

REPRESENTATIVE VERSES ON WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

Pre-Torah (Genesis 1—Exodus 19)

- * Gen 1:26-28 Creation of humans, no hint of hierarchy, both bear God's image and are given dominion responsibilities
- * Gen 2:18-25 Creation of woman as man's helper (cf. Gen 49:25; Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7)
- * Gen 3:1-6, 16 Eve tempted, punished with reality that Adam would rule over her and that her desire would be for her husband

Torah (Exodus 20—Deuteronomy)

- * Exod 21:10 A husband who takes a second wife must not diminish the rites of the first
- * Lev 12:2-7 Uncleaness is twice as long for a female child than a male child
- * Lev 27:2-7 The cash value of a male is higher than that of a female.
- * Num 5:12-31 Litmus test for a wife who is suspected of adultery
- * Num 30:2-16 A husband or father can nullify the vow of his wife or daughter, but a man's vow may not be nullified by another party
- * Deut 15:12-18 Both male and female slaves are to be released in seventh year; both can also commit themselves to their master permanently
- * Deut 21:10-14 Respect shown to a captive women tried as a wife and found inadequate
- * Deut 22:13-30 An innocent women accused and rejected by her husband is tested and protected if proven innocent

History & Prophets Before the Return from Exile (Joshua-2 Chronicles & various prophets)

- * Judg 4:4, 5; 5:31 Deborah is judge 40 years and tried civil cases. This passages represents numerous places where women occupy prominent positions: kings (1 Kgs 15:13; 2 Kgs 11:3); city founders (1 Chron 7:24); mighty/great women (1 Kgs 15:11; Jer 13:18; 29:2, et al); sages (2 Sam 14:1-20; 20:14-22); prophets (Exod 15:20; Judge 4:4; 2 Kgs 22:14; Neh 6:14; Isa 8:3; Ezek 13:17-23); tabernacle servant (Exod 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22)
- * Judg 9:53-54 Shame of being killed by a woman
- * Judg 11:30-35 Jephthah keeps his rash vow and kills his daughter
- * Judg 19:22-29 Gibeah tries to rape a man but instead rapes and kills his concubine whom the husband thereafter dismembers and sends throughout Israel
- * Isa 3:12 Implied shame of a woman ruling over a people
- * Jer 50:35-37; 51:30 Women as a metaphor for weak troops (also Nah 3:13)

Post-Exilic History & Prophets (Ezra-Esther & various prophets)

- * Joel 2:28, 29 Prophecy of men and women prophesying

Wisdom (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes)

- * Prov 31:3 Do not give your strength to women, they destroy kings
- * Prov 31:10-31 A capable wife is hard to find, but when found she is precious and successful in all she does, which is a lot
- * Eccl 7:27, 28 A wise man is hard to find, a wise woman is impossible to find

Jesus' Teaching and Example (Matthew—John)

- * Matt 10:34-39 Christ has come to bring a sword between family members.
- * Matt 12:46-50 Jesus' true family are those who do the Father's will
- * Matt 23:8-12 Call no one rabbi, father, instructor – for the greatest will be servants, exalted humbled, and humbled exalted. This passage represents the way Jesus overturned worldly notions of authority/status and replaced it with a servant ethic. Others would include first is last (Mark 9:34-35); rulers may not lord over like gentiles (Luke 22:25-27), new kingdom family doesn't mention fathers (Mark 10:29-31), etc. Jesus' most fundamental contribution to women is to challenge hierarchy as a whole.
- * Luke 2:36-38 Anna was a prophetess and the first to go around teaching people about Jesus as Jerusalem's redeemer. This passage represents others where women play prominent roles with Jesus: woman at well as first evangelist to Samaritans (John 4:28-42); women sponsor Jesus' ministry (Matt 27:55); women as first witnesses to resurrection (John 20).
- * Luke 8:1-3 Emphasizes the 12 followers who were all males, but goes out of his way to name several women who were also with Jesus.
- * Luke 10:38-42 Mary and Martha – the place where Jesus most directly weighs in

Early Church Experience (Acts)

- * Acts 2:16-21 Joel prophecy fulfilled
- * Acts 16:13-15, 40 Lydia played a major role in founding a church in Philippi
- * Acts 18:24-26 Priscilla and Aquila teach Apollos about Christ more completely
- * Acts 21:8, 9 Phillip had four daughters who prophesied

