

New Testament Church Principles - Part 4

by Mike Attwood

The sermon emphasizes the importance of focusing on what can be done rather than what can't be done, and highlights the significant role of women in the church through prayer and service.

Duration: 46:40

Scripture: Luke 8:2

Topics: "Women In Ministry", "Church Service"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the significant service of women in the local church, highlighting the various roles and impactful contributions they can make. It encourages focusing on the opportunities available for service rather than limitations, drawing examples from Scripture of women who served, ministered, evangelized, and suffered faithfully. The message underscores the importance of women's involvement in hospitality, financial support, evangelism, good works, sharing the Scriptures, and worship, showcasing the profound impact they can have on the life of a local assembly.

Transcript

And I'd like to continue on with this subject that we've kind of been dealing with. We've been dealing with New Testament church principles over the course of the weekend. And yet we said one of our difficulties is that this is a big subject and we don't have a lot of time that's been allotted to deal with it.

And so there's a lot of stuff that we just haven't even looked at and we won't get to look at on this occasion. But we were kind of looking particularly about some of the controversial issues and particularly today, very controversial, the role of women in the church. And I feel like I want to keep going on that a little bit further because what we've emphasized particularly is things that women can't do.

We've said that they can't preach in the church, that they can't pray audibly in the gatherings of the church. And so some people might say, well, that's a real kind of stinker, isn't it? You come here this weekend, all you're going to tell us is what we can't do. I don't want to do that.

I want to tell you that there is a lot you can do. And so I want to talk about the significant service of sisters in the local assembly. Now you say, well, guys, what am I supposed to do here? You know, they're talking about sisters.

Well, I'm sure that many of these things that we're going to share from Scripture that sisters are involved in, many of them you can do too, guys. So I don't want you just to go to sleep at this point. But I want you just to look with me at Genesis 3 just to begin with, because I want to just point something out that I think is quite important for us in this context.

A very familiar passage, you want to just read the first six verses. Genesis 3 verse 1, it says, Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made, and he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? The woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die.

For God doth know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and the tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat. And I want to just point out something about the strategy of Satan here in the Garden of Eden.

What was it that he was trying to get Eve to focus on? I'll tell you what it was. He wanted to focus on what she couldn't have rather than what she could have. Right? Because, you see, if you think about what she could have, what she could have is she could eat from any tree except one.

Right? I mean, she had tremendous scope that she could be taking from and enjoying, and yet he wanted her to focus on the one thing that God had withheld from her. Now, that worked, didn't it? Part of it is doubt the goodness of God. You see, if God really loved you, he'd let you eat from this tree as well, you see.

If he really cared for you, he'd give you this extra bit as well. Well, of course God loves you because, look, he's given you all these trees to eat from. And actually he's withheld this one because, well, because there's a reason for that.

It's not going to be good for you. And so, in a very real sense, the strategy worked, and he still wants to do that today. What he wants to say to you is this.

You know, you're in this assembly, and think about what you can't do. Instead of saying, look at all you can do. Look at the avenues of service there is for you.

There's so much that you can do that would be fulfilling and satisfying and can really be a blessing to your life. But you know, he wants you to think about, yeah, but I can't preach. And I can't pray audibly.

You see, the whole--and we play, guys, we play into the hands when we teach on church truth. You know what we tend to emphasize? We tend to make a big deal about what you can't do. And so we want to correct that.

We want to say, no, hold on a second. Instead of looking at the tree that you can't eat from, let's look at the trees you can eat from. Let's focus on what is available, what you can do, and the privilege of that, and let's try and look at it in a positive light.

By the way, Satan's strategy is always the same. He wants us to doubt God's love for us. But if we really are honest with the text of Scripture, this is both for guys and girls the same, but we can never ever doubt

now the love of God for us, right? Because Romans chapter 5, verse 8, God's love has been demonstrated.

God commendeth or demonstrates his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And no person in this room, if they're really honest with God and with Scripture, could ever doubt God's love for them, because he gave the best of heaven for the worst of earth. You can't doubt God loves you.

I keep coming back to that when I wonder sometimes, because I sometimes think, how could God ever love me? And then I realize, well, it was while we were sinners. While we were at our very worst, God demonstrated his love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us. So, back to our passage and thinking about this idea of what can sisters do.

Let's look at the trees rather than the tree. And of course, at the same time, we want to emphasize this, that why we've taught these things this weekend is because they're biblical. We are saying that women are to be silent in the church meetings.

