

DOESN'T CHRISTIANITY DENIGRATE WOMEN?

The Main Questions

- Isn't Christianity a misogynistic patriarchy?
- Wasn't Eve just Adam's helper?
- Where was Adam when Satan tempted Eve?
- If God is Father, where is the Divine Feminine?
- Marriage: Aren't women supposed to submit to their husbands?
- Did Jesus have any female disciples?
- What did Paul mean when he said women should not speak, teach, or lead?
- What is the role of women in modern church leadership?

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- We look around our culture and hear women crying for equity. We see women abused through the Me Too movement. We see government leaders disregarding women—Trump, Clinton, most recently the FBI
- Business—Gender Pay Gap 2020 women earn 85 cents on the dollar
- We look back at the history we can see—women are weaker sex, women are supposed to submit, women are supposed to take care of the home, women can teach Sunday school and bible study, but NOT be “over” men in ministry.
- All around us we see gender inequality—but it’s getting better, right? we’ve come a long ways, right?
- In the bible times women couldn’t own property, women had no rights, according to Paul women couldn’t even speak in church.
- In modern times there are many who look back at the early church and see 12 Male apostles, men spreading the gospel, men in charge and women in the background treated like 2nd class citizens with no control or rights.
- But what if God did not approve of a misogynistic Patriarchy?
- What if God’s message is that women and men are in fact equal?
- Do you know what Jesus said about women?

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- When we think about sex and gender, God is not constrained by biology
- Sex in Creation: God creates humanity in His image and in His Likeness
- This language applies to male and female together and God charges His humans to fill the earth and rule over it. (Gen 1:26-29)
- Fulfilling this role depends on man and woman relating to each other sexually.
- God gave His people 3 roles: to rule, to relate, and to create
- God, a relational being, who is Love (1 John 4:8) could not truly be imaged by a solitary human.

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- God relates to His Image Bearers as both Father and Mother roles although Jesus taught His disciples to pray to the Father The Bible also presents God like a mother—
 - Isaiah 66:13 As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you;
 - Isaiah 49:15 Can a mother forget the baby at her breast...though she may forget I will not forget you;
 - Isaiah 42:14 I have been quiet but now like a woman in childbirth I cry out, I gasp, I pant
 - Deut 32:18 you deserted the rock who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. “

Mathew 23:7

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- Genesis 2 recounts the Creation Story
- *First problem in Creation solved by creating Woman!*
 - God created the woman as an *ezer*. The word *ezer* occurs twenty-one times in the Old Testament. In two cases it refers to the first woman, Eve, in Genesis 2.
 - Three times it refers to powerful nations Israel called on for help when besieged.
 - In the sixteen remaining cases the word refers to God as our help. He is the one who comes alongside us in our helplessness. That's the meaning of *ezer*
- The woman was not created to serve the man, but to serve *with* the man. Without the woman, the man was only half the story. She was not an afterthought or an optional adjunct to an independent, self-sufficient man. God said that without her, the man's condition was "not good." God's intention in creating the woman for the man was for the two to be partners in the many tasks involved in stewarding God's creation.

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- Examples of Ezers in the Old Testament
- God Created Woman as an Ezer Kind of Helper (Genesis 2:18)
- Genesis 3 and the Birth of Sin
- Shiphrah and Puah: Two Ezer Midwives Defy the King (Exodus 1:8-22)
- Rahab: Diverse Situations Require Ezer Work (Joshua 2)
- Deborah: An Ezer Woman Equipped to Lead (Judges 4-5)
- Ruth: The Ezer Daughter-in-Law
- Abigail: An Ezer Ranch Wife Saves Her Household From Disaster (1 Samuel 25)
- Huldah: A Prophet and Teacher (2 Kings 22)
- Esther: A Harem Girl Grows Into a Powerful Queen (Esther 4)
- Lady Wisdom and the "Beginning of Wisdom" (Proverbs 1:20-32; 9:10)
- Lady Wisdom in Street Clothes (Proverbs 31)

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- Eve is made out of Adams flesh, Gen 2:21-23,
- Gen 2:24:
a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Sex joins the man and woman in intimate relationship as they become fruitful and multiply.
- *“the God who exists in utter intimacy, with love across difference at the core of His being, creates image bearers who are of the same essence but different, and calls them into one-flesh unity.”*

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Love becomes broken

- Where is the man?????
- Cursed by God, their roles they were jointly given are impacted
 - Ruling over Creation is made hard by the curse on the man
 - Multiplying is made hard by the curse on the woman, but not only that—"your desire shall be contrary to your husband/but he shall rule over you. (Gen 3:16)
 - This word "Desire" communicates the will to possess and master
 - Gone is the unashamed love story. Now there is conflict and struggle

It sounds as if God meant to denigrate the woman

But this is the diagnosis, not the prescription! The bible does not endorse what it reports.

