



Made on Purpose Handout

Session One: Method and Jesus

Androcentric: man at the centre – Adam and Christ

Patricentric: fathers at the centre – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and God the Father

Does the androcentric and patricentric nature of the Christian faith endorse patriarchy as a God-given order?

The Women Question?

1. How we frame the question determines the answer.
2. We can choose our starting points (points of departure) for research.
3. Where we start determines where we will go next.
4. Hierarchicalists (complementarians) and mutualists (egalitarians) begin with different texts and prioritize one over another. Both sides do this.
5. In reality, we have many options.
6. All the women in the Bible - a canonical approach
7. Christocentric
8. Crucicentric

The Christocentric Approach: What does Jesus show us about what God thinks of women?

Jesus is a man and had 12 male disciples.

He was born of a woman.

His mission was funded by women.

He had women travelling with him: Mary Magdelene, Joanna, Susanna and many others joined him in his mission. (Luke 8:1-3) It was the women who

stayed with him to the bitter end. (Matt 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41; Luke 23:49; John 19:25-27)

He healed women, taught women (Luke 10:38-42), and revealed his greatest truths to women, including appearing to women whom he appointed as witnesses to the resurrection. (John 4:1-42, 11:25-27, 20:11-18) Matt 19:9 he implements a radically subversive law regarding divorce, which is aimed at protecting women.

Note the physical proximity of Jesus to women.

'Perhaps it is no wonder that the women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this Man—there had never been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, who never flattered or coaxed or patronized; who never made arch jokes about them, never treated them either as 'The women, God help us!' or 'The ladies, God bless them!'; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously, who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no ax to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unselfconscious.'

Dorothy L. Sayers, "The Human-Not-Quite Human," in *Are Women Human? Penetrating, Sensible, and Witty Essays on the Role of Women in Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 68.

Session Two: What About Paul?

Paul's radical vision for humanity changed the way he understood the relation of Jew to gentile, free to slave, and male to female.

Paul had a vision for a new community in Christ, or 'in the Lord' as he sometimes puts it, where believers would be free to relate to one another without power relations and barriers, without the social patterns of superiority and inferiority operating, and without ethnic and tribal hostility, and without exclusion on the grounds of tribe, socio-economic status, or gender.

Even more powerful is the assumption that comes through in his writings that where the gifts of the Spirit are apportioned as the Spirit wills given to the body for acts of service, they are given irrespective of tribe socio-economic status or gender. (cf. Joel 2)

Churches are places of unboundaried worship and places of service where duties are carried out in humility and mutual submission.

For interest, read Eph 2 and Gal 3

Paul's Female Friends, Acquaintances and Co-Workers

Tabitha (Acts 9:36-42)

Lydia (Acts 16:14-15, 40)

Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Junia, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus's mother, Julia, the sister of Nereus (Romans 16)

Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11)

Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3)

Nympha (Colossians 4:15)

Lois and Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5)

Claudia (2 Timothy 4:21)

Apphia (Philemon 1:2)

Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19)

the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12)

the "elect lady" (2 John 1:1)

Philip's four prophet daughters (Acts 21:9)

the women who are encouraged to prophesy in Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:2-16)

1 Cor 12:28 'And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers ...'

Phoebe

'I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon (*diakonos*) of the church in Cenchrae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor (*prostatis*) of many people, including me.' Rom 16:1-2

Phoebe: servant and helper, or deacon and leader/patron?

Phoebe's role was as a leader in the church at Cenchrae, a co-worker of Paul's, someone who funded his mission, and the one he chose to deliver the letter to the Romans.

Prostatis: a hapax legomenon (once spoken) – only occurs once in the NT. It's related to the (cognate) verb – *proistemi*
For the use of this verb see Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4,5,12 where it is used in relation to preside, rule over, lead, and manage.

Douglas Moo argues that if the cognate verb *proistemi* is considered in determining the meaning for *prostatis*, Paul might be characterizing "Phoebe as the 'leader' of the church."

See Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 916.

Phoebe delivered and read, explained, and interpreted the letter to the Romans. With Paul's formal commendation of Phoebe to the Romans, the picture that we are getting is of a woman patron of Paul's, a great friend and co-worker, and one who is entrusted with the safeguarding and delivering of sound teaching and doctrine to a strategic church in a key city.

Euodia and Syntyche

Those who labored side by side with Paul (his co-workers) in Phil 4:3, not quarrelsome women! Co-worker is a term that Paul uses for those who teach and preach the gospel alongside him.

Clint Burnett and the study of inscriptions (social history) reveals the role of women in the ancient world and the early church in a new way. (D. Clint

Burnett. *Studying the New Testament through Inscriptions*. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Academic, 2020.)

The first convert is Lydia from Thyatira living in Philippi, who became the church's patron (cf. Acts 16:11-16,40) Lydia was probably the church's benefactress and Euodia and Syntyche were probably deacons or overseers.

'What is more, the attention that Paul pays to Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians suggests they were prominent in the congregation. Paul does not have a habit of calling out people in his churches and asking them to get along. The fact that he does so means that Euodia's and Syntyche's reconciliation is vital for the interests of the church.' (Burnett, *Inscriptions*, 138)

Junia the Apostle

'Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.' (Rom 16:7).

It is now accepted, but has not always been, that Junia with Andronicus of Rom 16:7 was notable or outstanding among the apostles and that she was a woman!

She was acknowledged in the early church as an apostle.

Chrysostom in the 4th C:

To be an apostle is something great. But to be outstanding among the apostles—just think what a wonderful song of praise that is! They were outstanding on the basis of their works and virtuous actions. Indeed, how great the wisdom of this woman must have been that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle! (*Hom. Ro. 31*)

But as time wore on and the opposition to women in leadership positions grew over the centuries, newer translations of the Bible changed her name to a male version of Junias.

First, she was a footnote (they acknowledged the name might be feminine) in translations of the Bible from 13th C where she was referred to as a man. Then in 1927, the footnote was axed all together.

The discovery and correction of this in recent years and centuries later, is a modern-day parable. As Scot McKnight writes, 'Let me be clear ... The editors of Greek New Testaments killed Junia. They killed her by silencing

her into non-existence.’ (McKnight, Scot, *Junia is Not Alone*, ebook, 2011, loc. 178)

We are not entirely sure what the title ‘apostle’ connotes, however, it is clear that it designates a person of gifting and authority in the church, one who oversees others, a guardian of the truth, missionary, church-planter, worker of miracles. (McKnight, *Junia*, loc. 92)

Women as Prophets

Philip’s daughters (Acts 21:9), we have the clear indication from 1 Cor 11:5 that women prophesied in the assembly.

Ben Witherington III writes, ‘Prophecy is addressed to the whole congregation – including the men. Since prophecy involved authoritative exhortation or a new word of God, *then it had a didactic purpose.*

Prophecy is not merely a personal testimony. There is nothing in 1 Corinthians 12–14 to suggest that prophecy (or preaching or teaching) were gender-specific gifts.’

Witherington III, Ben, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), 95-6: my italics.