfully as God’s image, representing him to creation and to one another. We are not God, but we act as he directs in the world, to exercise rule, to emulate his character, to be his ambassador, as sons and daughters of God, the image of family.

Our worth and dignity come from this identity and cannot be lost. This is true of all of humanity, not just Christians. As a psychiatric nurse practitioner, this truth helps me to see my patients through God’s eyes. When they believe they have no value, I ask them to trust my perception until it can become their own. When Christians fall for the lie that they have no value, not only have they lost sight of their creation, but they are also—without realizing it—disbelieving the fullness of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. Even in the early church, there were arguments about what men needed to do to be considered “true believers,” including things like circumcision. Yet what did Paul say? “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith

We are to view
ourselves (male and
female) powerfully
as God’s image,
representing him
to creation and to
one another.

working through love” (Gal. 5:6). **There is nothing we can add to his work, and nothing we can take away from it. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph. 1:13–14).**

God has gifted believers to build up his body, the church (Rom. 12:4–9; 1 Cor. 14:12). As one body, we have many members, and each member receives gifts and may have different callings. There is no mention of women being limited to certain functions within the Bible. In fact, both the Old Testament and the New highlight women in leadership as prophets, judges, teachers, and evangelists (Jdg. 4:4, 2 Kings 22:14, Lk. 2:38, Acts 2:17–18, Acts 21:9). They prayed publicly, led worship (Ex. 15:21), ministered to the poor (Pr. 31:20), financed Jesus’s ministry (Lk. 8:3), and were the first witnesses to the resurrection (Matt. 28:1–10, Lk. 24:8–10). Proverbs 31 describes a woman of valor as owning her own businesses (v. 18, 24), caring for her household (v. 15, 21), making independent financial decisions (v. 16), and being a source of wisdom and strength to her husband and community (v. 20, 26, 28). She is hardly the caricature of women as emotionally unstable, weak, and in need of male guidance to function.

It’s often asserted that women and men are spiritually equal before God, but that we are given different roles—men for leadership and women for submission. Does the Bible prescribe roles for women or men? Quite the opposite; Galatians 3:28 does away with culturally imposed roles for slaves and free, male and female, Jews and Greeks because, as Paul states “you are all one in Christ Jesus.” What the Bible does teach, and Jesus reiterates, is that believers are to love one another, to serve one another, to submit to one another, to put one another’s interests higher than their own (Lev. 19:18, Jn. 13:34, Rom. 12:10, Rom. 12:13, Eph. 5:21, Phil. 2:4). Husbands are to love their wives sacrificially and tenderly; wives are to walk in sync with their husbands in mutual respect and care. There is to be no power struggle or hierarchy. Notice: “but Jesus called them to him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you.’” (Matt. 20:25–26a). For one person to demand that another “submit” is a Gentile move, an abuse of power. Submission is a freely offered gift, one that is not limited to women or men.

If not roles, then is there some kind of image we are to conform to in order to be properly masculine or feminine? While this question involves many historic and cultural issues as believers sought to grow in grace, there are no universal mandates. Why? These

For one person to demand that another “submit” is a Gentile move, an abuse of power. Submission is a freely offered gift, one that is not limited to women or men.

would be equivalent to establishing another law: “You must be like this in order to be acceptable.” Paul was outraged at the Galatians for re-establishing rules to conform to rather than remaining entirely in grace. Our worth and identity do not come from so-called biblical manhood or womanhood. They come from our creation in the image of God, and Jesus’s completed work on the cross. Paul exhorts the Galatians, “it was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).

“Do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.” Do not allow yourself to be put into a straitjacket that does not come from God or how you must behave as a woman or man. There is plenty we are to do as the image of God in the world and in our quest for sanctification. We are to grow in faith, love, and hope. We are never to hold up a standard to try to measure ourselves by that which comes from man-made rules — especially culturally based, transitory ones, at that. Are you masculine enough? Feminine enough? What is this “enough” but a works-based criteria for acceptability? Is this not a new kind of law?

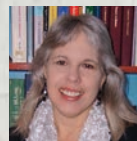
If there are no gender-based roles or defined behaviors for women and men, does that mean that women and men are the same or interchangeable, that gender doesn’t matter? No. Remember that the *Imago Dei* is active, having to do with our behavior in the world, in relation to each other, and toward God. The fact that we are created female and male in God’s triune image enables us to enjoy the unity as well as the diversity of his being. Neither aspect is more ultimate than the other, just as there is no hierarchy in the Trinity. Rather than looking to build our identities on gender-based rules or roles, we must turn back to the *Imago Dei* and to Christ’s work on the cross.