They're not to individually audibly address the assembly. And I stand by what I said all weekend long, because that's what the book says. We want to emphasize that.

This is what God says, and God is all wise. Women are not to teach. I suffer a woman not to teach, nor usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

We stand by that. But what can they do? Well, we also talked about the covering. And I want to just talk about the idea of just emphasizing again as a way of reminder, refreshing our memories.

One of the things we said when we talked about the covering is that one of the things the sister can do is she can't preach to men, but every time she takes that cloth upon her head, she is declaring to angels, look what God has done in this work of new creation. He's turned rebels into those that are now accepting God's headship order, and that's a great privilege. And I hope you feel, you know, I remember once teaching on this subject down in Florida, and a lady came up to me afterwards, and she said, you know, she said, Brother Atwood, she said, I've wore a head covering for 30 years, and until this morning I never understood why.

I thought, what a pity. What a real pity, because, I mean, praise the Lord that she was submissive enough to just do it and recognize I'm not going to make a deal of this or an issue of it. But what a difference it makes when you know why and know what you're actually saying when you do it, you see.

And we certainly want to say that. What a privilege it is to be able to do this and proclaim to the angelic realms what God has done. And so sisters are certainly stewards of the coverings.

Now, look at 1 Timothy 5, and we're thinking now particularly of the things that sisters can do that can have a profound effect in a local assembly. 1 Timothy 5, and I'm going to give you not only the passages, but I'm going to give examples. 1 Timothy 5, of course, this is a passage that deals with widows and the care of widows in the local assembly.

And somebody's stolen 1 Timothy out of my Bible. There it is, I've got it. 1 Timothy 5, and so he's talking about the care of widows and how the day before we looked to the government to do everything for us, and what a pity that we ever began to depend on the government.

You can begin to see that it's kind of putting your confidence in something that's bent and crooked and not going to help you. But back in the day of the Bible times, it was the local church that took care of widows if their immediate family couldn't care for them. In other words, first of all, it was the family's responsibility.

And if the family didn't have the wherewithal or weren't there or in existence or whatever, she was just destitute, then the local church had a widow's list, and they would support widows and care for them. And he started to talk about what kind of widow is worthy of being included on that list. And he says in verse 5, Now she that is a widow indeed, in other words, she meets the criteria to be supported by the local assembly and cared for by the local assembly, she that is a widow indeed, and desolate.

She's no other means. She can't look to a family because they're not there. They're not in the picture.

She's absolutely desolate. But in her desolation, where is her trust? It says she trusts in God. And then it says this, She continues in supplications and prayers night and day.

And we want to focus on the aspect of prayer and the impact of the prayers of sisters on the life of a local assembly. Now, of course, she's a widow. She wasn't always a widow.

And I'm certain she didn't just suddenly start praying when she lost her husband. In fact, those of you that are married, you realize you have to pray all the more when you've got a husband, right? Especially if you're anything like me. And so we're not saying she didn't just start this.

She's been characterized throughout her life as a woman who is given to supplication and prayers. Does that have an impact on the life of a local assembly? I don't know if you've ever read any of the great biographies. John Newton.

You remember John Newton? This guy, Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound That Saved a Wretch Like Me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, but blind, but now I see. You remember that guy? Slade Trader.

Remember the story of him? You know what? Wherever he went, whatever he did, he says he could never get away from the prayers of his mother. He was raised, his dad was nowhere in the scene. He was a bit like Timothy.

His father was out of the picture. Not a spiritual man at all. He was an ungodly, uncouth man.

A seaman. And yet the mother was a Christian woman, a godly woman. And he said wherever he went in the world, he could never forget the prayers of his mother.

Isn't that powerful? And that's ultimately what brought him to conversion. I read another one. One of the Anglicans that was greatly used, a fellow called Richard Cecil.

Same thing. His testimony is that wherever he went, whatever he did, he was kind of a real dandy and a worldling and all the rest of it. And he said he'd be there kind of in society events and all the rest of it.

He'd be dressed to the T, and he'd be doing his stuff. And he said a thought would come to his mind and he'd remember his mother's prayers. And he felt miserable.

He said, I just felt miserable in this middle of this social gathering because I remember my mother's prayers. And eventually he couldn't fight it anymore and he trusted the Lord Jesus as his Savior and was greatly used of God. And so we can see that.