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- The love song of God for His people
- Isa 54:5 For your Maker is your husband. The Lord of hosts is his name
- As stated God is described in parenting metaphors as mother and father. But in the marriage metaphor the roles are never reversed. God is always the husband.
- Unfortunately it isn't a happy marriage. God's people are unfaithful to him by worshipping idols. The implication is that women are less faithful than men.
- Jesus—the ultimate image of the invisible God becomes our bridegroom

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- Jesus is truly counter-cultural through demonstrating valuing women and his desire for personal relationship with him!
- Of all the gospels, Luke shows Jesus radically elevates women despite the Culture of the times
- Luke 1: men often get it wrong and women get it right. Women were bankrolling Jesus, disciples of Jesus.

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- 2 people visited by angels—Mary and Zachariah He doubts, she has questions but doesn't doubt
- Luke 2 Simeon and Anna prophecy over Jesus. She was radically dependent on the people as a widow
- Luke 4 Jesus preaching...the fulfillment of all is me. Example Widow and man in examples
- Luke 7 heals Roman officer son AND son of Widow
- Simon pharisee and woman breaks into party makes a fool of herself washing Jesus with her tears and her hair. If He knew who she was....Simon the cool man with everything. Which one was blessed?

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- Mary and Martha—Mary acting like men in men's position while Martha doing women's work
- Man loses sheep Woman loses Coin—Luke 15 they lose go look have party and rejoice each seek to find what lost
- Persistent widow...give me give me give me I need I need I need this woman is blessed but the man says thank God Im jew free and male
- Gals 3:28—no more slave free, jew gentile, male female
- In my economy women matter
 - Luke 21 rich men being seen offering huge deposit make sure you know it vs widow who drops 2 mites. You have given all you have
- Luke 23 on the cross its all women Oh daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me (Only John there) women faithful, men ran

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- Luke 24 Jesus raised from the dead the women went to the tomb
- Women preached first Easter sermon. They are there to honor Jesus. They believed Him They wanted to honor Him as they figure things out and see that the Resurrection actually happened
- Peter doesn't believe her Cant trust a woman
- Gender roles do matter—12 Apostles. Men is responsible to lead his wife.
- But Jesus values employs and uses women to do things on and for his behalf
- Treat women the right way—1st Tim 5:2 instruct young men Treat younger women as sisters in all purity—you don't objectify them
- Don't leave women on don't lie to women.
- We are to see women as Jesus sees them—in a way that glorifies God

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- Jesus valuing of women might be compromised by the naming of the 12 MALE Apostles, but Luke emphasizes the women who follow Jesus too:
 - Mary called Magdalene who he drove the 7 demons out of; Joana the wife of Herod's household manager; Susanna and many others who provided for him out of their means; Mary and Martha—Jesus affirms Mary's traditionally male role of sitting at his feet;
- He crossed every boundary by talking to the Samaritan Woman and made her his first Evangelist
- He even saved a woman from being stoned for adultery, showing the men that they weren't morally superior to her
- In Mathew 19 he protects women from unwarranted divorce which would've left them destitute
- In a culture where women were devalued and often exploited, it underscores their equal status before God and his desire for a personal relationship with them

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- And then there is Paul in Eph 5:22-24

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Offense of the marriage metaphor: Author has 3 problems

1. Wives submit to their husbands
2. Wives submit to their husbands *as to the Lord*
3. The husband was the “head” of the wife

Its one thing to submit to Jesus Christ, the self-sacrificing King of the universe. Quite another to offer that submission to a fallible, sinful man. Doesn't all of this imply a hierarchy at odds with equal status before God?