How can we live in the joyful freedom of our individuality as women and men created in the image of God? By pursuing integrity and recognizing our value which was set before us at creation. Seeing ourselves and each other as God does means we are

no longer bound to gender-based cultural rules. We are able to grow in love, work to promote the growth and well-being of others, whether that be a child, a friend, a partner, female or male in accordance with our gifts and callings. We are to represent God’s nature to one another, and to the world. That is what we were made for, and the foundation of our identities.

Our worth and identity do not come from so-called biblical manhood or womanhood. They come from our creation in the image of God and Jesus’s completed work on the cross.

1. Carmen Imes, *Being God’s Image* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2023), 4.
2. Imes, 40.
3. Alice Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 39.



Kathy Myatt is a psychiatric nurse practitioner with an emphasis on family and child development. A graduate of the University of Colorado with post-graduate studies at Vanderbilt University, she has taught courses on counseling and working with children. She is currently a psychiatric nurse practitioner at a mental health clinic. She lives in Colorado with her husband, Alan.

Setting the Record Straight: Roundtable Q and A

As we seek to "set the record straight" and grow in our understanding of the biblical equality of women and men, it is helpful to think through questions and clear up misunderstandings about what Scripture teaches. A selection of questions from the conference roundtable session has been adapted here, with answers from some of our conference speakers.

Have women been involved in church leadership throughout history, or is this a recent movement resulting from secular feminism and an example of the church trying to fit the culture?

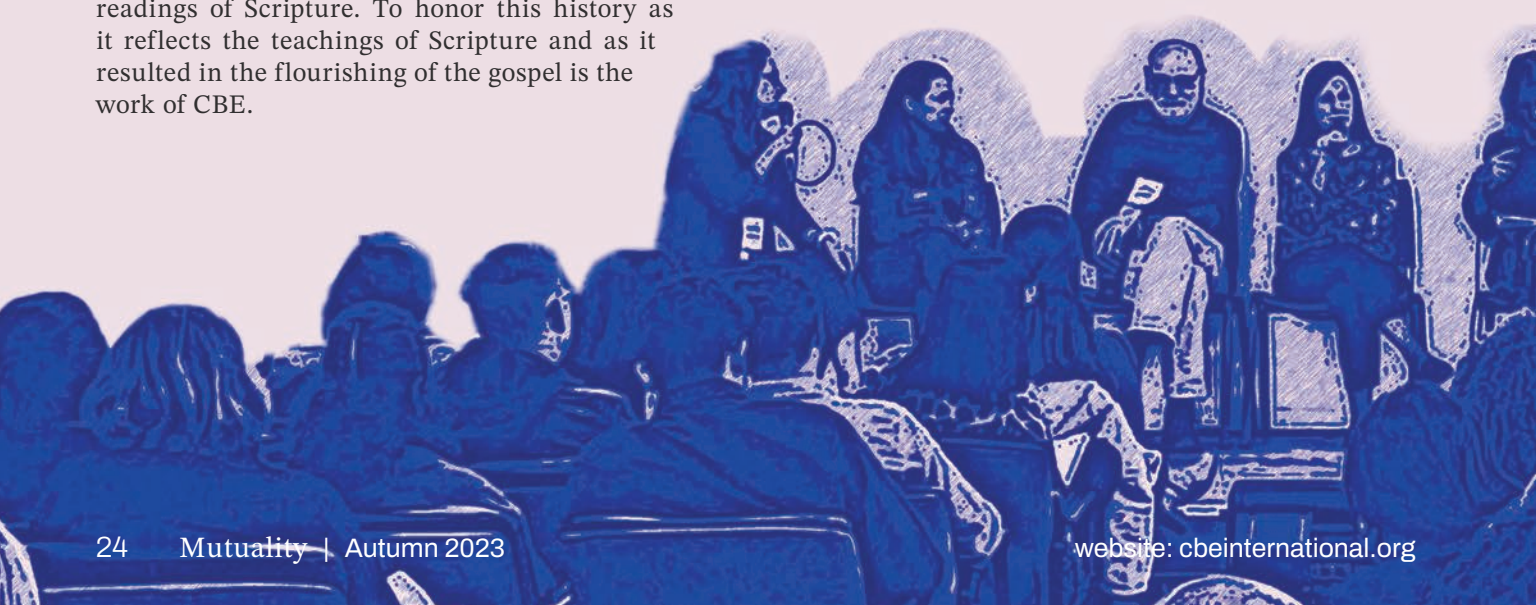
Mimi Haddad: Throughout Scripture and church history, the most unexpected people demonstrate the most extraordinary leadership. You can never look at a person and determine how God might use them, because God's Spirit gifts Christians not according to gender, race, ethnicity, or social class, but according to his pleasure. For this reason, individuals may receive a gift and calling that proves very challenging because of gender, race, ethnicity, and social class bias. Yet there is a responsibility to use our gifts despite the challenges. And Scripture teaches we're to "fan into flame God's gifts to us" (2 Tim. 1:6).

