



WHAT IS A WOMAN?

**A STUDY OF GOD'S GOOD
DESIGN REVEALED IN THE STORY
OF SCRIPTURE**

ALLIANCE BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

WEEK 1 | THE GOD OF CREATION

WEEK 2 | IN HIS IMAGE

WEEK 3 | THE REVERSAL OF GOD'S GOOD DESIGN

WEEK 4 | GOD'S DESIGN REVEALED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

WEEK 5 | GOD'S DESIGN REVEALED IN WISDOM LITERATURE

WEEK 6 | JESUS REDEEMS AND AFFIRMS WOMEN (PART 1)

WEEK 7 | JESUS REDEEMS AND AFFIRMS WOMEN (PART 2)

WEEK 8 | WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

WEEK 9 | WOMEN IN THE HOME AND COMMUNITY

WEEK 10 | WOMANHOOD IN THE AGE TO COME

FOREWORD

Dear Fellow Image Bearer,

The study you hold in your hands is a response to a rising chorus of voices in our culture, each singing a different melody about what it means to be a woman. As the voices grow increasingly louder in competition with each other, the noise can become overwhelming and the voice of Truth, muddled. Questions like, "What is a woman?" and "Why does gender matter?" seem to have a thousand different answers with no clear conclusion.

We believe the Bible is a harmonious, clear and distinctly beautiful symphony of truth. In an age of confusion, ambivalence and a desperate search for identity, we believe God's Word is a source of life and light...a compass toward true north as we navigate our life on earth. As we search and study the His Word, we see emerge a glorious picture of the unique purpose of womanhood. We find in those pages that gender matters to God and He created us in **His** image to reflect **His** likeness to the world.

Each of us will approach this study from vastly different life experiences as women and our prayer is for you to be able to see the beauty of your Creator and both the purpose and glory of His good design in your womanhood. You are a woman created by God, for God. You are not your own. You have a high and holy calling, which is ultimately found in Christ Jesus. We pray you learn to love Him more as you behold Him as the ultimate focus of every page of this study.

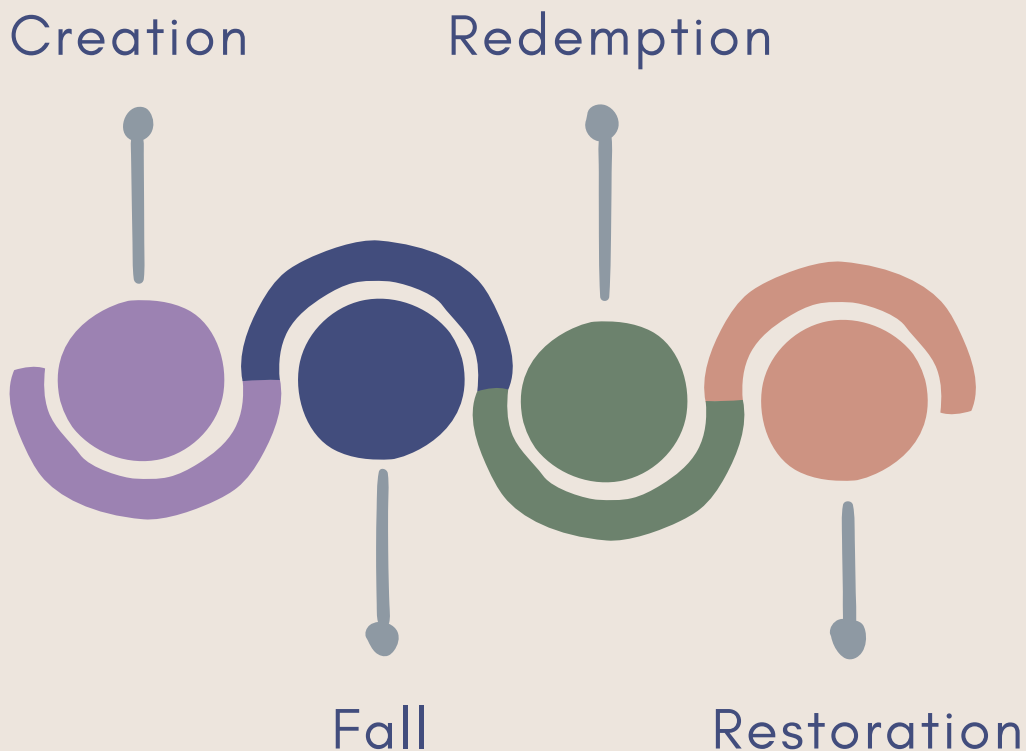
A final word on the nature of this study as you begin. We have chosen to study womanhood within the framework of Biblical Theology. This means we will look at womanhood through the lens of the entire story of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. We start with God's creation of the world, then move to the fall of humanity and the impact of sin on the whole of creation, God's merciful work to redeem creation and bring His people back to Himself ultimately through the person and work of Christ, and the future hope of full restoration of creation in the New Heavens and New Earth.

As we consider this sweeping storyline, we can find patterns of God's good design for womanhood throughout. As Elisabeth Elliott writes in her book, *Let Me Be a Woman*, "In order to learn what it means to be a woman, we must start with the One who made her." As we study the whole story of Scripture, the truths we glean about God and His creation will help us paint a beautiful picture of His good design.

WHAT IS BIBLICAL THEOLOGY?

Biblical theology helps us to understand the Bible as one, whole story from Genesis to Revelation. This type of study sees each book of the Bible as a chapter that moves the whole story, or *metanarrative*, forward.

Biblical theology shows us how the story progresses as Old Testament promises are fulfilled in the New Testament which is most fully realized in the coming of Christ, the Redeemer. In the metanarrative of the Bible, we discover the ultimate story of the creation, fall and God's plan to redeem His people from sin and restore all of creation to fulfill its purpose to worship and enjoy Him forever.¹



TEACHING NOTES

TEACHING NOTES

WEEK 1 | THE GOD OF CREATION

We are going to be spending a lot of time in the first two chapters of Genesis 1 and 2 these first two weeks. You may consider memorizing parts of these texts as your familiarity with them grows.

Some of the most important and foundational beliefs of the Christian faith can be traced back to these first chapters of the Bible. It is crucial that we spend time in these chapters if we want to understand God, His design, and why it is "good." Our study this week will focus on the beginning of the whole story of Scripture.

Day 1 - The Creator's Work

Read **Genesis 1**.

1) What do you learn about God from chapter 1? Which of His divine attributes do you see in this chapter?

2) Look at the beginning of each new day. How did God create the world?

3) Read John 1:1-4 (in these verses the Word refers to Jesus). What does this passage teach us about creation?

4) Considering the text in Genesis, what are the differences you notice between the Creator and the creation? List the characteristics that distinguish them from each other.

CREATOR



CREATURE

5) Look at the following passages about creation and the Creator. What words are used to describe the distinction between them?

- Romans 8:18-23
- Isaiah 40:12-26
- Psalm 8

6) What do these distinctions tell us about the universe? About humans? About God?

7) How does it encourage your faith to know that God is different from us? Why is this a good thing?

Day 2 - The Creator Observed

Today we are going to take a closer look at the Creator and His attributes observed in creation. We will spend time studying what His attributes mean for us, His creatures.

1) Look at Romans 1:18-23. According to the Apostle Paul, which two attributes can we perceive about God from creation?

2) What does Paul say this means about all people?

3) If creation points to God's existence and even some of his attributes, why do people continue to deny God? (Look to the Romans passage for help.)

4) Consider the below verses. What do they tell you about God's eternality (that he exists outside of time) and independence (that he does not require anything or depend on anything/anyone to be)?

- Acts 17:24-27
- Job 41:11
- Romans 11:33-36
- Psalm 90:1-2

5) If God has always existed and he is separate from creation (another word for this attribute is *transcendence*), then who or what existed before the beginning of time in creation?

6) If God is independent from creation, then he does not rely on creation for anything. How does this affect the way you approach God in worship? How does it affect the way you view yourself or humanity? Jot down any thoughts that come to mind.

7) How do these attributes strengthen your faith in God?

Day 3 - God's Pattern as Complementing

Today we will look at the pattern revealed in the days of creation and spend time considering the **complement** within it.

Review **Genesis 1** & read **Genesis 2** in its entirety.

1) In each day of creation we see God separating and distinguishing one created thing from another. List the pairs or distinctions you find each day.

day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6
⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮

2) Look up the definition of “complement” and write it below.

3) Where do you see complement in each day of creation?

4) How do the pairs/groups in question #1 contribute order, pattern, and structure for creation?

5) Consider what the world might be like if these complementing patterns were absent and there were no distinctions. Make notes about what the world might be like and what the consequences would be.

6) At the end of the days of creation, God called all that He made "good." Why do you think God called it "good"?

7) When you gaze at creation, what is "good" to you about it?

8) Do you believe that God is good?

9) In what ways have you seen evidence of His goodness in your life?

Day 4 – God’s Pattern as Order

Today we will pick up on yesterday’s study and look closely at the **order** within God’s pattern.

1) Look back at your answers from yesterday. What do you learn about God from this pattern and order? What is important to Him?

2) Why is it important for us to know and treasure His created order?

3) Do you function better when there is order, pattern, or structure in your daily life? Why or why not?

4) What does God do on the last day after he completes creation? What benefit does this have for creation?

5) God not only rests on the seventh day, but he also blesses it. What do God's actions reveal about pattern and order in life? Look at the Westminster Shorter Catechism to help with your answer:

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

*A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.*²

6) Can you think of any God-created human institutions or relationships that are designed by God with pattern and order in mind?

7) What happens when disorder or chaos happens in your life? How do you tend to respond?

8) Later we will learn more about what it means to be made in God's image, but for now, know that this means we are made in such a way to reflect His nature and what he values. Is there an area of your life within your control that is disordered or without structure? What is one step you can take this week to re-order that area of your life?

Day 5 - Response

- 1) Take some time to consider the attributes of God we have studied this week. Praise Him for being separate/independent from creation and for what that means for us.
- 2) Thank Him for His creation and its order and pattern. Thank Him for designing creation in such a way that we have no excuse not to believe in Him!
- 3) Confess the ways you fall short of being like Him through Christ.
- 4) Ask Him to reveal to you any parts of your life that are chaotic and disordered. Ask Him to help you re-order anything that needs to be changed.
- 5) Pray that as we look at the nature of God we would learn to love Him more and align ourselves to his intended purposes.
- 6) Use the space below to write a poem, draw a picture, or jot down some words that reflect God's design in creation.

TEACHING NOTES

WEEK 2 | IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED THEM

Now that we have looked closely at God's ordered and complementing pattern in creation, this week we will go back through the text to consider the unique creation of man and woman.

Day 1

We told you we would be spending a lot of time in these first chapters of Genesis! Read **Genesis 1 & 2** for today's study.

1) Where did Adam and Eve come from? How are these creatures formed and made differently from the rest of creation?

2) What do you think it means to be made in the image of God?

3) According to Genesis 2:20, what is lacking in creation?

4) What work or task does God give Adam to do? What does God give Eve to do?

5) How does the origin of humans affect your own understanding of the value of humans?

6) How might an unbelieving friend explain the origin of humans? How might that affect their understanding of human value?