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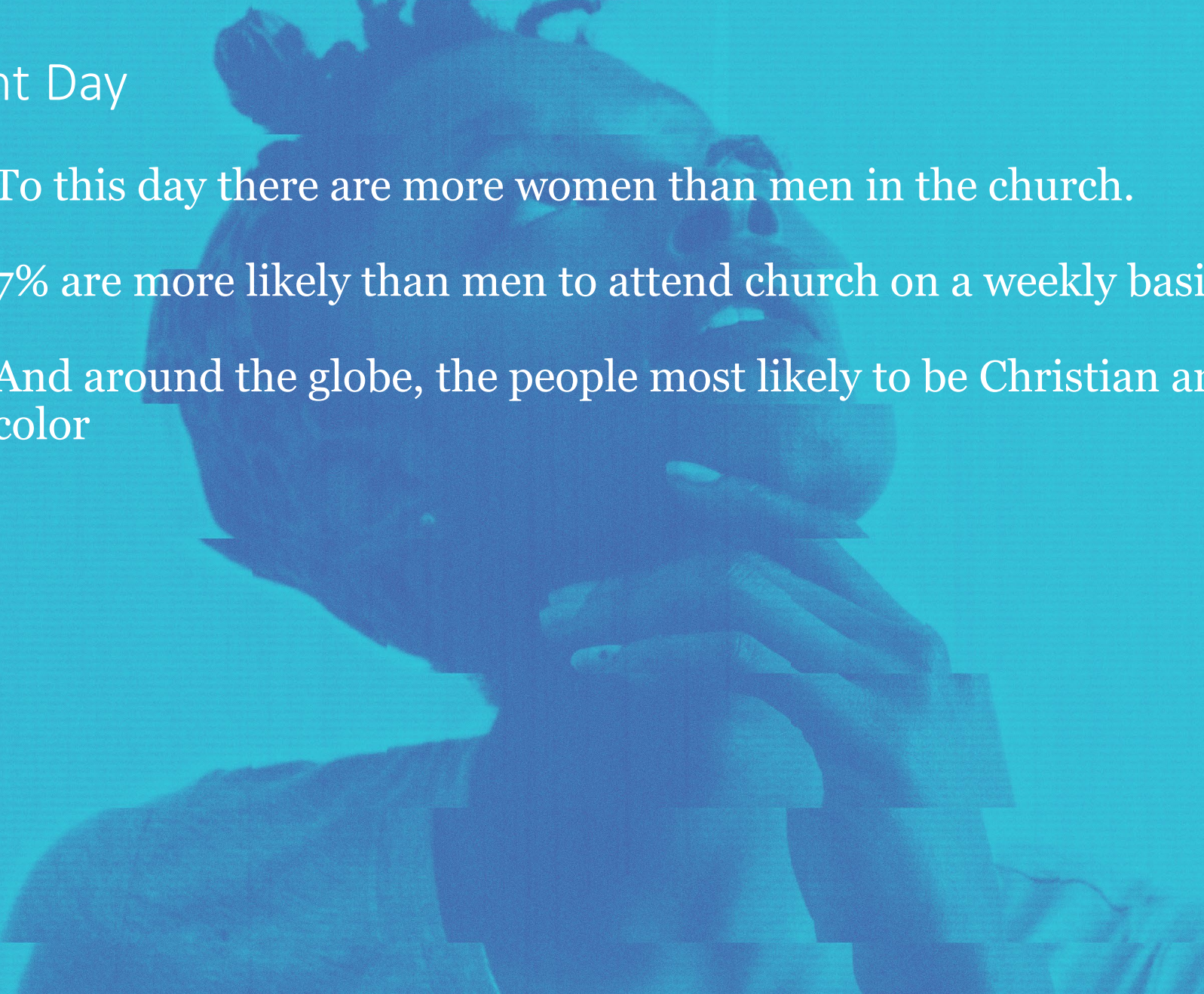
- Jesus had elevated women to equal status, but Paul it seemed, had pushed them down
- Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Eph 5:25)
- How did Christ love the church?
- Wives, how would we feel if this was our command:
 - Wives, love your husbands to the point of death, putting his needs above yours, and sacrificing yourself for him
 - Through the lens of scripture we see that God created sex and marriage as a telescope to glimpse his star-sized desire for intimacy with us

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- Women in the church
 - Christianity was predominately women in the beginning and was mocked for it
 - Romans left female infants to die
 - They gave their prepubescent daughters away in marriage
 - Men were not expected to be faithful to their wives
 - Paul included 9 women among his list in Romans.
 - These women founded churches, funded his work, worked alongside him.
 - Junia, in Romans 16:7, he praised as an outstanding Apostle
- Roles of Women in Church Leadership Today—
- The Controversies of 1st Timothy 2:12 and 1st Corinthians 14:34
 - Women are not permitted to speak during worship service but must wait to ask husband when they get home
 - Women are not to lead men

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- Present Day
 - To this day there are more women than men in the church.
 - 7% are more likely than men to attend church on a weekly basis
 - And around the globe, the people most likely to be Christian are women of color



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How have you been taught to think about women in the Bible?
2. In your experience, have your Christian communities treated women in a way that resembles Jesus' actions? Are there areas that have been lacking?
3. The author described some of her own wrestling through this passage, describe your own experience with this passage.

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