Throughout biblical and church history women have navigated a sinful, patriarchal world by using their gifts for God's glory. We find women leaders fanning their gifts into flame in the early church, like Apollonia of Alexandria (martyred in 249), who served as a deacon in the church in Alexandria; Catherine of Siena in the Middle Ages; Anne Askew, who was a leader in the English Reformation; Catherine Booth, who cofounded the Salvation Army with her husband William; and countless others. Women's leadership throughout history challenges patriarchal assumptions based on distorted and shallow readings of Scripture. To honor this history as it reflects the teachings of Scripture and as it resulted in the flourishing of the gospel is the work of CBE.

Do egalitarians deny gender differences?

Cynthia Muniz Soares: No. Egalitarians do not deny the differences between women and men; we believe that women and men were created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–27) and were equally commissioned by God to exercise authority and stewardship over creation. We recognize there are differences between women and men, but these differences do not constitute any form of hierarchy. Both women and men are free to exercise their gifts in the home, ministry, or society, regardless of gender, race, or social class.

When we look at Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments, we see women acting in various leadership roles. The example of Deborah is crucial in illustrating not only a woman in a leadership position (as a judge, prophet, and spiritual leader—a mother to Israel) but also showing that women and men can work together in shared leadership. In the early church, women are described in various leadership roles (consider the list of Paul's co-workers in Romans 16), and we have found historical evidence of women in leadership in churches during the early centuries.



Will allowing women to take on leadership roles (traditionally male roles) eventually lead to liberalism and the acceptance of gay marriage?

Mimi Haddad: The belief that churches or denominations that support women's leadership eventually find themselves on the slippery slope in support of gay marriage is not true of either prominent, established churches and those that are also growing the fastest worldwide. Consider the example of denominations like the Nazarene Church, the Assemblies of God churches, Pentecostals, and Foursquare churches where women have been preaching for more than one hundred years. Add to their numbers Baptist and Pentecostal churches throughout Africa and the Global South. They're the fastest growing churches in the world, and they support women preachers, but not gay marriage.

Cynthia Muniz Soares: On the contrary, biblical egalitarianism—which regards the Bible as inspired by God and the ultimate authority for all Christians—promotes a return to Scripture and the purpose God has for women and men in the Kingdom of God, as stated in Galatians 3:28. This is the opposite of liberalism.

It seems like complementarians derive their position from a plain reading of the Bible passages, whereas egalitarians must dig into the Greek to make their interpretations work. Isn't the simple reading the most accurate? Do egalitarians not believe in the authority of Scripture?

Alan Myatt: Egalitarians are motivated by our belief in the authority of the Bible. The “plain meaning” of a passage for us today might be different from the plain meaning for people 2,000 years ago. We dig into biblical languages because what counts is the plain meaning to the original audience. Many today think that the plain meaning of “helper” in Genesis 2:18 is that God created woman as an assistant who would take orders from Adam, much like a nurse would be a surgeon's helper in the operating room. But the ancient Hebrews would have seen the plain meaning as practically the opposite. In the Hebrew Bible the word for “helper” used here describes a person rescuing someone who is in need. Frequently it describes God as the helper saving his people.

Other passages where the “plain meaning” seems to support female subordination are similar. Digging into the original text shows that the actual plain meaning undermines human hierarchies. Instead, it plants the seeds of radical equality in the Kingdom of God.

In 1 Corinthians 11:7, what does it mean that “a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.” Does this mean women were not made in the image of God?

Cynthia Long Westfall: If Paul was saying that women were not made in the image of God, he would be flatly contradicting Scripture (Gen. 1:27; 5:1–3). Rather, Eve had multiple identities: she was both made in the image of God and in the image of Adam because she was created from him (Gen. 2:22–23). Therefore, woman is the glory of man who is the glory of God. In other words, she is the glory of the glory. This does not indicate inferiority or subordination, but rather a greater glory, and refers to the power of the beauty and attraction of women (cf. 1 Esdras 4:17). Women's use of head coverings was practiced because a woman's hair was considered to be a primary part of her sexual attraction (as Paul indicates in 1 Cor. 11:15) and an uncovered head in



public was viewed as seductive or even a solicitation. On the other hand, the practice of a man covering his head during prayer had a different meaning that was linked to Gentile pagan cultic rituals (Jewish men began to wear yarmulkes later), so men are prohibited from covering their heads. Paul explains that a man praying and prophesying with an uncovered head allows the glory of God to be appropriately reflected in his appearance but disapproves of the practice of men attracting and seducing by wearing their hair long (1 Cor. 11:14).