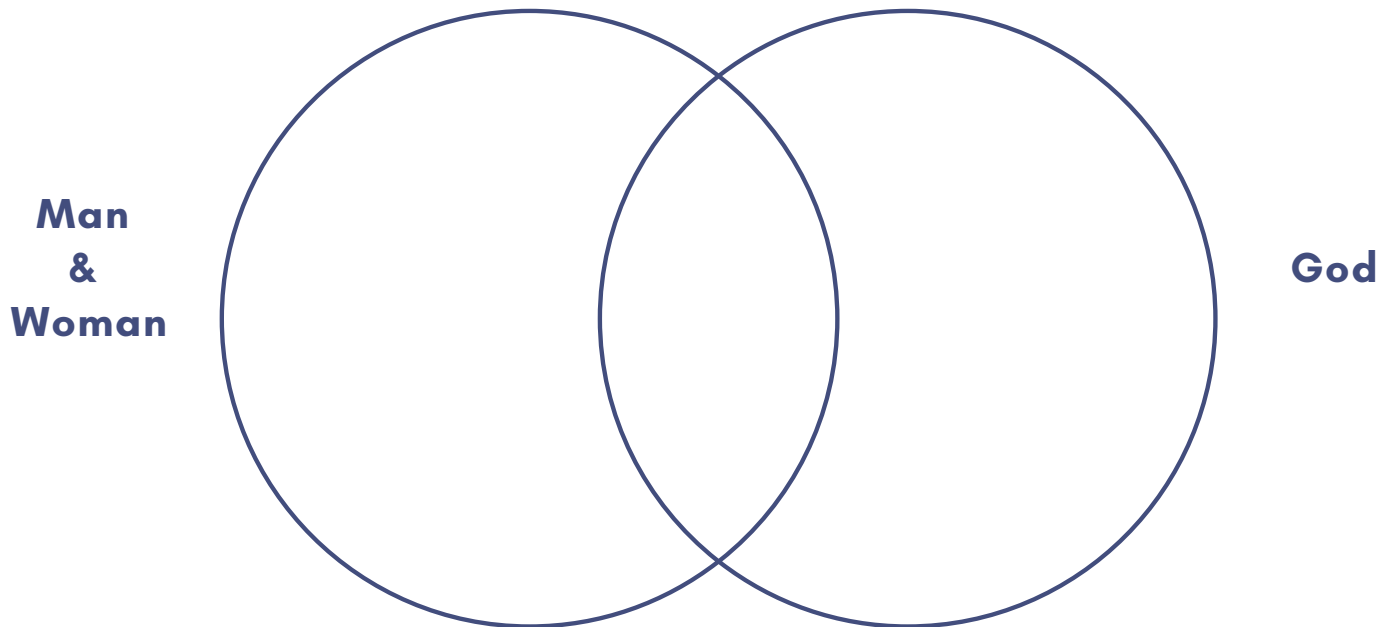
Day 2

Read **Genesis 1:26-31 and all of chapter 2** for today's study.

1) Look at Genesis 1:26-27 - What implications does this verse have for man? For woman? For God's people?

2) The Hebrew word for image is *tselem* which is used in (Gen. 5:3, Gen. 9:6, Eze. 7:20, Eze. 16:17). Based on these Scriptures, what is an image?

3) In verse 26, God says: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." In what ways are man and woman *like* God? In what ways are they not like God?



4) Describe the relationship between God and man. Who is in authority? Who is not?

5) Look at Gen. 1:28. This instruction is often called the creation mandate. It was a command/decreed. Who did God give this mandate to? Why did He give it to them and not other creatures?

7) Why is it important that we understand that all people are made in the image of God?

8) How does this affect the way that you see yourself? Is there anything you need to change about the way you view or treat yourself?

9) How does this affect the way you see others? Is there anything you need to change about the way you view or are treating someone else?

Day 3

Read **Genesis 2:1-18**.

1) How does God end his creative work?

2) According to chapter 1, on which day are man & woman created?

3) According to Gen. 2:5 & verse 15, what was God giving Adam to do in the garden?

4) What does God use to create man?

5) In this passage, what command did God give specifically to Adam?

6) Look at Psalm 103:14. What does this Psalm imply about man?

7) Look at 1 Cor 15:45-49. In this passage, in what way is Adam compared to Christ? Who does Adam represent? List the words Paul uses to describe the two men.

8) Verse 18 introduces something that is not good. What is that? (Look back to the creation mandate in Gen. 1:28 to help with your answer.)

9) How does the world's definition of what is 'good' differ from what God calls good?

10) Aloneness was not good in God's eyes. Look at Proverbs 18:1 for reference. How have you felt the effect of aloneness in your life?

Day 4

Today, we will look closely at God's calling for the man and for the woman. We will take some time to carefully consider what it means that Eve was called a helper to the man. Kevin DeYoung notes that... "helper" cannot be divorced from the broader concerns of the creation mandate. It was not good for man to be alone because by himself he could not "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28)...Another man could have helped Adam till the soil...But none would have been a helper fit for the crucial task of producing and rearing children."³

Claire Smith, author of *God's Good Design*, refers to the woman and says, "With her creation comes the creation of human community, and the ability to be fruitful and multiply and together fill the earth and tend it as God commanded them both."⁴

Read **Genesis 2:19-24**.

1) Look back at your answer to question 8 yesterday. What does this teach us about God's desire for humans?

2) Look at Adam's poem in 2:23. Re-write the poem in your own words.

3) What words do Adam and God use to describe woman in this poem? What makes woman different from the rest of creation in Adam's eyes?

4) Considering this, what was she specifically created to do? (Look at Gen. 2:18 for your answer.)

5) The same Hebrew term(s) are used in the below verses. Who are these verses referring to?

- Deuteronomy 33:26
- Psalm 33:20
- Psalm 70:5
- Hebrews 2:18

6) *Ezer kenegdo* is the Hebrew term translated to “a helper fit” or “a suitable helper.” How do the verses above help add to our understanding of what it means to be an *ezer*?

In her book, *Biblical Femininity*, Chrystie Cole describes an *ezer* as: “the one who helps, one who brings that which is lacking to the aid of another. An *ezer* assists another toward accomplishing a goal. Thus the word *ezer* actually connotes an inherent strength...joined together, *ezer kenegdo* means essential counterpart or corresponding strength.”⁵

7) Consider those women in your life who are godly helpers. How do they challenge you?

8) Look back at your answers for question 3 and 4. If *ezer* is a calling for all women, regardless of your role, what does this mean for your life as a woman?

"There is often confusion between role and identity, between function and design...Women tend to define themselves by roles (student, careerwoman, boss, mother, wife, grandmother, etc.) Or by the absence of such roles. But there is danger in defining yourself by the role you play. Roles are often temporary...some roles like that of wife or mother may span decades. Other roles... are shorter, lasting just a few years. Roles may bring clarity to how and with whom you live out your calling but they do not determine your identity or your calling. Your identity is certain and secure; it does not shift. You are a human being created in the image of God. You were created as a woman. Your calling is an outflow of your identity as a created being. As a woman created in the image of God, your calling is to be an ezer. As a woman created in the image of God, your calling is to be an ezer... Ezer is not limited to one role per se. It is who you are. It is a God-given design. Women are not defined functionally by roles; they are defined inherently by how God created them. Like your identity, your calling as an essential counterpart, ezer kenegdo, never changes." 6

9) Based on the quote above and what we've studied today in God's Word, in what way is your understanding of God's design and purpose for men and women more clear?

10) Adam is created from the dust of the ground to work the garden. The woman was created from Adam's rib to help him. What do their origin stories tell us about God's purpose for them?

11) What words would you use to describe the kind of relationship Adam and Eve had with one another?

Day 5 - Response

1) Summarize Genesis 2 in ten words or less.

2) How do these chapters affect the way you think of yourself as a woman?

3) Are you able to see the beauty and purpose in God's design for you in the story of creation? Can you call it "good"? Why or why not?

4) Write a prayer in response to God's design for creation and for humans. Praise him, thank him, and confess anything that is not aligned to his design.

TEACHING NOTES

TEACHING NOTES

WEEK 3 | THE REVERSAL OF GOD'S GOOD DESIGN

Last week we studied what it means that man and woman were made in the image of God. We saw that man and woman are distinct from the rest of the creatures because of this special identity. This week we flip to the next chapter in Genesis and see how the story unfolds with the sin and guilt of man but we will also see that God does not leave His people without a glimmer of hope.

Day 1

Read **Genesis 3**. Jot down any initial observations.

Let's hone in on the setting and circumstances of the Fall in Genesis 3:1-13. Answer the following questions:

- 1) Who did the serpent approach and speak to?
- 2) Why did the serpent approach the woman?
- 3) In what ways did the serpent's actions contradict God's design?
- 4) Make a list of everything the woman perceived about the tree:

5) What did the woman say about God? What does the serpent say about God? What does God actually say? Flip back to Gen. 2:15-16 for your answer.

6) Considering Gen. 3:6-13, in what ways did Adam and the woman sin by speaking and acting out of alignment with God's good design for humanity as His image bearers?

7) What were the immediate consequences of their sin in Gen. 3:7-13? According to Romans 5:12, what was the extent of the consequences of their sin? How does their relationship with God change after they eat the fruit? Their relationship with each other?

8) As a woman, why is it so easy to listen to voices that twist the truth? Why are we so quick to believe them? Can you think of a time when your desire for something outside of God's good will for you led you astray?

9) Think of some common lies that you are tempted to listen to in moments of weakness. What makes these voices so appealing? Look up 2 Corinthians 11:1-4. What is the warning for us?

Day 2

Today we will take some time to study God's curses on the serpent, the woman, and on Adam and how they relate to each other.

Read **Genesis 3:14-24**.

1) Who is talking? What are the repeated words you notice in these curses?

2) List the specific curses to each of the persons in the below chart.

SERPENT

WOMAN

ADAM



3) How does each curse relate to another? Draw a line that connects one curse to the other.

4) Paraphrase each of the three curses in your own words.

5) What do the curses tell us about God's original purposes for man and woman?

6) In what ways do you experience the consequences of the Fall in your daily life?

Day 3

We are back in **Genesis 3:14-24** for our study today. We will take a closer look at the curse directed toward the woman and the hope offered to her in the midst of it.

1) Look back at your chart from yesterday. Using your own words, write out the two curses specific to the woman. Why do you think God chooses these two specific curses?

2) Two different Hebrew words are used for the word “pain” in vs. 16, but they are similar in meaning. Look up these other cross references where these same Hebrew words are used in other passages and note below how they are used.

- Genesis 3:17 & 5:29
- Psalm 127:2
- Proverbs 15:1
- Psalm 48:4-7
- Micah 4:8-10

How does this add to your understanding of the words for “pain” in Genesis 3:16?

3) Notice the word “desire” and the way it is used along with the word “rule.” The Hebrew word for desire used here is *teshuqah* and the word for rule here is *mashal*. The word “rule” is used often in the Old Testament referring to dominance, authority, reign, or to have power over. We see both of these words together again in Gen 4:7.⁷ Kevin DeYoung explains, “Just as sin desired to have mastery of Cain, so the woman, tainted by sin, desires to have mastery over her husband. Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, God says to the man, you will get what you deserve, and she will try to master you (3:17).” How does Gen 4:7 help us understand the meaning of the woman’s curse in Gen. 3:16?⁸

4) What hope does the curse offer to the first humans? How would the Israelites have interpreted these curses? What do we learn about the seed of woman in these verses?

5) Who does God address when speaking to the humans?

6) Considering God's original design for a complementary relationship between husband and wife (see Gen. 1:26-29; 2:15-25), in what ways did the Fall specifically affect the marital relationship?

7) How has the Fall affected all relationships? How have you personally felt the effects of the Fall in your own relationships?

8) If a woman is unmarried and/or has never borne children, does this mean she is unaffected by these curses? Why or why not? In what very real ways do all women experience "pain" in childbearing or an ungodly desire?