Letters to Churches (Romans—Revelation)

- * Rom 16:1-7 Phoebe deacon; Prisca co-worker; Mary hard worker; Junia apostle
- * 1 Cor 7:1-16 Equal rights and responsibilities in marriage
- * 1 Cor 11:2-16 Head-covering
- * 1 Cor 14:34, 35 Silence in the assembly
- * 2 Cor 5:16-18 No longer view anyone from a human point of view
- * Gal 3:26-29 Neither male nor female (baptismal formula? Cf. 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11)
- * Eph 5:21-33 Wifely submission in the context of mutual submission
- * Col 3:18-19 Wives be subject to husbands; husbands love wives and don't treat harshly
- * 1 Tim 2:11-14 Women learn in quietness and full submission; no authority or teaching a man; Adam formed first; Eve deceived first; saved through childbearing. Wider context: 1:3-7; 3:4-5; 4:1-3; 5:10, 14; 6:3-5; and 2 Tim 3:7 below.
- * 2 Tim 3:1-7 These women appear to be beyond instruction, which may explain the strong words in 1 Tim 2
- * Titus 2:3-5 Older women are to be reverent and teach what is good – encouraging younger women to love their husbands and children, be good household managers, submissive to husbands so God's Word is not discredited.
- * 1 Pet 3:1-7 Wives accept husband's authority, convert by conduct, weaker "sex"

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- * Exod 21:10
- * Lev 12:2-7
- * Lev 27:2-7
- * Num 5:12-31
- * Num 30:2-16
- * Deut 15:12-18
- * Deut 21:10-14
- * Deut 22:13-30

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- * 1 Cor 7:1-16
- * 1 Cor 11:2-16
- * 1 Cor 14:34, 35
- * 2 Cor 5:16-18
- * Gal 3:26-29
- * Eph 5:21-33
- * Col 3:18
- * 1 Tim 2:11-14
- * 2 Tim 3:1-7
- * Titus 2:3-5
- * 1 Pet 3:1-7

A TOPICAL APPROACH TO WOMEN IN SCRIPTURE

Locating the Topic

- * Worldly Feminism vs. Biblical Egalitarianism
- * Gender Politics vs. Biblical Leadership/Power Dynamics

Approach

- * From the clear to the unclear
- * So best not to start with Gal 3:28 or 1 Tim 2:11
- * Sequential biblical picture: canonical directional reading

Old Testament Background

- * Creation: Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25
- * Fall and Aftermath: Gen 3:16, 20; but 4:1, 25
- * Torah, land ownership, and economics
- * Torah, unclean daughters/women, and menstruation logistics
- * Torah and the trial of a suspect wife (Num 5:11-31)
- * Sociological studies categorize Israel as being “patrilineal,” not “patriarchal.” The latter term implies male rule over all things in the house and in the wider community, which was not the case (see below). Rather property ownership was transmitted wherever possible from men to men (when there is no son, a daughter is acceptable, Num 27:4-8). There is abundant evidence in Scripture and archeology to suggest that when it came to power, Israel practiced heterarchy – different people were over different aspects of society, some male and some female.
- * Men appear to be a majority in public offices, but women are represented in most of them:
 - Judges: Deborah
 - Kings: Maacah (1 Kgs 15:13) and Athaliah (2 Kgs 11:3), as well as *gebirah* or mighty women/great ladies/queen mothers/mistresses (1 Kgs 15:11; Jer 13:18; 29:2, et al)
 - City founders: Sheerah (1 Chron 7:24)
 - Sages: 2 Sam 14:1-20 and 20:14-22
 - Poets/Lyricists: Deborah, Miriam, Hannah, King Lemuel’s mom, and the woman in Song of Songs
 - Performers: singers, dancers, instrumentalists (Exod 15:2-21; 1 Sam 18:6-7; 2 Sam 19:35; Ecc 2:8; Jer 31:4)
 - Prophets: Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14), Noadiah (Neh 6:14), Isaiah’s wife (Isa 8:3), prophetess groups (Ezek 13:17-23), and others possibly included in groups of “prophets” (in NT, Anna, Luke 2:36; Philip’s daughters, Acts 21:8-9)
 - Priests: some women carried out functions related to the tent of meeting (Exod 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22), but they could not serve as priests, probably because of menstrual impurity, down time, and the patrilineal nature of the priesthood—marriage would screw up the whole system like with land ownership.
 - What reasons might there be why men outnumber women as leaders in the OT?
- * Notably absent from the OT is any law or prophecy against the fact of women functioning as leaders
- * Joel’s Prophecy 2:28-29