When Paul describes elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3, he says that they are to each have one wife; doesn't that exclude women from being elders and deacons?

Cynthia Muniz Soares: When dealing with texts like this, it is very important to consider cultural and grammatical aspects that provide us with the context for understanding the passage. The description presented by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 reflects the common pattern of household leadership in both the Jewish and Greco-Roman world, where householders are managers, and where children, slaves, and employees are subject to them. As churches met in homes, men who were wealthy householders would be the natural leadership. In fact, while the most common scenario is that men were householders, women could also be householders, as exemplified by Lydia and Nympha.

Another important point is that Paul uses a gender neutral pronoun at the beginning of the text (*tis*) which can be translated as “whoever” or “anyone,” suggesting it is not necessarily limited to men. Additionally, when Paul says that the elder should be the husband of one wife, the idea is far more likely that men should be monogamous and faithful in marriage. If this condition were restrictive, no unmarried man or even widower could serve as an elder, including Paul himself. It is worth noting that the list of qualifications is very similar to those required of women, for example, 1 Timothy 3:11 for women deacons and 1 Timothy 5 for widows.

As William Witt aptly points out in his book *Icons of Christ*, “the qualifications for church office in the Pastoral Epistles are moral qualifications, not job descriptions, and not gender qualifications.”¹

Women who held leadership roles in the Old Testament are often cited as examples when discussing women's authority in church—but as

the New Testament presents a new paradigm with a unique structure and rules specific to pastors and elders, do these examples apply?

Cynthia Long Westfall: The new paradigm in the New Testament moves away from leadership based on privilege, lineage, and cultural notions about hierarchy to being called, gifted, and led by the Spirit who has been poured out on women and men. A New Testament leader is qualified by taking the role of a slave, and a nursing mother is Paul's model for apostleship. Women and men are priests. Women and men are given spiritual gifts (such as prophet, pastor-teacher, administrator, etc.) that are determined by the Spirit, not gender. Power, authority, and hierarchy characterized the Gentile authority structure, but the New Testament paradigm is cruciform self-sacrificing service that builds others up, and that is why Paul can maintain that it is a good thing for anyone to aspire to be an overseer (1 Tim. 3:1). Women are often trained to take the role of a servant or slave and put themselves last (Matt. 20:25), and women are stereotypical models for mutual submission that regards and treats others as more important than themselves in humility (Phil. 2:3). The fact that we find women with social, political, and cultic authority within the Old Testament authority structure should lead us to expect an increase in women's service and ministry in the New Testament paradigm of grace and freedom.

When referencing examples of women in leadership, people often cite Deborah, but in Judges 4 it seems that she only accepted leadership because Barak would not follow God's call. Can women be leaders only when men are disobeying the Lord?

Viktorya Zalewski Baracy: Deborah is a prophet and judge long before Barak enters the scene, and she is the one who summons Barak (Jdg. 4:4). In the song of Deborah and Barak in Judges 5, we read an invocation for both: “Awake, Deborah! Awake! [...] Rise up, Barak!” (Jdg. 5:12). Barak's military action does not exclude Deborah's prophetic leadership. God could have called Barak directly, but he chose Deborah as the judge over the people. As Payne and Huffaker comment, “Deborah was the leader of Israel because God chose her to lead Israel, not because God tried to get a male leader but failed and had to settle for a woman.”²

1. William Witt, *Icons of Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Theology for Women's Ordination*. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020).
2. Philip B. Payne and Vince Huffaker. *Why Can't Women Do That? Breaking Down the Reasons Churches put Men in Charge*. (Boulder, CO: Vinati Press, 2021), 62–63.

Meet the 2023 Alvera Mickelsen Memorial Scholarship Winners!

CBE is thrilled to announce the 2023 recipients of the Alvera Mickelsen Memorial Scholarship (AMMS)! **Jocelyn Moore**, **Malorri Seamon**, and **Nicole Kelly Vickey** demonstrate the commitments that characterized Alvera, including a love of Scripture, social justice, and women's equality. It's our honor to empower and encourage these women and women like them to use their God-given talents as they pursue their callings.