Day 4

Read **Genesis 3:20-24**.

1) Look back at Gen. 3:15. Who is responsible for putting enmity between the serpent and the woman as well as the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman?

2) What is more damaging, bruising a head or a heel?

3) This verse is often called the “protoevangelium” – the first time we hear and see a glimpse of the Gospel message in the Bible. Look up Hebrews 2:14-15 and 1 John 3:8-10. Based on these passages, how does Gen. 3:15 hint of the good news of the Gospel? Ultimately, who is the seed of the woman that will bruise the serpent’s head?

4) Considering the curse of pain in childbearing, how is Gen. 3:20 hopeful? In what way is Eve “the mother of all living” both humanly and spiritually speaking?

5) In the midst of God's response to their sin, in Gen. 3:20 Adam gives his wife a name. *Eve* sounds like the Hebrew word for life-giver. How is this name descriptive of Eve's past, present, and future?

6) The name *Eve* means "life" or "living". As a woman made in God's image, how are you also designed to be a life-giver?

Day 5

Read Genesis **3:21-24**. Today we will take a closer look at God's response to the Fall of man after He pronounces the curses.

1) Look at Gen. 3:21. Where did the garments of skins come from? What would have needed to happen in order for the skins to be used as clothes?

2) For whom did God make garments? What does this tell us about God? What does it tell us about the guilt of both Adam and Eve before God?

3) In what way does the provision of garments from the shed blood of an animal point forward to the redemptive story of Scripture? What does this tell us about what is required in order to cover guilt and sin?

4) How are God's actions both just and gracious at the same time? Can you observe any other attributes of God here?

5) How does the hope found in Gen. 3:15 and 3:20-21 encourage you as you live in a fallen world?

6) As you reflect on this week's lesson, are there any specific attitudes, heart postures or habits you need to change?

TEACHING NOTES

WEEK 4 | GOD'S DESIGN REVEALED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

“Only if we understand God's plan for men and women within the larger framework of creation, fall, and redemption will we be able to appreciate God's original design for men and women, the depths of humanity's fall from grace, and the magnitude of redemption in Christ and the restoration of God's original plan for men and women. The OT subsequent to Gen 3 is not a sufficient reference point by itself when witnessing “biblical values” regarding women, because it deals with a stage in salvation history where humanity had fallen and was awaiting redemption.”⁹

- Andreas & Margaret Kostenberger

We have spent the past three weeks in the first three chapters of the Bible. We've considered God's good design in creation and His pattern of complementarity. We affirmed the inherent value of humanity as image bearers and the unique calling of every woman as an ezer—an essential counterpart created for community. As we follow the story of Scripture, we are now moving from Creation and Fall to Redemption—the working out of God's plan to rescue His people from sin and bring them back to Himself to live under His rule and enjoy His good blessing forever.

This week we will cover a huge span of this redemptive story following the Old Testament history of the Patriarchs, Law, Judges, Kings, and Prophets. We'll highlight five different narratives of women from each era and see how God's original design for male and female has been both negatively affected by the Fall and graciously upheld by God's goodness and mercy. We'll consider what it looks like to live out the ezer calling in a broken world longing for redemption found in the life, death and resurrection of our Messiah, Christ our Redeemer.

Day 1

Last week we saw what happened when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden. We were reminded at the end of the day yesterday that God was both just and gracious in His response to their tragic fall. As time went on, the fall led to death over and over again but God remained faithful to His people. Today we will look at a family descended from the first couple, and in some ways, they were also set apart by God as the first of its kind - the patriarch family of God's chosen people. In Genesis 12, God said to Abram,

"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

In chapter 16 that we study today, God has reaffirmed His promise to Abram, 10 years after he spoke to him in Genesis 12.

Open your Bible to **Genesis 16-18:21** and review the chapters. This may seem like a lot of reading but we want to get a full picture of what God did through Abram and Sarai to carry out his redemptive plan.

1) Who are the main characters in this story? What are the surprises/ what is the conflict?

2) In Gen. 17: 1-14, when God speaks about his covenant promises, who does he address? Why?

3) Look at what happens between Sarai and Hagar in Gen. 16. Who sins in this story? What are the consequences of each persons' sin?

4) What does Sarai learn about God? What does Hagar learn about God?

5) Where do you see God's design for the complementary relationship between man and woman upheld in these few chapters? How do you see God's good design corrupted by sin?

6) How do these chapters depict Sarai walking in her calling as an ezer? How does she stray from her calling?

7) In Gen. 17:15-21, God makes some significant promises to Abraham and includes a new name for Sarai to Sarah (meaning princess in Hebrew). At this point in the story, what would Sarai have done to deserve this blessing? Why did God bless her?

8) How does God's covenant with Abraham and his offspring demonstrate God's continuing plan to redeem (or save) His people? (Remember on Day 4, question 3 when God promised an offspring of Eve.)

9) Despite her barrenness and sinful behavior, God chose Sarah to bear the son of covenant promise. When you consider your own frailty, failure or inability, how does this story increase your own belief in God's grace and faithfulness to carry out His will in your life?

Day 2

Yesterday we got to know Sarai/Sarah, who received the promise from God that He would make Abraham and her offspring into a great nation. God always keeps his promises. This week, we'll look at a woman who experienced the powerful redemption of God's people out of slavery, and who was there, standing at the foot of a mountain with those same people when God entered into a covenant relationship with them bringing them back to Himself and back under His rule and blessing.

Turn to **Exodus 2** to look at the story of Miriam.

1) Read Exodus 2:1-8 and 15:19-21. What do you learn about Miriam from these passages?

2) What kind of little girl was she? In what way was she displaying qualities of an *ezer* even as a young girl?

3) Miriam was the first woman in the Old Testament to be given the title mentioned in Ex. 15:20. What title is it? How did she use her specific gifting in the community of God's people?

4) What were the women celebrating?

5) In what way did God redeem His people? (see Ex. 6:5-9; 12:21-27; 14:26-31)

7) Think of the women rejoicing and celebrating their redemption on the seashore. What does your celebration of Christ's redemptive work in your life look like?

8) A few chapters later in Exodus 19, God gathers His people at the foot of Mount Sinai in the wilderness and sets before them the stipulations of His covenant and His commands communicated through His servant, Moses. Look at Ex. 19:6-8. Was Miriam present at the giving of the Law? Who else was present? What was the response of all the people?

9) In the book of Deuteronomy the people are about to enter the promised land and Moses reminds them of their covenant with God at Sinai and what God desires of them as His people living in accordance to His Law. Read Deut. 5:32-33 & 6:1-9. What is the purpose of the Law?

Sadly, Miriam's story ends with her heart out of alignment with God's Law and His good design for her as an ezer. Read **Numbers 12**.

10) Why did God's anger burn against Aaron and Miriam?

11) What sin was in Miriam's heart? In what way did she break God's Law?

12) How was she living outside of God's good design for her as an *ezer*?

13) Can you relate with Miriam's sin here? Are there certain situations in your life where you are dissatisfied with the leadership/authority over you? Have you ever struggled with a selfish desire to be affirmed, validated or recognized for your efforts?

14) All of us, like Miriam, need a Redeemer. Search your heart and consider your own need for redemption. What has Christ redeemed you from? What is your response to Him? See Rom. 3:23-26; 1 Cor. 5:7; and Col. 1:13-14 for help with your answer.

Day 3

After God gave the Law to Israel through His servant Moses, they struggled to wholeheartedly obey. In Romans 7:7-20, we learn that the Law could not do anything to save people, but instead it shows us our inability to please God and our need for redemption. Eventually, through failures and re-commitments, the Israelites, led by Moses and Joshua, entered the land God promised to their patriarchs (Abraham's family). But, their need for redemption only grew more apparent as they chose not to fully obey His commands and love Him alone as their God. The consequences were oppression and destruction as the surrounding nations fought and conquered the Israelites.

Soon, the people of Israel found themselves in need of someone to save them. God had already given the Israelites the priesthood and the sacrificial system as a means to seek after Him and His ways, but these were dark times and the system was broken because of failure and sin. God graciously responded to His people's desperation by appointing judges to help lead the people through various battles and trials. Today, we will look at Deborah, Barak, and Jael.

Open your Bible to **Judges and read chapter 4.**

1) Who are the main characters in this story? What are the surprises in this story?

2) Look at verses 6-7. According to these verses, who did the Lord give instructions to? How did they respond to these instructions?

3) What do we learn about Heber the Kenite from verse 11? Flip to Exodus 2:16-21, 18:8-12. Between the Israelites and the Canaanites, who should the Kenites be loyal to?

4) Look at verse 17. Where did Heber's loyalties lie? Who is Jael loyal to?

5) Compare the relationship between Deborah & Barak with Jael & Heber. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

6) Where do we see God's design for men and women upheld in this account? Where do we see the effects of the Fall on God's design?

7) Who remained passive? Who took action?

8) How did the women in this chapter fulfill their calling as an *ezer*? (Look back at Week 2, day 4 for help.)

9) How could this story have been different if God's design for man and woman were upheld?

10) Were God's purposes accomplished despite the failures in this account? How do we see His redeeming work despite human failure in this story?

11) Consider your own life in light of these women and God's good design. Give an example of a time when it might be appropriate for a woman to step up and speak up about something like Deborah or Jael did? When might it be inappropriate?

Day 4

Yesterday we looked at one account during the time of the priesthood when the judges were leading Israel. Today, we are looking at the next chapter of the story of Scripture, the time of the kings. King David was blessed by God, feared God, and was successful in most of his endeavors to lead and protect God's people. However our study today takes us to his grievous actions against God and His people. We will look at David's flaws highlighted in 2 Samuel and their consequences for those around him, including Bathsheba and her husband.

Read **2 Samuel 11-12:15** for today's study.

1) Who is this story about? Look at the below verses (2 Samuel 7-8 and 23:8, 39). What do we learn about David? What do you learn about Uriah? Who is Nathan?

2) According to 2 Sam. 11:1, both David and Uriah were supposed to be on the battlefield but instead where is David? Why?

3) According to 2 Sam. 11:5-13, What was David's motive? In contrast, what was Uriah's mind on?

4) What are the effects of the Fall in this story? What are the effects of the Fall on God's design for man and woman?

5) How did King David break the law in sin against God? Flip back to Exodus 20 for help.

In the Seed of the Woman, Nana Dolce writes of this story, "We are left to wonder how she managed the stages of grief from Uriah's only wife to one of David's many. Bathsheba maintained her silence but Yahweh spoke."¹⁰

6) How did Yahweh speak into this situation? Who did he use to bring truth?

7) We know little about Bathsheba yet we know she bore the consequences of someone else's sin. How does the Lord display care for her?

8) Have you ever been required to be silent and God acted on your behalf? How did this grow your faith?

9) This story shows us that God is not ignorant of the injustice and abuse of the vulnerable, particularly women. How does this encourage you?

10) How do these characters point you to a longing for Christ and his redemption?

Day 5

Yesterday we looked at a brief account about King David and Bathsheba during the time when the kingdom of Israel was united. As both good and bad kings rise and fall, God's people are led either to worship Him or to forsake Him. Their longing for redemption and a better king only grows with every new era. In today's study, we look ahead to a time when the kingdom is divided and the evil king Ahab rules over the northern kingdom.

Open your Bible to **1 Kings**. We will be referring to the following passages in today's study: 1 Kings 16:29-31; 18:1-19, 36-40; 19:1-5; 21:23-26 and 2 Kings 9:30-37.