Jesus and Women

- * Anna, a prophetess, was among the first people to speak to everyone about Jesus (Luke 2:36-38)
- * The Twelve were men but others disciples were women (Matt 12:48-50)
- * Women sponsored Jesus’s ministry (Matt 27:55)
- * Mary and Martha standoff (Luke 10:38-42)
- * A woman is the first evangelist to Samaritans (John 4:28-42)
- * Women served as God’s original witnesses to the resurrection (John 20)

Jesus, his followers, and kingdom leadership/power dynamics

- * Servant leadership: Jesus (John 13:1-17; Phil 2:1-11); Paul (1 Cor 9:1-27; 2 Cor 11:16-31)
- * Unlike Gentiles, leaders must not lord over the people (Luke 22:25-26; 1 Pet 5:3, 5)
- * Leaders don't do the ministry but equip all for ministry (Eph 4:1-16)
- * Holy Spirit empowers all (Acts 2:14-22; 1 Cor 12:7-13; 14:26)
- * Holy Spirit is more present among Christian gatherings (Matt 18:18-20; 1 Cor 5:4-5)
- * First shall be last (Matt 19:30; 20:1-16; Mark 9:35; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30)
- * The seemingly less honorable are accorded more honor in the church so there might be equity (1 Cor 12:22-26)
- * Universal Giftedness (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:7-13; 14:26; Eph 4:11-13)
- * Priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:4-9)
- * Witness takes precedence (1 Pet 2:5, 9, 11-12, 15; 3:1; 5:2-3)
- * Church members teach, admonish, and exhort one another (Rom 15:14; Col 3:16; Heb 3:13)
- * Leaders should be known for gentleness, patience, peaceableness, and hospitality – not charisma or a take charge disposition (1 Tim 3:1-13; 2 Tim 2:24-25; Titus 1:5-9)

Acts

- * Joel prophecy fulfilled (2:14-21)
- * Lydia as key convert in Philippi (16:11-15, 40)
- * Philip's four daughters – virgins, prophets (21:9)
- * Priscilla and Aquila (18:2, 18, 26; cf. Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19)

Romans

- * Phoebe as deacon and letter deliverer/teacher (16:1)
- * Prisca and Aquila who work with Paul and to whom all the Gentile churches owe thanks and who host a church in their house (16:3-4)
- * Andronicus and Junia were prominent among the apostles (16:7)

**** Up until this point, gender appears to be a non-issue ****

First Corinthians

- * Revolutionary marital equality (7:1-5, 10-16, 32-34)
- * Prophecy and head covering (11:2-16, in v. 10 the term “symbol/sign” not in the Greek)
- * Spiritual gifts with no gender distinction (ch. 12)
- * Silent women (14:34-35, these two verses were flagged by several different scribes as questionable)

Galatians 3:26-28

- * Neither male nor female (a topic tangential to the problem in Galatia, which was Jew/Gentile relations)
- * See 2 Cor 5:16-18; Gal 6:15
- * See also 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11 for parallel formulas; baptismal confession?

Ephesians 5:21-24

- * Spousal submission (note: v. 22 lacks the verb “be subject” and this section likely begins in v. 21 or earlier, perhaps v. 15, because it lacks any kind of introduction)

Philippians 4:2-3

- * Divided co-workers who served alongside Paul like Clement and the rest of his co-workers

Colossians 3:18-19

- * Spousal submission and love (“as is proper in the Lord”), truncated version of Eph 5, which they may have received

1 Timothy

* Silent women, not teaching men (2:11-15; cf. 1:3-7; 3:4-5; 4:1-3; 5:10, 14; 6:3-5; 2 Tim 3:6-7)

* Deacons (3:11)

Titus 2:3-5

* Older women teaching younger women how to live

1 Peter 3:1-7

* Winning over husbands and weaker vessels (lit. show honor to your wife as to a weak vessel [fragile vase?])

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