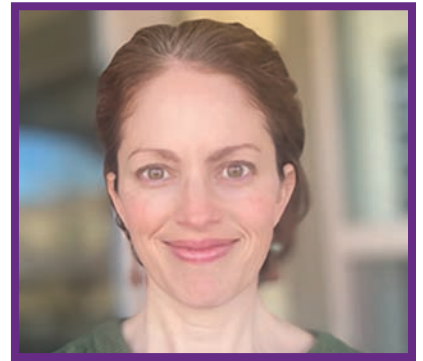
Jocelyn Moore

Jocelyn is a third-year student at Palmer Theological Seminary pursuing a master's in Theological Studies. She is a member of New Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Mays Landing, New Jersey, where she serves as an ordained minister and the youth ministry director. Jocelyn also works full-time at an educational nonprofit, where she leads the team toward improving culture and setting strategy. In addition, Jocelyn works part-time as a DEI facilitator, supporting organizations on their journey toward greater anti-racism and equity. Receiving the AMMS award is just another example of God's divine provision and another opportunity for Jocelyn to continue to "lead a life worthy of [her] calling."



Malorri Seamon

Malorri Seamon is pursuing a Master of Arts in Theological Studies at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. The incredible witness of her female youth pastor opened the door of possibility for her own calling. While attending MidAmerica Nazarene University, she was hired as the pastor to middle school students at the church where she interned. Following this assignment, she served as co-lead pastor in Kea'au, Hawai'i, where she was the church's first female pastor. Receiving the AMMS award not only helps immensely financially but reminds Malorri of the call to continually break barriers and address the unique gaps and gifts female clergy bring to the table alongside male colleagues.



Nicole Kelly Vickey

Nicole Kelly Vickey is a second year MDiv hybrid student at Duke Divinity School. It took years for Nicole to reconcile her calling with her denomination's lack of affirmation for the ordination of women. Prior to beginning seminary, she served as a pastor for three years at Envision Community Church in Longmont, Colorado. She is currently serving as a ministerial intern at Cairn Christian Church in Lafayette, Colorado. Nicole has a passion for preaching and teaching on topics related to biblical equity, including the learnings that can be taken from the narratives of female characters included, but often overlooked, in Scripture. She lives in Boulder County, Colorado with her husband, Jesse, their two children, and their beloved bulldog, Grace.

Setting the Record Straight: CBE's 2023 Conference in Brazil



Several years ago, God sent CBE a prophet from Brazil. Holding a doctorate from a prominent institute in Brazil, she attended CBE's 2017 conference in Florida. There she met my husband, who was also born and raised in Brazil. Throughout the conference weekend, she shared her story as a theologian, called to serve the church. Her passion for her faith and professional work most definitely represented a calling to serve the church as a teacher. She longed to help her faith community share the good news of Christ by deepening their engagement with Scripture. Part of a large denomination in Brazil, she watched in agony as women were slowly marginalized to serving in the kitchen and nursery. She lamented as women were, in some churches, even excluded from playing instruments during worship, as that too was construed as leadership. Concerned about the impact complementarian theology was having on marriages and outreach to non-Christians, she was also worried about women like herself, who knew very well God's giftings and calling as preachers, teachers, and leaders. Her voice had a strong prophetic call to all of us at CBE even as it was filled with much sorrow.

Fast-forward four years later . . .

As CBE's conference team prayed for God's guidance on the best location for CBE's 2023 International Conference, colleagues in Brazil spoke with a loud and confident voice: "The church in Brazil needs CBE's message and ministry." They need to know Scripture's teachings on women, not only because of the enormous influence American complementarians exert on evangelical denominations in Brazil, but also because more than forty percent of evangelical families in Brazil experience abuse.¹ Beside colleagues working in seminaries, publishing houses, and Christian colleges, they identified the conference theme Brazil needed most, "Women and Scripture: Setting the Record Straight." From there, we invited a mix of Brazilian and American speakers, biblical and theological experts in their fields like Craig S. Keener, Alan Myatt, Cynthia Long Westfall, Cynthia Muniz Soares, and Viktorya Zalewski Baracy. We also needed practitioners acquainted with Brazil's struggle with abuse and Scripture's remedy. São Paulo was selected as our host city given its local Christian colleges and seminaries and access to ground transportation and airports. God worked out every imaginable detail, large and small.

Our host facility—a welcoming Baptist college—was directly across the street from an affordable hotel as well as the largest, most prestigious graduate school in the country. Coincidence? Nope! Librarians in both schools not only welcomed CBE's journals and books but also invested hours strategizing ways to increase egalitarian resources in their libraries at other locations. Thanks to generous donors and friends at the largest Christian publisher in Brazil, two CBE books—*Still Side by Side* by Janet George² and *Partners in Marriage and Ministry* by Ron Pierce³—were translated into Brazilian Portuguese and are now available in bookstores throughout the country. Each conference attendee received a copy of each book, Brazil's first CBE resources! Other titles will soon follow, as Thomas Nelson Brasil (TNB) and others have expressed interest in investing in and contributing to the spread of egalitarian resources in Brazilian Portuguese. TNB is, as I type, translating and editing other egalitarian titles for release later this year and next!