1) Who was Jezebel? Write everything you observe about Jezebel below.

2) If you had to describe the characteristics of Jezebel, what would you say about her?

3) Jezebel uses her *ezer* position for evil throughout her life. Recount the ways she abused her position below.

4) From what we have learned about God's good design for man and woman, in what ways is His design corrupted in this story?

1) Consider the effect she could have had on her husband and on the rule of the kingdom. How do Jezebel's actions demonstrate the influence and importance of the *ezer* calling?

2) How do we see God working out His redemptive plan despite Jezebel?

3) How can your calling as a suitable helper influence others to fear the Lord this week?

TEACHING NOTES

TEACHING NOTES

WEEK 5 | GOD'S DESIGN REVEALED IN WISDOM LITERATURE

Wisdom literature and poetry help us to understand life's experiences and emotions. Crucial to these genres is the cultural context, which helps us get a better glimpse into life as it was for the original audience. On this subject, Kristie Anyabwile says, "we want to enter the world of the original audience and see with their eyes, from their perspective, so we don't inadvertently impose meaning that is not there or miss meaning we should take from the passage...the greatest benefit that context brings to our study of wisdom literature is that Aha! factor that helps us see even more clearly the point of a passage."¹¹

This week, we will look at the Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and the Psalm looking to learn about God and His design from this poetry and wisdom.

Day 1

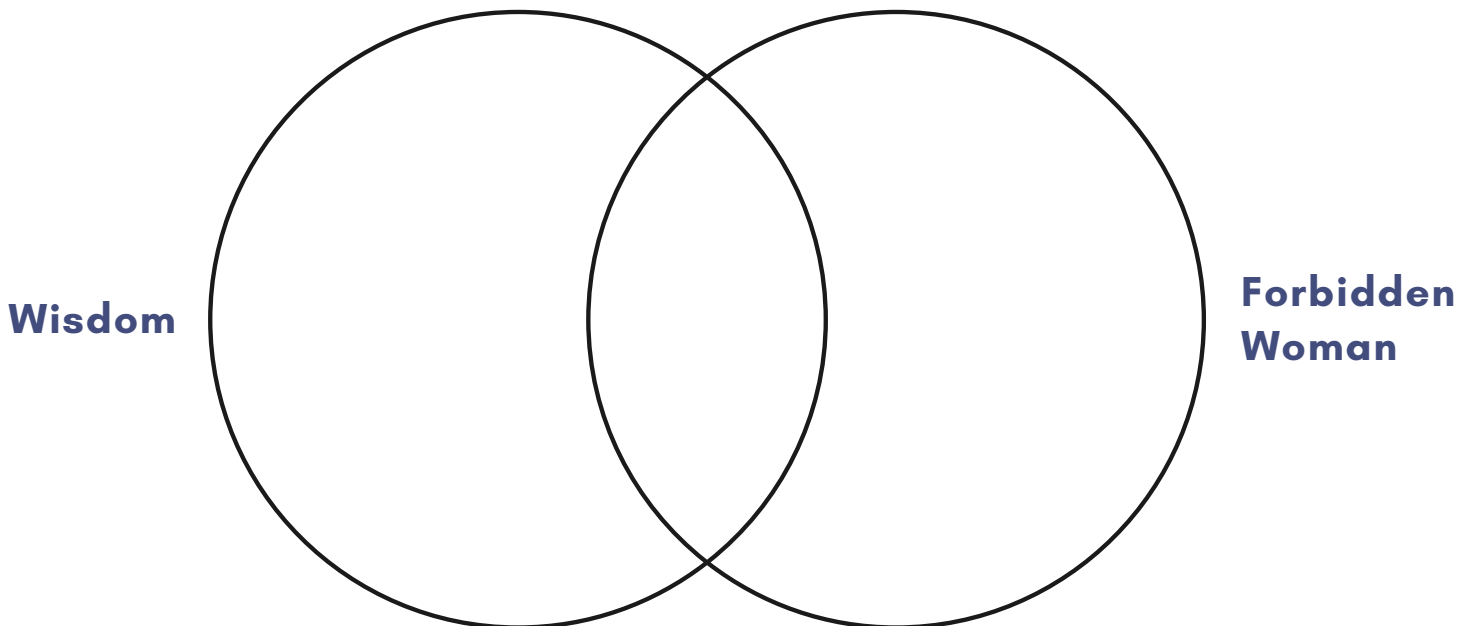
When reading the Proverbs it is important to keep in mind they are not meant to be read as a list of directives to obey. Rather, they provide "...everyday wisdom that serves as a guide for the wise living in a wicked world." Keep this in mind as you study the Proverbs over the next two days.¹²

Read **Proverbs 1 & 5** for our study today.

1) What relationship does the author have with his reader? How does this inform the way we read these proverbs?

2) What literary devices are being used? (i.e. parallelism, imagery, personification, etc.)

3) Compare & contrast the woman wisdom (Prov. 1:20-33) and the forbidden woman (Prov. 5)? What is similar/different about their position toward people? Toward God?



4) Both of the women in these proverbs are inviting others to join them. Consider God's good design for women as *ezer*. Why are wisdom and the forbidden woman personified as female?

5) How does the author make his appeal to/motivate the reader?

6) What is the author's intended message in these proverbs? What is the main point?

7) How do you see God's redemptive work in these proverbs?

8) Do these proverbs point to Christ? How?

9) Think back to last week. How do the women we studied reflect the character of these proverbs?

10) What voices are you listening to and following in your life? Where can you find wise and godly counsel?

11) Thinking back to question 4 and the power of invitation, specifically as a woman, how are you inviting others in? To what are you inviting them?

Day 2

Today we will take a look at Proverbs 31. Remember what we established at the beginning of yesterday's study as you look at this beautiful image of a faithful woman.

Read **Proverbs 31**.

1) Who gave this oracle or teaching to King Lemuel? (Remember Proverbs 1:8-9.)

2) Why is it helpful to know that King Lemuel's mother taught him these things?

3) Verses 10-31 are an acrostic poem and each line begins with a letter from the Hebrew alphabet. Since this is Hebrew poetry, should we consider Proverbs 31 as a checklist to complete?

4) What are the repeated ideas and themes?

5) What are some qualities of this fictional woman that point us to God's good design of women?

6) How can Proverbs 31 be misinterpreted?

7) How do we see the *ezer* calling upheld in this proverb? In what ways is she a suitable helper to her husband, family, and community?

8) How does this proverb point us to Christ?

9) The woman in this proverb spends much of her time and resources taking care of others. How does her self-sacrifice demonstrate the character of God?

10) As a woman, does this proverb affirm or challenge you in any way? Think about your time and resources and consider how they might be used to care for others this week.

Day 3

The Song of Solomon tells the story of a man and a woman pursuing a relationship with each other culminating in marriage. Here, we see the physical reality of joy in relationship that points us to a spiritual reality that, as New Testament believers, brings joy in our union with Christ. This book teaches that in our physical desires, we are to sense a glimpse of the love God has for us (Isaiah 62:5).

Many read this book and allegorize the bride and Solomon as depicting Christ and His church. In her book, *Literarily*, Kristie Anyabwile says, "...I think this book can be read more naturally as symbolizing and illuminating romantic love. It seems to be a stretch to make it about Christ. We do know that all of Scripture is about Jesus, but its not about Jesus in the same way...the Scriptures teach us that there is a love that is deeper, more intimate, and greater than earthly love. It is the love of Christ for His bride the church." **13**

Of this book, Charles Spurgeon writes, *"This Book stands like the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and no man shall ever be able to pluck its fruit, and eat thereof, until first he has been brought by Christ past the sword of the cheribum, and led to rejoice in the love which hath delivered him from death. The Song of Solomon is only to be comprehended by the men whose standing is within the veil...they who come very near to Christ can often see in this Song of Solomon the only expression which their love to their Lord desires."* **14**

Read the **Song of Solomon chapter 1** for today's study.

1) Look at SoS 1:1-4. What do we learn about the man this woman loves? She lists several things about him: your ____, your ____, and your _____. What might these tell us about this man?

2) Look at verses 5-6. What does this woman do with her time? What is the reason for her complexion? What might this tell us about her character?

3) In verse 5 the woman says "Do not look at me" - ashamed of the color of her face from toil. What words does the man use to describe her in the rest of the chapter? How might this speak life to her insecurities?

4) Look at SoS 2:16. How is this statement similar to Adam's poem in response to the creation of Eve in Genesis 2:23? What does this tell us about God's design for the marriage relationship?

5) This woman is called lovely and beautiful multiple times in chapter 1. Consider SoS 5:10-16. How does this poetic imagery depict the differences between male and female?

6) Read SoS 8:4. What does this caution teach us about desire and self-control for the unmarried and married alike?

7) What principles can we learn from the depiction of the earthly love we see described in this book? How do these remind us of our longing for redemption in Christ, no matter our relationship status?

8) Considering the quote by Charles Spurgeon at the beginning of today's study and what we have learned, regardless of your marital status, what can all women learn from the Song of Solomon?

8) In what ways does this chapter remind you of the longing we feel for the coming of Christ? How does this chapter give you a glimpse of God's perfect love?

Day 4

Today we will take a look at Psalm 4. Though this psalm is not directly addressing women, we can learn from King David's expression and posture toward God as we learn what it means to be a woman who depicts God's good design.

Open your Bible to **Psalm 4** and read the entire psalm.

1) What is the tone of this psalm? What emotions does David want the reader to feel?

2) What can we learn about God from this psalm?

3) Do you ever experience the emotions David depicts in this psalm? If so, how?

4) Verses 4 & 5 are at the center of the psalm. What makes these lines different from the rest?

5) When God has been quiet in your life, what is your natural response? What does David encourage readers to do about this? Why is this a wise response to our anger?

6) What has made you angry recently? How can you apply the pattern presented in this psalm to your present situation?

7) Consider the *ezer* calling in relation to the instruction and encouragement of this psalm. Remember, *ezer kenegdo* is translated “suitable helper” and can denote “corresponding strength.” Why is it important to take hold of the truths of this psalm as a woman designed by God?

Day 5 - Response

1) Look back at the readings from this week. How has the wisdom literature and poetry of the Bible shaped your understanding of God’s design?

2) It might be that some of the instructions and encouragements have made you uncomfortable or challenged you. Take some time to consider why.

3) In His wisdom, we believe God knows what is best for us. What can you thank Him for as you consider His design revealed in Scripture?

4) Ask the Lord to help you see His good design in your life and to help you, by His Holy Spirit, to follow his Scripture-revealed desire for your life.

TEACHING NOTES

WEEK 6 | JESUS REDEEMS & AFFIRMS WOMEN (PART 1)

Throughout the Old Testament we hear whispers and see signs of a coming Savior—One who will save God’s people once and forever from their sin and bring them back into the blessing of relationship with Him. The first pages of the New Testament announce, “He is here!”

Jesus Christ, the Son of God was the exact representation of God to the world, full of grace and truth (Hebrews 1:3; John 1:14). Jesus lived the perfect life we could never live and He died a death we deserved to redeem us back to the Father.

As he walked the earth Jesus showed us how to love God and love others with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength in relationship with others. In a day when women were devalued and often oppressed, Jesus’ words and actions affirmed them, thus declaring their equality, worth, and dignity as image bearers.

For the next two weeks we’re going to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. The goal is to glean some valuable lessons from His interactions with women and to grow in our admiration and worship of Him as our Lord and our Redeemer.

Day 1 - Mary the Mother of Jesus

1) Read the passages below. What important role does Mary play in the fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan of salvation for all people?

