

Editorial

Aesop's "The Grasshopper and the Ant" takes an interesting turn in some of its retellings. In its earliest forms, the fable commended hard work. The ant toiled ceaselessly all summer to store up food for the winter while the grasshopper sang and danced the long bright days away. When autumn turned to winter, the grasshopper, shivering with cold and hunger, stood outside the ant's door begging for shelter and food. Work hard, the fable says. Plan for the future.

Just after Napoleon III (1808–1873) took France into a disastrous war with Prussia, and ended up a prisoner of war, Jules-Joseph Lefebvre (1836–1911) painted *The Grasshopper*, taking inspiration from the fable. His grasshopper is female—a nude, worriedly chewing on a fingernail while standing among autumn leaves gusting around her feet. This "grasshopper" is the painter's reference to a foolhardy emperor who acted without having thought through his action. Lefebvre's *The Grasshopper* was one of many paintings titled as such in late nineteenth-century France, in which the grasshopper was represented by the metaphor of the beautiful *bohème*, a woman, often holding a musical instrument. The woman typified the person who idles, without a care for the future.

Why a woman rather than a man? Is it that women portray idleness more readily than men, who in our patriarchal cultures are the proverbial bread winners?

In this issue, we feature women at work. Susy Flory introduces Enheduanna (2334–2279 BC), the royal daughter of Sargon the Great of Mesopotamia. She is now recognized as the earliest litterateur in human history. This poet priestess composed hymns, earning for herself the epithet of "the Sumerian Shakespeare." The implication for biblical studies is the plausibility of female authorship for texts and books in both Testaments. Rudolf Gaisie

compares the attributes of Proverbs' Lady Wisdom with the defining virtues of the queen mother of the Akan people of Ghana. Both are women at work, being productive for the good of family and community.

Julie Walsh tracks women theologians across three centuries (sixteenth through eighteenth) to showcase the various kinds of arguments they made for biblical egalitarianism. They put their minds to work, wrote, and published, establishing a firm foundation for the scholars who succeeded them, and for multiple Christian movements.

Alison Gerber's sermon profiles Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus, as a "minister" in her desire to serve Jesus. Maybe a rather distracted and anxious minister, running herself off her feet, but a minister nonetheless. Indeed, she makes one of the most stupendous declarations of Jesus's identity in the gospels: "I know that you are the Messiah, the Son of God" (Jn 11:27).

On another track, Dezerai Seitzer presents an obstacle for women in ministerial work: gender-exclusive (male) language for God as a possible reason why women do not readily enter church ministry. She posits such language as justifying, maintaining and perpetuating a patriarchal church culture.

Women, just as much as men, are capable of both industry and idleness. The women in this issue are women who took their work seriously. Their diligent labor and the example they set as "ants" continues their impact down to the present day.

I pray that this issue of *Priscilla Papers* inspires us to serve together, side by side, in God's world.

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