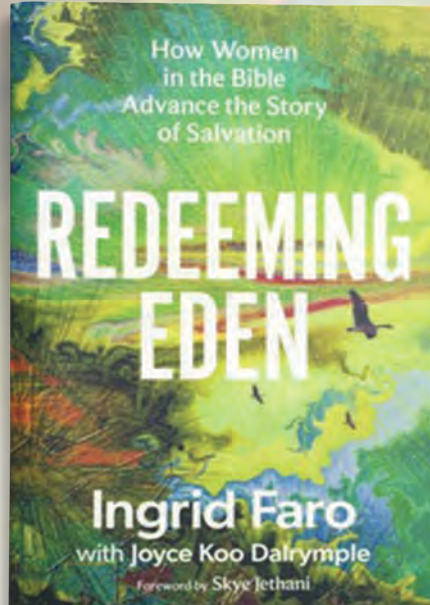


REVIEW: REDEEMING EDEN

Mayzie Mayfield



Ingrid Faro brings nearly three decades of biblical and theological study to bear in her latest book, *Redeeming Eden: How Women in the Bible Advance the Story of Salvation*, and her expertise shines throughout this spiritually uplifting, theologically sound work. Rather than writing an academically dense text, Faro has leveraged her skills as researcher and teacher to craft a readable, nuanced, and compelling study of women in the Old Testament. While the stories of women in the Bible are frequently portrayed as disconnected events, Faro endeavors to “trace a thread through Scripture . . . demonstrating that women initiate and advance key movements in redemptive history” (1). She does so, to great impact.

The first three chapters of *Redeeming Eden* examine the beginning of Genesis, laying the theological foundation for how Faro analyzes the narratives in following chapters. In chapter 1, “Man and Woman as God’s Image,” Faro states that “the intended purpose for every human is to be royal children of God” (16). While her exegesis of the creation narrative in Genesis 1 is probably familiar ground for CBE readers, Faro’s emphasis on community within the Trinity, among people, and between God and creation (16, 23), offers a fresh perspective. It is a recurring theme throughout *Redeeming Eden* that I had

not noticed in Scripture before!

Chapter 2 (“Man and Woman as Sacred Space”) and chapter 3 (“Redemption Hope Through the Woman”) are where the strongest aspect of *Redeeming Eden* shines—Faro’s ability to draw on language and cultural context guides readers in her exegetical process. For example, while discussion of the mistranslation of the word *‘ezer* (“divine help,” 28) is commonplace, Faro also explains that the Hebrew word *tsela’* (often translated in

English as “rib”) more accurately means “side,” such as the side of a frame or wall supporting a holy place (31). The implications of this translational choice underscore the emphasis on kinship and communal wellbeing that Faro explores in the remaining chapters. She also emphasizes the agency and moral dignity God affords Eve after the fall (42ff); this relationship between God and woman is another pillar of Faro’s argument that women in Scripture are vital to God’s redemptive movement.

Chapters 4–12 consider women who influence Jesus’s lineage—Sarah, Tamar, the women of Exodus, Rahab, Deborah as well as Jael, Ruth, Hannah, Bathsheba, and Jehosheba, respectively. In each chapter, the readers’ attention is drawn back to the key themes: the bold, redemptive action of these women, their care for God’s

**FARO’S ABILITY TO DRAW ON LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL
CONTEXT GUIDES READERS IN HER EXEGETICAL PROCESS.**

**NOT ONLY DOES REDEEMING EDEN
EXEGETE GOD'S APPROACH TO
WOMEN IN SCRIPTURE, BUT IT ALSO
EXEMPLIFIES WHAT GOOD EXEGESIS
LOOKS LIKE IN A WAY LAY-LEVEL
READERS CAN UNDERSTAND.**

people and their community, and their hopeful trust in an unfailing God. Chapter 6, “Women Who Instigate the Exodus,” was especially impactful. Faro’s description of Pharaoh’s arrogance to overlook women as formidable opponents allowed them to help the “one right in front of them,” subversively giving, saving, and protecting life (80). Her word study of Deborah’s description, *eshet lappidoth* (commonly translated “wife of Lappidoth”, while Faro advocates for “fiery woman”), in chapter 8 was delightful! Chapter 12, Jehosheba’s story, brought tears to my eyes as I reflected on how everyday acts of bravery can impact generations to come—to the point of preserving families.

Faro excels at guiding readers through her exegetical process, providing enough linguistic and contextual information to build trust without bogging readers down in the details. Although I have studied biblical gender equality, I learned something new in each chapter. Faro demonstrates concern for the spiritual formation of her readers, recruiting a contributor, Joyce Koo Dalrymple, to provide a breath prayer¹ and questions for reflection at the conclusion of each chapter. This indicates that Faro wants not only to disseminate information, but also to contribute to the spiritual formation of her readers. Faro also understands that her audience may contain skeptical readers and encourages them to read her work through a literary lens (10). She displays holistic care for her audience.

Not only does *Redeeming Eden* exegete God’s approach to women in Scripture, but it also exemplifies what good exegesis looks like in a way lay-level readers can understand. Faro explains the tools she uses and provides substantive footnotes and endnotes to support her claims. Rather than feeling overwhelming, the

guided experience of watching a skilled academic develop conclusions will foster trust with Faro as an author and perhaps embolden readers to dive deeper into biblical exegesis themselves.

Although it can be read individually, *Redeeming Eden* will especially benefit those who read it in community. Streaming videos that further explore *Redeeming Eden*’s contents are available with purchase of the book, and the questions at the end of each chapter facilitate conversation. I would suggest reading it with a discussion group, especially because community is such a significant aspect of Faro’s thesis. However, I would not discourage anyone from reading *Redeeming Eden* on their own! I would comfortably recommend it to egalitarians and the egalitarian-curious alike.

Redeeming Eden was written to showcase how women in the Old Testament have been part of God’s redemptive plan since the beginning. Faro weaves stories of bold action, love for other people, and “unpretentious tenacity” in faithfulness to God to prove that God’s use of women in God’s story are not isolated events. In a way that aligns with CBE’s values, Faro forms a compelling case for women’s biblical equality and dignity—one based on Scripture, history, language, and cultural context. Faro joins the tapestry of women who have participated in the redemption of Eden through the use of her God-given gifts.

Notes

1. “Breath prayers are short prayers that coincide with inhaling and exhaling.” Esther Shin Chuang, “How Breath Prayers Helped Me ‘Pray Continually’” Christianity Today, July 14, 2023, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2023/07/breath-prayer-busy-mom-spiritual-disciplines/>.



Mayzie Mayfield is Baltimore-based writer and seminarian whose work examines womanhood, justice, and Christian hope. She is married and has one daughter.