

10. Women of Mission (3Q 2008—Agents of Hope)

Biblical material: Luke 8:41–55; John 4:1–40; Acts 16:14-16; 18:1-3, 24–28; Rom. 16:3–5.

Quotes

- Cautious, careful people always casting about to preserve their reputation or social standards never can bring about reform. Those who are really in earnest are willing to be anything or nothing in the world's estimation, and publicly and privately, in season and out, avow their sympathies with despised ideas and their advocates, and bear the consequences. *Susan B. Anthony*
- My address is like my shoes. It travels with me. I abide where there is a fight against wrong. *Mother Jones*
- Don't compromise yourself. You are all you've got. *Janis Joplin*
- Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose. *Helen Keller*
- People think at the end of the day that a man is the only answer [to fulfillment]. Actually a job is better for me. *Princess Diana*
- As a woman I have no country. As a woman my country is the whole world. *Virginia Woolf*
- The first problem for all of us, men and women, is not to learn, but to unlearn. *Gloria Steinem*

Questions

Why do women seem to play such a minor role in the mission of the church as recorded in the New Testament? How does this relate to the situation today? From the perspective of speaking the truth about God, what difference does gender make? How should we relate to the issue of women's roles then and now?

Discussion

“In the New Testament we see examples of how Jesus dealt with women. At the same time, many women followed Jesus and supported Him financially (Luke 8:1–3) and helped care for His needs (Mark 15:41). Jesus specifically ministered to women on several occasions. When many of His disciples deserted Jesus at His death, women remained true and stayed with Him to the Cross. Women were the first witnesses of His resurrection.” (Sabbath's lesson).

Yet how many missionaries were there? Where are the books written by women evangelists? How much theology is developed in the New Testament by women? While we may applaud the intent of the lesson author in promoting the role of women in mission, the material in the New Testament is scanty. The woman at the well transmitted the message of Jesus. The Syro-Phoenician woman argued with Jesus, and received what she was looking for. The women who followed Jesus helped the group financially and cared for them. Lydia, Priscilla, and Phoebe are hardly more than names—we know little about them and the work they did.

But for all that we must recognize the difficulty, because of societal attitudes to women that continue today. The challenge is to move away from the arguments over roles (including ordination!) and work together for what really matters—sharing God’s good news, the issues in the great controversy, and the marvelous plan of salvation for every being in the universe.

For this is the essential part of the message we wish to share. There are plenty of distractions, and cultural/societal issues will always be there for us to argue over. The more important issues are ones of truth and right, trust and evidence, vindication and demonstration—all about God! Instead of being sidetracked by the debates of the day, we need to keep our focus, and always be talking about God and his government, ready to explain the issues of the cosmic conflict, and to defend the character of our loving Lord.

Comment

“Keep about your work. Do not flinch because the lion roars; do not stop to stone the devil’s dogs; do not fool away your time chasing the devil’s rabbits. Do your work. Let liars lie, let sectarians quarrel, let corporations resolve, let editors publish, let the devil do his worst; but see to it that nothing hinders you from fulfilling the work that God has given you... Keep about your work. Let your AIM be as steady as a star. Let the world brawl and bubble. You may be assaulted, wronged, insulted, slandered, wounded and rejected; you may be abused by foes, forsaken by friends, and despised and rejected of men, but see to it with steadfast determination, with unfaltering zeal, that you pursue the great purpose of your life and object of your being, until at last you can say, ‘I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.’” H.M.S. Richards, Sr.

Ellen White Comments

The most important discourse that Inspiration has given us, Christ preached to only one listener. As he sat upon the well to rest, for he was weary, a Samaritan woman came to draw water; he saw an opportunity to reach her mind, and through her to reach the minds of the Samaritans, who were in great darkness and error. Although weary, he presented the truths of his spiritual kingdom, which charmed the heathen woman, and filled her with admiration for Christ. She went forth publishing the news, “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” [JOHN 4:29.] This woman’s testimony converted many to a belief in Christ. Through her report, many came to hear him for themselves, and believed because of his own word. {GW92 186}

The Samaritan woman who talked with Jesus at Jacob’s well had no sooner found the Saviour than she brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples. The disciples saw nothing in Samaria to indicate that it was an encouraging field. Their thoughts were fixed upon a great work to be done in the future. They did not see that right around them was a harvest to be gathered. But through the woman whom they despised a whole cityful were brought to hear Jesus. She carried the light at once to her countrymen. {MH 102}

There are noble women who have had moral courage to decide in favor of the truth from the weight of evidence. They have conscientiously accepted the truth. They have tact, perception, and good ability, and will make successful workers for their Master. Christian women are called for.--Review and Herald, Dec. 19, 1878. {ChS 28}