Why is God moving all so powerfully in Brazil?

Because of the chaos and pain as churches continue to advance male authority as God's ideal. Complementarian theology, according to our conference attendees, has demoralized and demeaned God's gifts and calling to women in Brazil. Even worse, it extends power to men not based on character but because of biological sex. Men with a demonstrated pattern of violence and abuse are placed in authority over their wives and children because of flawed biblical teachings endorsed by many churches and denominations.

Throughout the conference, I spoke with women and their families desperate to know that God values and loves women as much as men. One woman, now divorced from an abusive husband, approached me to share how much she has appreciated hearing Scripture interpreted to give women equal dignity, responsibility, and a voice in their marriages and churches. She talked about her life of abuse with enormous regret and sorrow. Her family members, also present at the conference, thanked me privately for the confidence and healing they too gained from the conference overall, but especially the sessions on abuse. One woman said she cried throughout my lecture on human flourishing

because of the many lost opportunities for families in complementarian churches to flourish.

Another woman greeted me with pain on her face and her shoulders slumped forward as if she wished to be invisible. Fortunately, she joined several groups for meals, and we had the privilege of hearing some of her story as it pointed to the toll and damage caused by a totalitarian marriage. By the time the conference ended, there was a noticeable change in her face and overall demeanor. Her smile was very bright, and her posture was upright and confident. Thank you, Jesus!

We spent a considerable time with another young woman during and after the conference. She worked serving the youth in her church. Her ministry resembled in every way that of a youth pastor, though her church would not give her either the title of pastor or a pastor's salary. Yet, she was undaunted. A highly skilled linguist, passionate about biblical languages and theology, she was constantly thinking of ways to help young Christians become more confident in Christ. At one point, she broke into tears asking, "Why did God give me these gifts that bring so much frustration and humiliation when denied an opportunity to use them full time as a pastor?" "Well," we said, "surely the pain you feel now is evidence of your gifts and calling. Do not give up! You have your entire life ahead of you, and God has and will continue to open doors. Remain faithful!" Fortunately, she was surrounded by other young leaders who were also moving forward, gaining experience whenever and wherever possible in using their gifts and testing their vocation!

To support younger leaders in the Brazilian context, we invited several young theologians to lead devotions and workshop sessions, to translate content, and speak on podcasts, each exploring our conference theme through their own experiences and reading of Scripture. Stunningly, after leading devotions, one such speaker's husband teared up and said to me, "She's such a gifted teacher and preacher. I cannot hold back my joy in watching her use her gifts. I'm so thankful she's had this opportunity." Of course, his support of his wife was an example to us all. Needless to say, the energy, insights, and engagement of young Brazilian leaders was insightful and irrepressible! As we know too well, great content comes from younger theologians. Two approached me in tears, saying they never imagined having an opportunity to use their gifts at an international conference supporting women's leadership as biblical.

The last day, we took photos together, discussed future possibilities, and exchanged emails. A CBE WhatsApp

group had formed—the beginnings of a CBE chapter in Brazil. Just today I learned of a seminary interested in adapting their statement on gender and service to reflect CBE's mission statement.

These events and more are the direct result of your prayers and generous donations. Thanks to each donor who made this possible. Thanks also to a generous grant so CBE could provide more than twenty conference scholarships along with books, journals, and conference resources which people carried in their arms like precious, treasured gifts. Truly, God's word is always precious but especially when its teachings have been distorted to demean and humiliate women and families, leave bodies bruised, hearts crushed, and worse.

As we sang our last worship song together, those of us less fluent in Brazilian Portuguese entered more fully into this glorious culture with its love of people, its discernment of hearts, its passion for family, and its devotion to God. We sang in another language, and beside a people who know and love our Lord, who have committed themselves to faithfully interpret Scripture in serving the church they love so dearly. As we sang praises to God, we trust that our work together will bring lasting glory to God. Joined more closely as sisters and brothers in Christ and united in our struggle to expose Christian patriarchy and its blight on cultures worldwide, we leave the conference emboldened, more skilled, and hopeful.

