

**Disapproving Marginalisation: Viewing Biblical Women Through A
Feminist Perspective**

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ABSTRACT:

While women were created as equals before God, the male-centered society criticizes the fact that women were created as equals and instead pronounced the point that women were designed to be docile to men. This paper attempts to explore Biblical women through a feminist perspective, thereby disapproving the patriarchal statements that rob women of their dignity.

KEYWORDS: Women, God, Equals, Male-centered society, Docile, Biblical women, Patriarchal.

FULL PAPER:

Women are created in God's image, just like men. Although women have made great measures in various spheres of the Christian mission, the male-dominated society denounced women's status by saying that they were created as subordinates to men in society. This paper attempts to view Biblical women through a feminist perspective thereby denouncing the androcentric interpretations of the Holy Bible regarding gender roles. Women, just like men were bestowed with different gifts from God as both men and women were fashioned as equals before God. "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27; NKJV). Though God strictly showed

no discrepancy between male and female, there are confusions in the thoughts of men and women concerning gender roles in Christian ministry. Many misjudge that the Holy Bible looks down upon women; like the Scripture doesn't give any space for women etc. Contrary to the patriarchal interpretations of the Holy Bible, the Bible presents some prized and esteemed women. The Bible through the examples of Biblical women proves that the creation of women is not a postscript. A woman is an elite part of God's making just like how a man is. The androcentric society should stop saying that a woman is responsible for the fall. While both males and females have equally disobeyed God's will, how is that a woman alone responsible for the fall? The Scripture doesn't blame a woman for the fall instead the norms of male-dominated society do. When women were created in God's image, the patriarchal society deprecated their status by treating them as subordinates. In an age when many women were categorized equal to slaves, the Scripture accredited women's value and raised their status equal to that of men. When many patriarchal writers approved the point that God created women only as helpers for men, the feminist perspective of this statement voiced out women's equality by proving that a male can't do anything alone without the help of a female. This verse in Genesis 2:18, "And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.'" (NKJV) proves that a helper is not somebody who is secondary, but the one who works together, side by side. The Holy Bible elevates the status of women by breaking through racial, and cultural barricades. By presenting some venerable women examples, the Holy Bible proves that it is not only full of heroes, but it is also full of female protagonists. While the Old Testament has Deborah, Ruth, Hannah, Esther, and a multitude of many, the New Testament has many heroines like Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Phoebe, etc. In spite of the Holy Bible having male prophets, the Scripture has also got female prophets. The examples of Deborah and Huldah

stands firm to validate the statement. “Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time” (Judges 4:4; NKJV); “So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her” (II Kings 22:14; NKJV). During the Old Testament times, society never allowed women to raise their voices against men. But even during those times, the Scripture gives readers the examples of Miriam, Deborah, and Esther, as Women trailblazers. The examples of Lydia, Pricilla, and Phoebe in the New Testament authenticates the avowal of having women spearheads in the Church. There are also so many unnamed heroines in the New Testament. For example, the woman who anointed Jesus with perfume (Mark 14), the Samaritan Woman (John 4), etc. The Bible writers were not startled to give women the appreciation they deserved, but the male-centered society looks at the role differences as prejudiced. The patriarchal writers fail to understand that women and men can fill the altered roles and functions and can still linger “equal.” Though the male and female roles were seen independent in the Bible, they were always contrived to be interdependent upon each of them. E.g. Just because children and parents are valuable in the sight of God, would a child have an “equal” say with her/his parents? No, right. In the same way, the Holy Bible clarifies that both males and females are both equivalents, but their roles are different and are of equal importance. The patriarchal writers fail to understand that transformations in roles do not imply subordination or dominance. There are several basic discrepancies between man and woman in terms of emotion, voice, size, power, etc; the disparities between them go even further as they have distinct roles to play. This paper denounces the patriarchal avowal of laws concerning women’s roles that articulate them as impure, weak, subordinates to men, etc. In the Bible, Jesus Christ treated women as equals in life and social status. Jesus Christ

showed no favoritism to any gender in particular. He expected women to be his disciples the same way He expected men. He had no double standards for moral concepts regarding men and women. It is to be noted that women funded many times for Jesus's ministry.

Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities- Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance. (Luke 8:1-3; NKJV)

The Holy Bible signifies the fact that both women and men stand on parity with each other as disciples, in prayer. No Spiritual gifts were denied to women. This verse shows that even women were given the gift of prophesy, “Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied” (Acts 21:9; NKJV). This example in the Bible disapproves of the boundary on women, which states that Spiritual gifts were only given to men. The Holy Bible has also included women in teaching the ministry as the Scripture always consider women as notable channels of ministry.

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles (Romans 16:1-4; NKJV).

In the above - mentioned example, the Bible talks about a woman called Phoebe who is a servant of Christ followed by the names of a couple, the fellow workers in Christ. Priscilla,

the name of Aquilla's wife is preceded first to determine the fact women were much persistent in their faith. Following is an example from the book of Acts which testimonies the position of women in the events and augmentations of the Church.

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.
(Acts 1:12-14; NKJV)

Though the Old Testament times had certain laws against women, there were no double standards for moral concepts regarding men and women during the New Testament period. Following is an example from the book of John, which devalue the laws set by the patriarchal society of the Old Testament.

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (John 8:3-7; NKJV).

When the laws during the Old Testament times had severe effects on women, Jesus' take on this issue discredited the androcentric standards of the acts of adultery. The following

example from the book of Mark, chapter 14, verses 3-9, denotes that the Holy Bible supported women when the patriarchal society has put them down.

And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." (Mark 14:3-9; NKJV)

These examples of Jesus' treatment regarding divorce and adultery evidenced the equal stand of women with that of men. These are specific examples that corroborate women's position on women's equality in the Bible. When the male disciples of Jesus' deserted Him during the time of Crucifixion, the women followers of Jesus were with Him near the Cross until His death. Also, the post-resurrection of Christ was first to a woman through which the Gospel widely spread. This verse is a proof for that, "Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons" (Mark 16:9; NKJV). When women were considered as feeble during those days, the records of the Holy Bible thus elucidate the fact that women had come out of their male-centered circle and corroborated themselves in the colossal task of spreading the Gospel. This paper, therefore,

disapproves the patriarchal customs of gender discriminations in the Bible, thereby declaring the practicality that both males and females were owed even moral and social responsibilities to build the Lord's kingdom. The paper thus confirms that the marginalization of Biblical women was created by the patriarchal society, while the Holy Bible irretrievably authorizes the praise and dignity of womanhood.

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