- Matt 1:1,16, & 18-25 -
- Luke 1:26-33 -
- Luke 1:39-44 & 54-55 -

2) Considering the verses above, in what way will the fruit of her womb (Luke 1:42) be a fulfillment of the following promises of God found in:

- Genesis 3:15 -
- Genesis 12:1-3 and 17:1-8 -
- 2 Samuel 7:8,12-14,16 -
- Isaiah 7:14 -

3) Put yourself in Mary's shoes for a minute. A young teenage girl from a small town—a nobody—confronted by an angel who stands in the presence of God proclaiming the news that she would bear the Son of the Most High by the Holy Spirit's power and not by human conception. What emotions do you think she felt? What questions would she have had? What would you feel? (Luke 1:29-30,34,39)

4) How do the Scriptures affirm Mary's response to being the favored one, chosen by God for this incredible task? What do these passages reveal to us about her trust in God?

- Luke 1:35-56 -
- Luke 2:1-7,16-19 -

5) Let's take a moment to simply marvel at the fact that the "Son of the Most High" would not only humble Himself to human, infant form (Phil. 2:6), but He also grew up under the nurturing care of an earthly mother...Mary. Look at these passages that give us a glimpse into Mary's experience as Jesus' mama. Write any observations you make as you read.

- Luke 2:21-22, 25-35, 39, 41-52 -
- Matt 2:11, 13-15 -
- Matt 13:53-56 -
- John 19:25-27 -

How do these passages affirm the importance and value God places on women, and specifically on motherhood?

6) What has the Lord taught you today as you studied what the Scriptures tell us about Mary?

Day 2 - The Woman at the Well

Is it hard for you to believe the longest conversation recorded in the Gospel narratives between Jesus and another individual is not with a man, but with a woman? It's found in John 4, and it's the story of a transformational encounter between Jesus and a Samaritan woman at a well just outside of town. Let's get familiar with our text for today by reading through the whole dialogue found in **John 4:1-42**. As you read, consider the person of Jesus and how He interacts with the woman. Write down any observations and initial thoughts in the space below.

1) If you have a map in your Bible, look up the town of Sychar in Samaria and trace the route Jesus would have been taking from the region of Judea to the region of Galilee. (If you don't have a physical map, try viewing an online version here:

https://www.blueletterbible.org/images/rosepub/imageDisplay/maps_nt_b

For some helpful context, Samaritans had been hated by Jews for several hundred years. They avoided interaction with Samaritans at all cost and considered them perpetually unclean (like Gentiles). Pious Jews would have never chosen a direct route through Samaria, nor would they have engaged in conversation alone with another woman. With this in mind, how is this setting of this story already surprising?

2) What time of day was it? Why would this have been a strange time for the woman in this story to be gathering water?

3) To a strict Jew, sharing water with a Samaritan would have made them ceremonially unclean before God. Considering this, and your answer to question two above, why did the woman respond to Jesus in the way that she did?

4) What does Jesus offer her? (John 4:10 & 13)

Now look up Jeremiah 2:13 and 17:13 along with Isaiah 12:3. What is Jesus proclaiming to this woman?

5) Jesus was patient with the woman's confusion and continues to press in to help her fully understand what He is offering. What did she perceive as her need? (John 4:15) What deeper need was Jesus desiring to meet in her?

6) Why did Jesus ask her to go and call her husband? How did this affect her faith and belief in who Jesus said He was? (John 4:28-29)

7) Jesus then clearly and unmistakably reveals Himself to her as the long awaited Messiah in 4:26. What was the woman's response? How did God use her response to impact others?

8) How did Jesus redeem this woman's life?

9) How did Jesus affirm this woman's value?

Consider this quote by Rebecca McLaughlin about today's passage:

*"We all long to be deeply known and loved. But so often we feel the need to manage how much we're known, because if people really knew the truth about us-our darkest thoughts, our envy, our deceit, our lust, our failed relationships-we fear that we would not be loved. In Jesus, this woman met a man who knew her to the core. He could have ignored her at the well or pulled away. Instead, he met her deepest need and told her who he is." **15***

10) Jesus saw this woman, knew all that she ever did, revealed Himself to her, and quenched her thirsty soul. How has he done the same for you? How does this beautiful interaction between Jesus our Savior and this outcast woman encourage your heart today?

Day 3 - The Woman Suffering from Bleeding

If you have ever had a season of longsuffering—perhaps a chronic illness, or looming mental, emotional and/or relational struggle—then you might relate with the woman in our story today. When daily suffering goes on...and on and on...it's normal to have moments of utter desperation. The question is, to whom or to what do you turn to alleviate your pain? Let's take a look at Jesus' interaction with a woman who knew intimately well the heavy weight of longsuffering, and how she came face to face with the only One who could truly redeem and affirm her.

1) This story is recorded in three of the Gospels and found in:

- Matthew 9:18-25
- Mark 6:21-34
- Luke 8:40-48

Read each account and jot down any observations you make about the following:

- The setting of the story -
- Jesus -
- Jairus -
- Jairus' daughter -
- The woman who had a discharge of blood -

2) Look up Leviticus 15:25-30. How would this law have directly affected this woman's everyday existence? After twelve years, how do you think she may have felt mentally, emotionally, physically, socially, and spiritually?

3) Knowing the context of the question above, why did the woman approach Jesus silently from behind? In what way was that a huge risk for her?

4) The crowds were pressing in on Jesus from all sides. What, then, led Him to ask out loud, "Who touched me?"

5) What was her response in front of the entire crowd?

6) In what ways do you see both fear and faith demonstrated by the woman in this story?

7) In all three Gospel accounts what name does Jesus call her? Why is this significant? (Remember the context of His encounter with her. He is on his way to respond to an urgent request from an important religious ruler).

8) In what way does Jesus redeem this woman?

9) In what way does Jesus affirm her?

10) Have you exhausted your resources and spun your wheels only to be left worse off than before? Picture yourself reaching down to touch the hem of Jesus' garment in desperation and faith. Imagine yourself bowing at His feet in reverent fear. How does this story reveal to you the person and work of Jesus in a more personal way? Journal a prayer of response below.

Day 4 - The Canaanite Woman

Today's account takes place in Gentile territory about 35 miles northwest of the region of Galilee. This surprising encounter between Jesus and a Gentile woman reveals that salvation and inclusion in God's Kingdom is not dependent on race, ethnicity, gender, or social status.¹⁶ Rather, humble faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Go ahead and read today's account found in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30.

1) If you have a map in your Bible, look up the region of Tyre and Sidon. (If you don't have a physical map, try viewing an online version here):

https://www.blueletterbible.org/images/rosepub/imageDisplay/maps_nt_b

2) Let's get to know the woman in our story a bit more by making a list of everything you learn or can discern about her from the two Gospel accounts using the space below:

3) Is Jesus' response surprising to you? Look up Ezekiel 34:6, 11-16 & Matthew 10:5-7. How do these passages help you understand His response more fully?

4) How do you think the woman might have felt after hearing His initial response? At this point, why didn't she just walk away?

5) How did even her limited understanding of who Jesus was influence her words and actions next in vv. 25 & 28?

6) What does she seem to understand about God's promise of salvation?
(See Gen 12:3; Psalm 22:27-28; Micah 4:1-2)

7) How did Jesus view this woman? Why did he heal her daughter?

8) How did Jesus redeem this woman?

9) How did Jesus affirm this woman?

10) Have you ever felt unworthy because of your race, status or gender?
How does this story encourage you as you consider God's promise of salvation in Christ for you?

Day 5 - The Widow from Nain

Both the woman suffering from the issue of blood from Day 3 and the Canaanite woman in Day 4 approached Jesus out of their desperation and in humble faith. They came to Him. In today's passage, we'll look at how Jesus reached out to a woman, who in the depths of her indescribable grief, probably wasn't even aware of his presence in her darkest hour, nor His power to be able to reverse death itself.

We find this account in Luke 7:11-17. Read the passage and answer the following questions:

1) Pay attention to the setting of the story. Where are they? How many people are present? What is going on?

2) What information does Luke give us about this woman?

3) Widows were dangerously vulnerable in ancient times, especially those without a son to provide for them. What might this widow have been feeling at this moment as she was burying her only son?

4) The text doesn't lead us to believe that she even looked up from her weeping to acknowledge Jesus and the crowd following him. However, it does say "the Lord saw her..." (vs. 7:13). Consider a time when you have been so overwhelmed by feelings of grief, fear, or hopelessness that it was difficult to believe Jesus was with you and that He actually saw you in your pain. How does vs. 13 encourage and comfort you?

5) What was the Lord's response to seeing her?

6) Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Jesus is the "radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature." What does this story reveal to us about the heart of God toward His children in their suffering and sorrow? Look up Psalm 103:13, Isaiah 54:10, and Luke 15:18-20 for reference.

7) Christ's compassion compelled him to action. In vs. 14, what did Jesus do and say? What was the result? (vs. 15) What did this miracle declare about who Jesus is? What was the people's response? (vv. 16-17)

8) Adding to the question above, how then did Jesus affirm this widow who had lost her only son?

9) The story leaves out the woman's response to Jesus, but considering the response of the crowd, it's not too far reaching to assume she came to believe in Him as the Son of God, her Lord. With this in mind, how did Jesus carry out his redemptive work in this story, even through her suffering?

10) What does this story teach you about how Jesus sees you in your overwhelming times of pain and sorrow? What does it reveal to us about his heart for the vulnerable?

TEACHING NOTES

TEACHING NOTES

WEEK 7 | JESUS REDEEMS & AFFIRMS WOMEN (PART 2)

Day 1 - The Women Who Followed Jesus

Although Jesus specifically called twelve male disciples, also called apostles, (see Matthew 10:1-4 & Mark 3:14-15) we are given insight into the additional number of disciples who followed him during his earthly ministry, including women. Today we'll look at the scriptures that give us insight into the important roles they played in Jesus' life and ministry.

1) Name the three women mentioned in Luke 8:1-3 and what the text reveals about each one of them? (We'll study the women at the cross of Christ on Day 4 this week, but for today's study, you can refer to Mark 15:40-41 for additional insight on the role these women and others played in Jesus' ministry.) Use the table below to record your observations.

Name	Description

2) We won't see Mary Magdalene mentioned again in the Gospels until the cross and resurrection, but knowing what Luke tells us about her deliverance from seven demons, what was her motivation for leaving her hometown of Magdala to follow Jesus? In what way would her presence among the followers of Christ have been a blessing to his ministry and had an impact on others?

3) Joanna was the wife of Chuza, the household manager of Herod Antipas (a king in the line of the Herodian dynasty who ruled over Galilee and Perea under the authority of the Roman Empire). This is the Herod who beheaded John the Baptist and was a key player in the crucifixion of Jesus. Look up Mark 6:16-29; Luke 13:31-32 & 23:8-12 for additional insight and answer the following questions:

What did Joanna give up to follow Jesus?

How might her decision to become a disciple of Jesus have been a great risk to herself and her family?

4) In what ways(s) did Joanna uniquely support the ministry of Jesus?

5) In Mark 15:41 we see how certain women disciples followed Jesus and ministered to him. The Greek word for “ministered” is *diakoneō* and is the same word used in Luke 8:3 above for “provided for” and it’s found in other New Testament scriptures for the word “serve” (Matt 8:15; Luke 10:40). It’s also used synonymously for the role of deacon in the church (1 Tim 3:10) and to describe the angels that ministered to Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4:11). Taking into account the examples of the word *diakoneō*, in what specific ways might these women have ministered to Jesus?