As you read this, will you please pray for the precious souls that attended CBE's conference in São Paulo? Pray also for those who will discover our resources in libraries, watch our conference sessions on YouTube and SoundCloud, or read the conference presentations published in the forthcoming issue of *Mutuality*. Pray that God will protect, guide, embolden their calling, and heal their wounds. That the church in Brazil will bring the message of "Women and Scripture: Setting the Record Straight" not only to many more in Brazil but also where it's needed most in the world. Thanks be to Christ, "who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever" (Eph. 3:20–21).

1. This statistic is from Kathy Myatt's workshop session titled "Submission and Abuse," available on CBE International's Youtube channel, youtube.com/@cbeinternational.
2. See *Ainda lado a lado: Uma explicação concisa da igualdade bíblica* or Thomas Nelson Brasil.
3. See *Parceiros no casamento e no ministério: Uma visão bíblica da igualdade de gênero* or Thomas Nelson Brasil.

Praise and Prayer

Praise

- We praise God for the success of CBE's 2023 International Conference in São Paulo, Brazil, and the healing that occurred among attendees as they recovered the biblical vision for women and Scripture.
- We praise God for the collaboration between CBE and Thomas Nelson Brasil for the translation and publication of *Still Side by Side*, by Janet George, and *Partners in Marriage and Ministry*, by Ron Pierce, into Brazilian Portuguese just in time for CBE's 2023 International Conference.
- We praise God for the expansion of CBE's podcast, *Mutuality Matters*, into a fifth theme focused on Bible translation and CBE's gender-accurate Bible project.
- We praise God for the CBE staff who serve the organization so well. We also thank Christ for CBE volunteers, board members, partners, donors, and foundations who give sacrificially of their time, talent, and treasure.
- We thank God for the heartfelt scholarship of many academics to bring clarity to Bible passages about women and men.

Prayer

- We ask for God's wisdom to guide our planning of CBE's 2024 International Conference in Denver, Colorado, July 26–28, themed: *Tell Her Story: Women in Scripture and History*.
- We ask God to guide the Alvera Mickelsen Memorial Scholarship winners as they pursue their gifts and calling in ministry.
- We ask for God's guidance in reaching new communities and audiences worldwide through outside events, CBE publications, and CBE's online presence.
- We ask Jesus for financial support from foundations and individuals for CBE's initiatives, like our Katharine Bushnell film, the Alvera Mickelsen Memorial Scholarship, our Christian radio project, and CBE's podcast *Mutuality Matters*.
- We pray for the ETS annual meeting in November, that we would connect with many scholars about biblical equality between women and men.

Would you be willing to pray regularly on behalf of CBE? Join our prayer team to receive a full list of prayer needs on a quarterly basis, plus occasional urgent prayer needs. Please email us at cbe@cbeinternational.org to sign up.



Join the Movement

Make a statement about your commitment to women when your church or school joins CBE as a member.



Visit cbe.today/orgmembers.

CBE INTERNATIONAL (Christians for Biblical Equality)

CBE International (CBE) is a nonprofit organization of Christian women and men who believe that the Bible, properly translated and interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of women and men of all racial and ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all ages, based on the teachings of Scriptures such as Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (NIV 2011).

MISSION STATEMENT CBE exists to promote the biblical message that God calls women and men of all cultures, races, and classes to share authority equally in service and leadership in the home, church, and world. CBE’s mission is to eliminate the power imbalance between men and women resulting from theological patriarchy.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

- We *believe* in one God, creator and sustainer of the universe, eternally existing as three persons equal in power and glory.
- We *believe* in the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ.
- We *believe* that eternal salvation and restored relationships are only 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* the Holy Spirit equips us for service and sanctifies us from sin.
- We *believe* the Bible is the inspired word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.
- We *believe* that women and men are equally created in God’s image and given equal authority and stewardship of God’s creation.
- We *believe* that women and men are equally responsible for and distorted by sin, resulting in shattered relationships with God, self, and others.
- Therefore, we *lament* that the sins of sexism and racism have been used to historically oppress and silence women throughout the life of the church.
- We *resolve* to value and listen to the voices and lived experiences of women throughout the world who have been impacted by the sins of sexism and racism.



SUBSCRIBE

Receive a year of print copies of *Priscilla Papers*, CBE’s academic journal, and *Mutuality*, CBE’s popular magazine. Subscriptions are available for individuals, churches, and libraries.

Learn **more at cbe.today/subscriptions**.

JOIN

If your church, seminary, school, or nonprofit agrees with CBE’s Statement of Faith and Core Values, join CBE as an organizational member to receive publications, discounted conference registrations, and more.

Visit **cbe.today/orgmembers** for more info.

