

The Role of Women in the Ministry:

"Helps" from the Beginning

From the beginning of time, woman was created to be a help. God created woman to be a help meet for man in marriage (Genesis 2:18). After the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden, headship over the woman was given to man because of the role that Eve played in the fall of mankind from their holiness (Genesis 3:12-20).

Even today in God's church, which represents the ultimate marriage, every believer is a member of Christ's body and as such has a definite ministry (I Corinthians 12:28). However, a woman's ministry regardless of her marital status is still governed by God's Christian order of headship (I Corinthians 11:3).

When a woman knows, perceives and understands the work of Jesus Christ on Calvary, she understands God's order of headship and why. She still rejoices to be all that she can be in the role set out for her in the body of Christ today. God has given both men and women different ministries or roles in the church but each very important – "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; ... (Ephesians 4: 12-16; I Corinthians 12:28; Titus 2:2-5)

Throughout the Old and New Testament, the scriptures provide numerous examples of females, young and old, who God used to help fulfill His will and purpose in the earth. While it is sad that it was a woman who first contributed to bringing sin into God's holy meeting place with mankind, it was likewise a woman who gave the world the Savior – Jesus Christ, who today delivers from sin.

There are almost 200 named women in the Bible, and almost the same number who are unnamed. I have chosen five categories for this discussion: youth; young women; married women; aged woman; and a mother.

Youth – Maid of Naaman's Wife (II Kings 5:1-19)

- Action: Told Naaman's wife about the prophet Elisha, a miracle-worker who could heal Naaman's leprosy
- She was a believer/godly Hebrew/honored God/feared the Lord/loved her captors and cared for them
 - She was a slave/spoils of war/lost all that was precious to her/trusted in God
 - She was a maid/served Naaman's wife/loyal/humble/did not let her status take away her witness
 - She was a Herald/told her distressed mistress that her husband could be cured/became a witness

Young Women – Daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8 – 9, Acts 2:16-17, Joel 2:28-29)

- Action: Traveled with their father, Philip the evangelist, which afforded them the opportunity to witness to other females
- Four daughters are nameless/in the primitive fellowship of the early church/faithful women
 - They were virgins/committed to the “way”/not silly women laden with lust/single and sober
 - They prophesied/Christian exhorters/declared God’s redemptive message/confined their ministry to women in keeping with the “silence of women” as preachers in churches
 - Took opportunity to tell women, Jews and Gentiles, about Jesus/helped and encouraged female converts

Married Woman – Simon Peter’s Wife (Matthew 8:14-18, Mark 1:29-34, Luke 4:38-41)

- Action: Given to hospitality, cared for husband and sick mother, represented the wife of I Peter 3:1-12
- Peter’s wife remains nameless in scripture/Peter’s mother-in-law healed by Jesus/faithful partner to Simon Peter throughout marriage
 - Discreet, sympathetic and understanding woman
 - Impulsive husband/gifted to reason with her husband, caution him to go slowly, and encourage him to rise above trials and disappointments
 - Inspired Peter’s description of the modestly dressed women of I Peter 1:1-12, meek and quiet spirit
 - Not flashy but reserved

Aged Women – Anna, the Woman Who Committed Her Life to God (Luke 2:36-38, I Timothy 5: 3,5)

- Action: By faith, waited for the birth of the Messiah and believed that Mary’s first-born Son was indeed the rod out of the stem of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1, Micah 5:2)
- Scripture identifies her as a prophetess/herald the coming of the Messiah/proclaimed a divine message of future events
 - She was of a Great Age/a virgin who married and lived with her husband for seven years
 - Widowed approximately 84 years/over 100 years old when she saw the Messiah/devoted to God/trusted in God/her hoary head was a crown of glory (Proverbs 16:31)/God’s house was her dwelling place

- She departed not from the temple/attended day and night services of the Temple/devout worshiper/pastor could count on her prayers/not given to absences
- She served God with fasting and prayers/cried publicly day and night in prayers/willing to miss a meal/had Godly self-control/learned how to crucify the flesh in order to serve God more acceptably
- She gave thanks likewise unto the Lord/prayers coupled with praise
- She spoke of the Messiah to all, and even in old age, she went out to declare his arrival to all who would hear

Finally, our last woman for consideration was both a wife and mother. This woman was indeed a saintly woman who followed Jesus in Galilee and ministered unto him from the outset of Christ's work on earth. She was also among the women who watched afar off as Jesus died upon the cross.

Salome – the Women Who Wanted the Best for Her Sons (Matthew 20:20-24, Mark 10:35-40)

- Action: When Christ inaugurated his earthly kingdom of Israel, Salome wanted for her son's to have seats on the right and left side of Jesus' throne
- Devoted/among the women who supported Christ's ministry on earth/wife of Zebedee/mother of James and John who became apostles/came to the tomb to anoint the body of Christ/shared in the news of Christ's resurrection/proclaimed the blessed truth of the resurrection/her son John wrote the final book of the new testament – Revelation.
 - Misguided ambition for her sons/actions were not divinely directed/demand arose from maternal pride and jealousy, not from true faith/vain in her desire/actions caused strife among disciples/Holy Spirit greater than blood
 - Unintended consequences not understood/James and John would suffer indeed/James died first for the name of Jesus and John died last after writing the book of Revelation (they were killed for their association with the "way")
 - The mother sought earthly crowns for her sons, but through losing their lives for Christ's sake, they gained greater honor in heaven

All of the above females were "helps" in the ministry of God and our Lord Jesus Christ. They were simply individuals who exempted great love and care for others, and for the mission of the church and its work on earth. **Let us remember that the ministry gifts and our work as "helps" must be governed by love (I Corinthians 13:4-7) and not by our selfish desires to be recognized, to hold a position, or to leave an earthly legacy.** What we do must be rooted in "Love":

- ✓ Charity suffereth long, and is kind
- ✓ Charity envieth not
- ✓ Charity vaunteth not itself

- ✓ Charity is not puffed up
- ✓ Charity doth not behave itself unseemly
- ✓ Charity seeketh not her own
- ✓ Charity is not easily provoked
- ✓ Charity thinketh no evil
- ✓ Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity
- ✓ Charity rejoiceth in the truth
- ✓ Charity beareth all things
- ✓ Charity endureth all things

The motto, **"Women Working Together in Love"** must be more than a saying that sounds nice. We have to be real and honest in our motives. Do nothing in pride and jealousy, or to be recognized. Do not covet the ministry that God has given to someone else. Do not take upon you a call not given to you by God. Whatever you do, be decent and in order. Whatever you might desire to do, always ask for the will of God to be done. If it is God's will, he will provide a door of opportunity, just like he did for the many women written about in the Bible, some named and some unnamed. Some never received public recognition but their names are written in the Book of Life. God knows the heart of every one of us. Let us make sure that what we do in the church indeed "helps" and does not contribute to contention and division.

But wait on the Lord, and in due time God will give you the opportunity to live out His purpose for your life.

God Bless!