How were they fulfilling their calling as an ezer?

6) Jesus uses this same word, *diakoneō*, as he calls all of his followers to be a servant like him. Read these words of Jesus in Mark 10:45, Luke 22:26-27 and John 12:26. How does Jesus elevate and bring honor to the role of a servant? In what specific way did the women represent Christ and His Kingdom to the world around them as they ministered to the Lord

7) How did Jesus redeem these female disciples?

8) In what ways did Jesus affirm these women?

9) How does their inclusion in the Gospel accounts encourage you today as a female disciple of Christ? As a woman, do you consider yourself valuable in Jesus' eyes and as an integral part of his ministry in and through church? Why or why not?

Day 2 - Mary, the Woman at the Feet of Jesus

1) For the next two days we'll spend time looking at two familiar sisters as they interact with Jesus in their small village of Bethany. We'll consider Mary today, and her sister, Martha, tomorrow. Let's begin with a scene recorded in Luke 10:38-42.

Where are they? What is Mary's posture?

2) What is the good portion Jesus speaks of in vs. 42? (See Ps. 73:26, 142:5)

3) Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart. What portion do you tend to choose?

4) How does Jesus specifically affirm Mary and women as disciples in this passage?

5) Mary is also one of the two women recorded in the Gospels who anointed the feet of Jesus. Look at this beautiful and tender scene in Mark 14:3-9 and John 11:1-2, 12:1-8. What emotions arise in you as you read?

6) Why did Mary break open and pour out this expensive perfume on Jesus' body? What was she proclaiming to Jesus, those in the room, and to the world?

7) Why did Mary break open and pour out this expensive perfume on Jesus' body? What was she proclaiming to Jesus, those in the room, and to the world?

8) What did Jesus, in turn, proclaim about her? How did he defend and affirm her?

9) How do these stories about Mary challenge you as a female disciple of Jesus?

10) From what you studied today, in what way did Jesus redeem Mary's life?

Day 3 - Martha, the Woman who Believed Jesus

Martha is notorious for being the bossy older sister in the scene we studied yesterday in Luke 10. But often we neglect to emphasize her strength and rock solid belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, even in the face of tragedy.

We'll spend today looking at Martha's raw conversation with Jesus in the wake of the death of her brother, Lazarus.

1) It's a big longer text, but let's go ahead and read all of John 11, the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. While you read, what do you notice specifically about Martha? What was she thinking, feeling, or saying? Use the space below to jot down your observations:

2) After reading this passage, what can you deduce about Jesus' relationship with Martha and her family?

3) Look at John 11:21-22. Martha was not necessarily indicating she thought Jesus would raise her brother from the dead, however what do her words reveal about her faith in Jesus?

4) In vs. 25, Jesus privately makes the stunning revelation to Martha that he will not only bring about the resurrection from the dead, but that he himself is the resurrection and the life. What did Jesus want Martha to personally understand?

5) What was Martha's response to Jesus' question, *"Do you believe this?"*

6) Imagine yourself standing in front of Jesus, your world shaking and things don't make sense. Then he looks you in the eye and asks you, *"Do you believe this?"* How would you respond?

D.A. Carson writes in his commentary on John, *"When Jesus asks Martha, 'Do you believe this?', he is not asking if she believes that he is about to raise her brother from the dead, but if her faith can go beyond quiet confidence that her brother will be resurrected at the last day to personal trust in Jesus as the resurrection and the life, the only person who can grant eternal life and promise the transformation of resurrection."*¹⁷

With this in mind, how did Jesus redeem Martha's life?

7) How did Jesus affirm Martha in this story?

Day 4 - The Women at the Cross of Christ

The Gospel writers are intentional to include the presence of the women at the cross. They were faithful disciples, who despite their overwhelming grief and horror of the scene, remained until the body of Jesus was finally laid in the tomb.

Let's look at their names today, considering their courage and devotion and what we might learn from these women at the foot of Calvary.

Read the following passages and write the names of each woman in the numbered list below:

Matthew 27:55-61; Mark 15:40-41, 47; Luke 23:49, 55; John 19:25-27;

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

For the purpose of this study, we won't be taking the time to identify each woman in the list above, rather let's consider why they were there and what their presence at the cross means to us today.

1) We know these women followed Jesus throughout his ministry all the way to Calvary. What do you think caused them to stay at the crucifixion when others (other than the disciple, John) are not mentioned?

2) How would you describe these women?

3) Mark 15:41 describes these women at the cross as the ones who followed and ministered to Jesus. In what way did these women continue to minister to Jesus even as he suffered on the cross?

4) How do you think their time spent at the cross impacted their personal relationship with Jesus and their future ministry of Gospel proclamation?

5) Who was there to nurture and comfort Jesus at both His first and last breaths on earth? What does this say to you about God's view of motherhood?

6) How does the inclusion of these women in all four Gospel accounts affirm them? What does it communicate about the value of women?

7) At the time, they may not have realized the full ramifications of Jesus' death, but later they would understand. In what way did Jesus redeem these women on the cross? (see Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 9:11-15)

8) Why is it important for readers today to have a recorded account of these women at the crucifixion? What do they teach you? How do they encourage you?

9) When was the last time you spent time at the cross of Christ? Write a prayer below as you turn your gaze to Calvary and consider the redeeming love of your Savior for you.

Day 4 - The Women at the Resurrection

All four Gospel writers include the scene of the women disciples going to the tomb at dawn on the day Jesus was raised from the dead. While the accounts vary slightly on the names of the women they chose to include, they all tell the same story and portray the same similar scene. For the purpose of this study, we'll focus today's lesson on John's account, paying close attention to the encounter between the risen Lord Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

Let's begin by reading John 20:1-18, then answer the questions below.

1) What did Mary Magdalene and the other women see when they arrived at the tomb before dawn? (vv.1)

2) What was Mary's immediate reaction? What did Mary (and the other disciples) believe happened? (vv. 2, 9, 13)

3) Why didn't Mary recognize Jesus?

4) What did Jesus say that made Mary realize it was Him?

5) Go back to Genesis 3:8-10 and read the scene of God walking in another garden and calling out to Adam and Eve. Contrast their reaction with Mary's reaction to the risen Lord Jesus in the garden of the tomb.

6) Why do you think she clung to Him?

7) Which parts of this story reveal to you the personal nature of the relationship between Jesus and his followers?

8) Jesus chose to reveal Himself first to a woman, Mary Magdalene. He then entrusted her with the awesome assignment to be the first person to do what?

9) How did Jesus affirm Mary Magdalene?

10) Remembering her dark past from question 1 yesterday, how did Jesus redeem Mary Magdalene?

11) Read John 10:3-4. Have you ever recognized the voice of Jesus tenderly calling your name? How will you respond to Him today as your risen Lord and Savior?

TEACHING NOTES

TEACHING NOTES

WEEK 8 | WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Day 1

This week we will move from the earthly ministry of Jesus to after His ascension to Heaven. Now, through the Holy Spirit, the church takes on the continued work of the Great Commission in partnership with the church until the day of His return. This is the age in which we find ourselves today. The Scriptures we will study this week have been debated, twisted, squeezed and reimagined to fit varying cultural contexts, but we are going to aim to understand what the authors meant for their original audience and apply those evergreen truths and principles to our specific context as women in the local church today.

This week will require a little rolling up of your sleeves, grit, and commitment to do the hard work but it'll be worth it. These particular passages are often debated and difficult to interpret which means there will be a heavier load of homework. However, I believe we'll come through on the other side with greater clarity, deeper gratitude and joy, and an overwhelming sense of awe and worship for our God, our Great Designer and Christ Jesus, our Lord.

We'll begin by looking at the confirmation of God's intent for salvation to be for all who believe in Jesus through the outpouring of His Spirit at Pentecost.

Let's set the scene by reading through a few key verses in Acts. Open your Bible and look at:

- Acts 1:8-9 & 12-14
- Acts 2:1-4, 15-18 & 37-47
- Acts 5:14

1) Who received the filling of the Holy Spirit?

2) Which of the verses show women receiving the Word, believing in the name of Jesus, being baptized, and actively living in the community of believers?

3) How does what happened at Pentecost confirm what was prophesied by the prophet Joel? See Acts 2:15-18 and Joel 2:28-29.

4) Other New Testament passages are clear that salvation is for both male and female. The Gospel does not discriminate based on gender. Look up Galatians 3:26-29. List all of the things this passage says every believer has in Christ.

5) According to Galatians 3:26-29 and I Corinthians 12:12-27, what is the basis of the unity of the body of Christ? What does Paul say about the worth and value of every member of the body?

6) If you are in Christ, then you are God's daughter, part of the family of God, an heir of promise. You are filled with His Holy Spirit making you an invaluable member of the body of Christ. Is it difficult to believe this is true? Why or why not?

7) How do these truths change the way you think about your oneness with others in the body of Christ? How does it challenge you to live differently today as a daughter in God's family?

Day 2

1) Think back to our first three weeks of study in Genesis 1-3 (see Week 2, Day 2, Question 5). What specific commands were given to both Adam and Eve? Did God intend for them to carry out these commands individually, or together?

2) What similar mandate did Jesus give to the apostles? (see Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 1:8) Was this a command just for the eleven apostles, or intended for all of the church? Explain your answer.

3) There are several references to women who were filled with the Spirit and played an important role in the spread of the Gospel. Read the following verses and fill out the chart below:

Scripture	Name(s) of women	Role/Contribution
Acts 16:13-15, 40	Lydia	hospitality/ house church
Acts 18:1-4, 18, 24-28; Rom. 16:3-5a		
Acts 21:8-9		
Rom. 16:1-2		
Rom. 16:6, 7, 12-16		
Phil. 4:1-3		

4) How do the examples of these women encourage you as you consider your role in the church today?

5) Yesterday we looked at Paul's exhortation to the church in I Corinthians 12:12-27 regarding oneness in the body in Christ and the value of each member. Let's conclude today's lesson by going back to that same chapter and naming the individual gifts of the Holy Spirit apportioned to every believer. Read I Corinthians 12:1-11 & 27-31 and make a list below of all of the varieties of gifts mentioned in this passage. (Reference Rom. 12:3-8 and Eph. 4:4-16 for additional insight.)

6) According to 1 Corinthians 12:7 and Ephesians 4:11-16 what is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

7) Are spiritual gifts gender-specific? Explain your answer.

8) If you are a Christian, do you know what your spiritual gift is? If so, then how have you been able to use that gift of grace as a "worker in the Lord" in building up the body of Christ? If not, consider asking a close Christian friend or family member what your gift might be.

Day 3

In our remaining days this week, we are going to unpack three challenging passages in the New Testament outlining God's good design for the church. We'll study specific ways He has commanded His household to function, and the complementary pattern He has set in place for the purpose of carrying out the Great Commission.

It will be important to carry the perspectives and lessons learned from Old Testament patterns, Jesus' earthly ministry, and the affirming value God places on women throughout Scripture into your study.

1) As we begin today, reflect back on our time in Genesis. We identified God's pattern and order in creation. In the rest of the Old Testament, where did we see this pattern and order put into place in the structuring of God's people and their leadership?

2) You may remember Week 1 Day 4, as God's image bearer, in what ways do you daily bring order to your sphere of influence? How does this image God to others?