CORE VALUES

- Scripture is our authoritative guide for faith, life, and practice.
- Patriarchy (male dominance) is not a biblical ideal but a result of sin that manifests itself personally, relationally, and structurally.
- Patriarchy is an abuse of power, taking from women and girls what God has given them: their dignity, freedom, and leadership, and often their very lives.
- While the Bible reflects a patriarchal culture, the Bible does not teach patriarchy as God’s standard for human relationships.
- Christ’s redemptive work frees all people from patriarchy, calling women and men to share authority equally in service and leadership.
- God’s design for relationships includes faithful marriage between a woman and a man, celibate singleness, and mutual submission in Christian community.
- The unrestricted use of women’s gifts is integral to the work of the Holy Spirit and essential for the advancement of the gospel worldwide.
- Followers of Christ are to advance human flourishing by opposing injustice and patriarchal teachings and practices that demean, diminish, marginalize, dominate, abuse, enslave, or exploit women, or restrict women’s access to leadership in the home, church, and world.

CONNECT WITH CBE

Connect with CBE online to learn more about us, enjoy the resources we offer, and take part in our ministry.



Visit our website, cbeinternational.org, to find thousands of free resources—articles, book reviews, and video and audio recordings.



Get news, updates, and free resources (**cbe.today/news**).



Follow our blog (**cbe.today/mutuality**).



Follow us on Twitter @CBEInt (**twitter.com/cbeint**).



Find us on Facebook (**facebook.com/cbeint**).



Follow us on Instagram @cbeinternational (**instagram.com/cbeinternational**).



Follow us on LinkedIn (**linkedin.com/company/christians-for-biblical-equality/**).



Find us on YouTube (**youtube.com/@cbeinternational**).



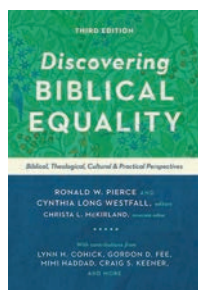
Listen to us on Soundcloud (**soundcloud.com/cbe-international**).

CBE International
122 West Franklin Ave,
Suite 218
Minneapolis, MN
55404-2451

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Jefferson City, MO
Permit No. 210

**Forwarding
Service Requested**

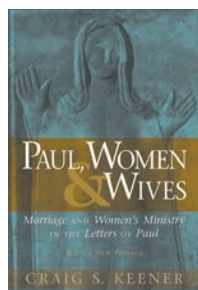
Featured Books from CBE Bookstore



Discovering Biblical Equality: Biblical, Theological, Cultural, and Practical Perspectives

Ronald W. Pierce, Cynthia Long Westfall, Christa L. McKirland, eds.

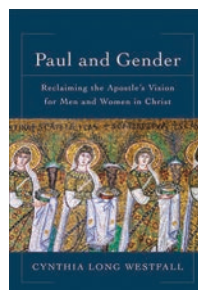
The third edition of this groundbreaking work—bringing a fresh, positive defense of gender equality—is at once scholarly and practical, irenic yet spirited, up-to-date, and cognizant of opposing positions. Readers will find essays on biblical equality in relation to several issues, including the image of God, the analogy of slavery, same-sex marriage, abortion, domestic abuse, race, and human flourishing.



Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul

Craig Keener

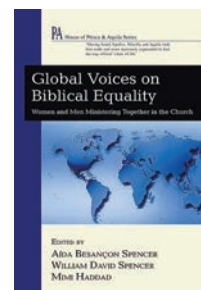
Paul's letters stand at the center of the dispute over women, the church, and the home, with each side championing passages from the apostle. Acknowledging that we must take the biblical text seriously, and recognizing that Paul's letters arose in a specific time and place for a specific purpose, Keener mines the historical, lexical, cultural, and exegetical details behind Paul's words about women in the home and ministry to give us one of the most insightful expositions of the key Pauline passages in years.



Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ

Cynthia Long Westfall

Respected New Testament scholar Cynthia Long Westfall offers a coherent Pauline theology of gender, which includes fresh perspectives on the most controverted texts. She offers viable alternatives for some notorious interpretive problems in certain Pauline passages, reframing gender issues in a way that stimulates thinking, promotes discussion, and moves the conversation forward.



Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Ministering Together in the Church

Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer, Mimi Haddad, eds.

Biblical equality is a burgeoning, global reform movement led by scholars and leaders not only in North America but also on every continental landmass in the world. In this book, female and male writers who are ethnically part of every continent explore the contextual challenges, successes, and adaptations of engaging the biblical text on gender and ministry.

cbeBookstore

providing quality resources on biblical gender equality

For more resources,
visit cbebookstore.org



Mutuality offers articles from diverse writers who explore egalitarian theology as it impacts everyday life.