This week we're wrestling with some tough passages that speak of this same ordering in the function of male and female relationships within the church. Open your Bible and read **1 Corinthians 11:2-16**, Paul's letter to the church in Corinth. Using the space below, write down any key or repeated words that stand out to you and/or any initial questions that arise as you read this passage:

3) The Greek word for "head" (*kephalē*) in vs. 11:3 is the same word Paul uses in Ephesians 1:22 & 5:22-23 and Colossians 1:18 & 2:10 to describe the authority and preeminence of Christ as Lord of the church. Use the space below to draw the order of the persons mentioned in vs. 11:3 (Hint: God, Christ, husband, wife).

4) Paul uses of God and Christ as the analogy for headship within the marital relationship. How would this have been a comfort and encouragement for the women in the church?

5) In order to uncover (no pun intended) the meaning of the following verses in this passage on head coverings, we must take into account the Greco-Roman context of this letter and its audience. In those days, a married woman who appeared unveiled in public would be considered promiscuous, conveying her sexual availability. This would be disrespectful and dishonoring to her husband (see vv. 4-5).¹⁸ With this in mind, what would a married woman's head covering signify to God and others in the church?

6) What does Paul seem mostly concerned about in vv. 2-10?

7) How does Paul use the Genesis account of the creation of man and woman to support his main point?

8) What does Paul want to make sure his readers understand in vv. 11-12?

9) Read 1 Corinthians 11:14-16.

In his book, *Men and Women in the Church*, Kevin DeYoung offers helpful insight into verses 14-15.

*"Culture teaches us the acceptable hair lengths for men and women. Nature, though, teaches us that men ought to adorn themselves like men and women like women. The natural God-given inclination of men and women is to be ashamed of that which confuses their sexual difference. Culture gives us the symbols of masculinity and femininity, while nature dictates that men should embrace their manhood and women embrace their womanhood."*¹⁹

Considering this quote, along with what we've studied today, what does this show you about the nature and character of God?

How would you finish this sentence?

God values _____.

10) Practically speaking, what might it look like for you to embrace your womanhood and live out 11:14-15?

11) In what way has 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 encouraged your heart or strengthened your faith? How will you personally respond to God's truth in this passage today?

Day 4

Today we'll spend a bit more time in Paul's letter to the Corinthians and then hone in on 1 Timothy 2:8-15 for the rest of today and tomorrow.

Let's begin by reading **1 Corinthians 14:26-40**.

In this passage, Paul is continuing to emphasize the importance of decency and order within the church. The Corinthian church was a mixed bag of confusion, disunity, pride and self-promotion. They had strayed from God's missional call for them to walk in holiness in order to advance the gospel, and were missing out on the rich blessings found in humble obedience to Christ Jesus, their Lord.

1) At first glance, what is the seeming contradiction in 1 Cor. 11:5 & 13 and 1 Cor. 14:34?

2) Let's consider the context surrounding 1 Cor. 14:34-35. Who is commanded to "keep silent" in vv. 26-35?

3) What reason does Paul give for the command for certain people to choose to be silent and wait? What does this reveal to you about who God is and what He values? (see vv. 14:31-33, 40)

4) Look up the word 'decent' in a thesaurus (you can use [thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com) for this). List a few synonyms below.. What do these tell you about Paul's desire for the order of the church?

5) Given the context of this passage of both prophesying and weighing prophecy, what would be the circumstance, then, for a woman to remain silent in the church?

6) Think of a scenario of how this passage might be applied correctly in your local church family and write it below.

We're going to wrap up today by moving on to our third difficult passage this week, **1 Timothy 2**. Go ahead and read the whole chapter.

7) If you were sitting over coffee with Paul and you asked him what he really wanted Timothy to know and understand in this section (chapter two) of his letter, what do you think he would say?

8) Considering vv. 1-7, what is the basis of the instructions Paul gives in vv. 8-15?

9) As Paul shifts to giving instructions for right behavior in the household of God in vv. 8-15, who does he address first? Why?

10) What is Paul concerned about with the men? Their outward posture of prayer or the inward posture of their hearts?

11) Likewise, what is Paul concerned with regarding women? Their outward appearance or the inward state of their hearts?

12) Next week we will focus more on the characteristics of biblical femininity, but for the sake of this week's study of women in the church, rewrite vv. 2:9-11 in your own words. Write down the names of one or two women in your church that you have seen exemplify these verses well in their own lives.

13) Let's conclude today with a heart check. On a scale of 1-10 what is the posture of your heart when it comes to full submission to the Lord? In what areas do you need to grow in your submission to Him? How might your outward words and behavior change if inwardly you were fully submitted to His authority?

Day 5

As we begin today, go back and reread **1 Timothy 2:8-15**. List all of the instructions Paul specifically directs toward women in these verses below:

1) In 2:11, what is Paul inviting women to do?

2) Churches have divided over this next verse for centuries, but we will take a straightforward approach to what Paul originally intended Timothy to understand.

Read 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

In verse 11, Paul invites women to learn and tells them how to do it. Verse 12, then, is an explanation of what that learning looks like in the context of the local church. Taking into account all we've studied about God's affirmation and value of women in the story of Scripture, why does Paul limit women in the areas of teaching and exercising authority over men?

3) Keeping in mind Paul is instructing Timothy on church order and practice, how does this context inform your understanding of time and place women should be limited in their teaching and exercising authority?

4) How does vs. 12 naturally flow into Paul's directives to male elders and deacons outlined in chapter 3 where the qualifications for these roles are clearly specified? Are these roles open to any male in the church? Why or why not?

5) In vv. 13-14, Paul gives his reasons, or the why, for his instructions to women. Just like we saw in 1 Corinthians 11, where does Paul point back to, to explain his reasoning? Why is this so important as we aim to interpret these instructions for the order and behavior of the church?

6) How does Paul's first reason, "that Adam was formed first, then Eve" explain and support Paul's directive to women? For help, go back and review Genesis 2:20-23.

7) How does Paul's second reason, "and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" explain and support Paul's directive to women? For help, go back and review Genesis 3:1-6.

8) Look up Romans 5:18-20. What do these verses say about Adam's sin? How does that add to your understanding of 1 Tim. 2:14?

9) Finally, let's look at the last verse in this section, 1 Tim. 2:15, which can be challenging to comprehend and remains difficult to interpret by many respected theologians. For today we will try to use a process of elimination, along with the context of the passage, to help us get as close as possible to what Paul intended to communicate to his readers.

Knowing many women may never experience childbearing and that our salvation is by grace through faith alone and not by works, what can you conclude this verse does *not* mean? (see Rom. 4:2-5, 16, & 23-25; Eph. 2:8-9)

10) Read all of vs. 2:15 again. Later in his letter Paul exhorts Timothy with a similar statement. Look up I Tim. 4:14. Considering this verse and the context of the letter, write down any thoughts you have about the meaning of being saved through childbearing. It's OK to not have an answer.

We will discuss this text further in the large group teaching, but it may be helpful to consider the following as a helpful explanation:

As Paul writes later in his letter to Timothy in v. 4:16 exhorting him to *persist in this*,²⁰ so a woman should humbly persist in God's good design in faith, love, holiness, and with self-control. Women will be saved through or despite the trial of childbearing if they persist in this faith. Childbearing is one of the unique ways a woman can accept in obedience her God given design.²¹ This is in the sense that she is working out her salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12)²² and she will receive the joyful blessing of receiving everything she needs in Christ and represent God and His truth to the world (1 Tim. 3:15).²³

As we close this week, here is helpful quote summarizing 1 Timothy 2:

“This is about fidelity to God’s Word. This is about inviting God’s Word to shape the life of the church, rather than the intrusive winds of culture...This is about living out the creation order that comes from the character of God, God’s goodness...When we live out our salvation, we can expect to receive everything we need. When we live out his creation order, it is a joyous venture...This is about gospel and mission. Paul’s concern that the church pray and deport itself so ‘all people [would] be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth’ was one with the concern that godly men, not women, exercise authority in the church. Paul believed that if the church joyfully lived out the creation order in God’s household, the gospel would continue to go out with power.”²⁴

11) In reflection, as you consider living out your calling as an ezer in God’s good design, think of a personal practical application for how you might grow in “continuing” in each virtue Paul mentioned below:

- Continuing in faith -
- Continuing in love -
- Continuing in holiness -
- Continuing in self-control -

12) Reflecting on the Scriptures you studied this week, write a prayer of response to God in the space below. Pour out your heart of gratitude and praise, recommitting yourself to His good design for you...This is your space and your time to meet with your good Creator who: loves you unconditionally, gave up His own life for you, brought you from darkness into light, and redeemed you. He longs to be in a relationship with you and to give you everything you need to live out His infinitely good purposes for you in this life and in the one to come.

TEACHING NOTES

WEEK 9 | WOMEN IN THE HOME & COMMUNITY

Day 1

Last week we focused on what God has to say to the church, his household, in regards to behavior and the roles of men and women. This week, we'll move into the spheres of marriage, home, and community and how women are to uniquely image their Creator as they live for Christ. We'll also look a little bit more at the specific characteristics of biblical femininity and the beautiful nature of Christ we can put on display as we live out our calling as a Spirit-filled *ezer* in our daily lives.

We will begin by looking at the marital relationship and the specific instruction and encouragement given to wives in **Ephesians 5**. Read the whole chapter.

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1) How does Paul begin this chapter to the Ephesian church in 5:1, 6-10, 15, 21? What is he urging all members of the church to do? What is to be the posture of their hearts toward God and one another?

2) How does Eph. 5:21 naturally flow into Eph. 5:22-6:9? What specific "ordered" relationships are outlined in this section?

3) Who is instructed to submit to whom in Eph. 5:22? Is this intended for all women in the church, or specifically in regard to wives? (see also Col. 3:18 & 1 Pet. 3:1a) Explain your answer.

4) What does the word “submit” mean? Look it up in the dictionary or do a word search using an online Bible study tool (i.e. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>). Write the definition below:

5) Paul gives his reasoning for the command to submit in Eph. 5:22 in the following verses in Eph. 5:23-24. What passage did we study last week that reminds you of these verses?

6) Look up John 4:34, Luke 22:42, and Philippians 2:5-8. We see the perfect and beautiful example of a heart of submission in Christ Jesus during his earthly ministry. Who did Jesus submit to? What did his submission look like?

7) As fallen humans affected by sin, why is it so difficult to submit to authority (regardless of our gender and marital status)? Why is it difficult to submit to God's authority in our lives?

8) What does submission require of us? (See Gal. 5:24, Eph. 4:20-24, and Phil. 2:1-4.)

9) Can we do this in our own strength? How are we able to walk in humble submission before those in authority over us? (See Rom. 8:1-11 for help with your answer)

10) End your time today in prayer, confessing any sin before the Lord, knowing that in Christ there is no condemnation. Are you able to give thanks for the authority God has placed in your life? Are you able to give thanks for God's authority? Commit to walk in Him and in the power of the Spirit of God who dwells in you as you live in humble submission before Christ, your Lord, and those He has placed in authority over you.

Day 2

Today we will continue on in Ephesians 5, looking at the specific commands God gives to husbands and how those commands affect women.

1) What specific command is given to the husbands in v. 5:25?

2) According to vv. 5:25-33a, what is the manner in which a husband is to love his wife? What comparisons does Paul make?

3) At the time Paul wrote this letter, women were often devalued or taken advantage of in marital relationships. What do vv. 5:25-33a clearly convey about wives (and women)? If you were a reader in the original audience, what might these clear instructions to husbands cause you to believe about God and what he values?

4) How do these instructions create a safe, encouraging and joyful environment for women to carry out the command in 5:22-24 & 33?

5) A helpful analogy for God's good design for marriage is a couple figure skating.²⁵ What does this imagery depict about the marital relationship? What does it require from both parties?

6) Can you think of a couple that has lived out this kind of complementary relationship well?

7) Regardless of your marital status, what can all women learn from Eph. 5:22-33 and apply to their own heart and life?

8) Last week we studied the relationship between men and women in the church and so far this week we've looked at the marriage relationship. Take a minute to consider the men in your life. Which men does Scripture specifically call you to live in submission under?

**It's important to qualify this question and answer with the recognition that, for many reasons, this can be very challenging. Our perfect Heavenly Father never expects or demands his daughters to remain in an abusive or harmful relationship with a man in authority over her. There may be times when a woman needs to seek wise counsel and either remove herself or put up protective boundaries within that relationship. God designed our roles to be lived out within the context of relationships characterized by grace, sacrificial love, and joyful partnership. While all relationships are affected by the consequences of the Fall, we have hope in the redeeming power of Christ Jesus that healthy, flourishing male/female relationships are possible.*

9) Consider certain men in your life you are not specifically called to live in submission under, but rather to walk alongside (or perhaps you have been placed in an authoritative role over). What are some very practical ways you can relate to them as an *ezer*, displaying the attributes of a godly woman? How could you serve or help them fulfill God's design for them to step up in their responsibility to lead and protect? How might you be a hindrance to them?

10) Finally, it's important to remember Paul, the author of Ephesians, was unmarried (the same as Jesus) and in his letter to the church in Corinth he states the one who refrains from marriage does even better than the one who marries (1 Cor. 7:38). Flip a few pages back in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 7:6-9 & 32-38. In what way is singleness considered a gift from the Lord? What does this indicate about an unmarried woman's ability to live out her calling as an *ezer*?

Let's end today with a quote from Elisabeth Elliott: *"But having now spent forty-one years single, I have learned that it is indeed a gift. Not one I would choose. Not one many women would choose. But we do not choose gifts, remember? We are given them by a divine Giver who knows the end from the beginning, and wants above all else to give us the gift of Himself. It is within the sphere of the circumstances He chooses for us--single, married, widowed--that we receive Him. It is there and nowhere else that He makes Himself known to us. It is there we are allowed to serve Him."* **19**

Day 3

Today we're focusing on our relationships with other women in the church. Titus 2 outlines these commands and behaviors and is often the "go-to" verse for women's discipleship relationships.

1) Open up to **Titus 2** and read the entire chapter. As you read, list all the behaviors Paul mentions for each of the groups he addresses:

2) Are any of these behaviors mentioned for more than one group?

3) In a nutshell, what does Paul want Titus to teach the church? Summarize ch. 2 in one or two sentences.

4) Why should the church be characterized by these behaviors and attributes? (Consider vv.8 for your answer).

5) Looking specifically at the exhortation to women in vv. 3-5, what is Paul commanding them to do?

6) Based on these verses, what conclusions can be drawn about the specific attributes of a biblical woman (regardless of marital status or whether or not a woman has children).

7) Who in your life has been like an "older woman" who has taught and trained you in what is good and what is sound doctrine?

8) Is there a "younger woman" in your life you are currently pouring into? If so, what does that relationship look like?

9) If not, what might it look like for you to intentionally live out Titus 2:3-5 in a personal, practical way?

Day 4

Jesus spent much of his teaching ministry emphasizing the importance of the inner heart. In Matthew 23:25-28 he warned the religious leaders of being like the clean and shiny outside of a cup while inside being full of greed and self-indulgence. Or, like whitewashed tombs, outwardly appearing beautiful, but inwardly full of bones and uncleanness. In short, Jesus wants your heart. He wants you to love him with all your being, and image Him to the world with a heart that beats like His.

Today we'll look at the inner disposition of a Godly woman which overflows into her outward appearance and actions. Jesus said, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matt 12:34a). Rewrite that verse in your own words below:

Read I Timothy 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 3:1-7.

1) As you read, write down your observations about both Paul and Peter's descriptions of a Christ-like woman's conduct and inner state of the heart:

2) In your own words, what kind of a woman is this?

3) What is true beauty, according to this text? How does God feel about an inner heart that looks like this?

4) These two passages are describing God's good and unique design for women. He has created us to be uniquely characterized by a gentle and quiet disposition and inner beauty which then invites and welcomes others in.

However, many women read these passages and feel a tension between their natural personality and what it seems Peter and Paul are describing here. If this is you, perhaps this quote will help clarify:

"A gentle and quiet spirit is not about being soft-spoken. It is not a personality type, nor is it a temperament. It is about being approachable and welcoming, like a comfortable, welcoming front porch, so others feel welcome and able to come to you to find rest. It is a God-given spirit, a disposition that gives women the capacity to welcome and to be open. A quiet spirit makes a customized invitation, meeting others where they are. A quiet spirit draws others to a safe place." **20**

When we display a gentle and quiet spirit in this manner, who are we inviting others in to see, know, and experience? See Matthew 11:29.

5) How does your answer to the question above give additional insight to 1 Peter 3:1-2?

6) Can you think of a time when your inner beauty of gentleness and quietness of spirit has invited others to a safe place to experience Jesus?

7) In times when you have clothed your heart with the opposite disposition (think opposite of pure, gentle, quiet, self-controlled), what has been the result?

8) In what way is your outward appearance related to the inner adorning of your heart?

Is there anything in your outward appearance or conduct that is not reflective of what God desires in the inner person of your heart? What very practical changes can you make this week so that at the overflow of your heart, your outward appearance and actions bring glory to God?

Day 5

1) Flip back through the pages from both last week and this week and write out the specific characteristics or attributes of biblical femininity we saw. Star one or two attributes that are most challenging for you to live out.

2) As you look at your list of attributes above, think of your own relationships at work, in your family, with friends and neighbors. By God's grace, how will you lean in to His good design for you as an ezer even more fully this week?

3) We also spent time looking at the roles of men and women in the church and marriage. As both men and women aim to partner together in love and in accordance to God's good design, how would this more fully represent Him to the world? How would it proclaim the Gospel to the world?

No matter your personality, season in life, or surrounding relationships or circumstances, God has created you and called you to be a strong ezer, who adorns herself with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. Ask the Lord to show you how you can live out this calling in your unique sphere of influence.

TEACHING NOTES

TEACHING NOTES

WEEK 10 | WOMANHOOD IN THE AGE TO COME

Day 1

Well done, sister! You've made it to our final week together! We'll wrap up our study pondering the last and final chapter of the redemptive story of the Bible—Revelation. We've spent the past ten weeks looking at womanhood within the framework of the overarching story of creation, fall, redemption and now restoration. As we tie the bow on the gift wrap, we'll hopefully close these final pages with a deep sense of awe, clarity, freedom and joy in who we are as women created in God's image and called by Him for a holy purpose in this life and throughout eternity.

Let's begin by gazing at the indescribable scene of the glorious throne room of heaven.

Open your Bible to **Revelation 5:6-14**.

1) Who is on the throne?

2) Who is standing next to the throne?

3) Who is worshiping the One who sits on throne and the Lamb?

4) Where will all living creatures be when this happens? What will they be saying?

Now read **Revelation 19:1-3 & 6-9**.

5) Who is the great multitude mentioned in vv. 1, 3, & 6?

6) Who is the Bride of the Lamb? (see Eph. 5:25-32 and Rev. 19:8)

7) Who is invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb?

In **Matthew 22:23-32** Jesus has a conversation with the religious leaders about the resurrection, or eternal life after death. Read the passage and do your best to answer the following questions.

8) What does Jesus imply about earthly marital relationships?

9) Considering both the Matthew and Revelation passages, if earthly marriages will not continue in heaven, then which marriage will be celebrated?

Day 2

We began our study in Weeks One and Two studying God's complementarity in creation and His good design for male and female as His image bearers. Week Three we saw how sin entered human hearts and turned everything upside down and inside out. We daily feel the effects of the Fall in our own heart and in our relationships. Weeks Four through Nine we held on to the hope we have in the redemptive work of Jesus to cancel the curse and bring us back to Eden...to Himself. Now, in our text today, we'll see the final scene of restoration. Jesus will come again and take His bride, the church, for Himself. We will be in an eternal blessed relationship with God as His people and the curse will be no more.

Let's conclude our time in Revelation by looking at 21:1-8, 22-26 and all of chapter 22. Write down anything you observe about:

God:

The Lamb:

The bride or the people of God:

Eternal life without the curse:

1) Think back to Day Seven of the creation account in Genesis 2:1-3. God finished his work of creating and ordering, and He rested. The ancient understanding of divine rest is the image of God finishing the work of building His sanctuary (the earth) for the purpose of dwelling with his creation.²⁷

2) In what way is Revelation 21 the ultimate fulfillment of Day Seven of creation?

3) Who is the focus of the scene in Revelation 21? What words does John use to describe this?

4) God created male and female, making a distinction between them before the Fall, and it was very good (Gen. 1:31). From all that we've studied, what is the purpose of gender on earth?

5) We have studied many passages in Scripture that teach clear distinction between genders. However, in Revelation, we see little mention of this male and female distinction. Why would gender be under-emphasized in Revelation?

6) Who is your gender ultimately about?

7) How does this inform the way you think about your gender while you are living here on earth?

8) In a world that twists and confuses the purpose of gender, have you ever found yourself tempted to make your gender about you?

9) Where is your ultimate worth and purpose (both in this life and in the one to come) found?

Day 3

We're going to spend the next two days looking back over all that we've studied, and, like putting together a puzzle and the big picture slowly comes into view, end our time with a clear definition to the question, "What is a Woman?". As the Scriptures we've studied overlap and correspond to one another, the clear calling and role of women and the unique attributes we are designed to reflect should begin to crystallize.

1) We must begin our review back in Genesis 2:20. According to God's good design, what is the unique role and calling of the female?

This means woman was made for relationship. With the creation of the woman came the origin of community. All of the distinct attributes of biblical womanhood will correspond to her original design as an ezer made for relationship with others.²⁸

2) In the chart below, look up the Scripture, then identify the feminine attribute(s) highlighted in that text, along with the divine attributes she reflects. Finally, in the column, give an example of the way you may personally display these attributes in your own unique personality and life circumstances.

Scripture	Feminine Attribute	Divine Attribute	Practically Speaking
Gen. 3:20; Ruth 4:14-15; Is. 49:15-16; 66:10-14; Matt 23:37; Titus 2:3-5			
Prov. 5:18-19; 9:1-6; Song. 8:10; Ps. 27:4; 37:4; 96:61; Matt 11:28-29; 1 Pet 3:1-5			
Gen. 1:27-28; Matt 28:18-20; John 15:12-17, 26; Acts 2:1-4; 17-18; Phil 1:3, 4:3;			

Day 4

In a continued effort to put together all the pieces, today you will write a summary statement encapsulating all we've studied.

1) Imagine you're in a conversation over coffee with a friend and she asks you the question, "What is a woman?" How would you answer her based on what you have studied in the story of Scripture?

2) How is the Biblical answer to this question different from the world's answer?

3) In what ways has this study shaped your view of yourself as a woman?

4) In what ways has it shaped your view of the relationships in your life?

Day 5

As you close the final page, spend time once again gazing on the beauty of the Lord. Consider your high calling as an *ezer*, created in His image, to live out your femininity as a declaration of praise. Use the space below to reflect and respond to God your Creator and Christ Jesus your Lord. Close in a time of fellowship and prayer, thanking Him for His good design, and receiving His grace to joyfully walk in freedom and truth. Ask for strength in His Spirit to fully embrace your womanhood to represent Him to the world.

TEACHING NOTES

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