Stories of revival. I love reading about revival. And I want to tell you that wherever there's revival, you usually find there's somebody praying as a precursor to spiritual revival.

And oftentimes, it's sisters. The story of the revival that took place in the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides in the Scottish Islands is quite remarkable because the story goes like this, that Christianity was at a very low ebb. The churches were just about empty.

The young people had no interest spiritually. They were too busy off dancing and doing their thing. And there were two older ladies who couldn't even get out to the meetings anymore.

One was crippled with arthritis. The other one was legally blind. And yet, they were burdened for the state of the Christian faith and the gospel.

And so they began to pray earnestly about the spiritual scene in the Outer Hebrides. And as they began to pray, they had heard about this man called Duncan Campbell. Duncan Campbell had been speaking and God had really used him.

A lot of people had got saved through his ministry. And so they began to pray earnestly about Duncan Campbell. And they called for the pastor of the church.

This was the Church of Scotland church. And they said, would you invite Duncan Campbell? We've been praying that this man would come and have some meetings. And the guy said, sure, we'll invite him.

And so he wrote a letter to Duncan Campbell, invited him to come and have a special series of meetings on the Isle of Lewis. So he wrote this letter. And of course, Duncan Campbell was booked up for years in advance and couldn't come.

He said, I can't come for at least three years. So the pastor goes back to these ladies and says, well, this is what he said. He can't come for at least three years.

And so they looked at the pastor and they said, he will come. He will come. And they got back on their knees and they prayed that God would overrule these decisions and bring this man.

He was due to speak at the Keswick Convention. Now, if you know anything about Christianity in England, if you get invited to the Keswick Convention, you've arrived. I mean, it's kind of the premier preaching or it used to be the premier preaching event in the British Isles.

And Duncan Campbell is due to speak at the Keswick Convention. In fact, he sat on the platform and he's the next speaker. And God so burdened him with this invitation that he'd had to the Isle of Lewis that he felt convicted that if he didn't go right there and then, he'd be disobeying the will of God.

So he leans over to one of the guys that was gonna speak there and he says, you'll have to take my place, I'm leaving. He got a ferry, went over to the Isle of Lewis and the people were there to meet him, even though they had no correspondence. And God began a revival in the Isle of Lewis.

Every public house, every bar shut down. It's still shut to this day. You can't buy alcohol in the Isle of Lewis.

You can trace all that to the prayers of two women. D.L. Moody, you know the story of D.L. Moody, great evangelist. Well, D.L. Moody was preaching in his church in Chicago and there were two ladies.

And every time that Moody would preach, they would come up to him afterwards and say, we are praying that you'll have an experience with the Holy Spirit. D.L. Moody said, don't pray for me, pray for the lost. They said, no, we're praying for you, that you'll have an experience with the Holy Spirit.

Now I can tell you, we reject the nonsense of the charismatic movement, but we better be dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit to work through us or else we're out nothing. Right? This pendulum swing, reject charismatic movement and what we do sometimes is we throw the baby out with the bathwater. And we expect nothing from the Spirit of God.

And that's wrong, isn't it? God meets our expectation. If we don't expect anything, guess what? He'll meet us there. So they prayed that Moody would have an experience with the Holy Spirit.

And Moody said, don't do that. Well, they kept on doing it. Thankfully, they ignored his statement.

And one day he was walking down a street in New York City and he began to experience the love of God going over him in waves and billows. Just was so conscious of the love of God. It was such a holy moment.

He booked himself into a hotel room and locked the door. And he said that in the end, he said he was so conscious of God's love for him in that room that he thought he was going to be consumed with the love of God and he actually had to ask God to stay his hand because he thought he was going to die because he was so conscious of the presence of God in that room. He said he went back to preaching and he preached the same sermons.

He used his sermons more than once. But he said what was different was the results. He said he would, before he'd even finished, people would get up out of their seats and come to the front broken under conviction and sin and receive the Lord Jesus.

And he said from that point on his ministry, his souls were getting saved everywhere. Now, isn't that amazing? What's amazing is it started with the persistent prayers of two sisters. What I'm saying is sister, you may not be able to publicly pray out loud in this assembly.

And you may not be able to preach in this assembly, but I can tell you, you can affect the course of the history of this assembly for years to come by being a woman of prayer. You can. And, you know, you don't like the preaching here.

Some of the guys, maybe they're not really, you know, kind of lighting your fire or whatever. You have two options. You can criticize them or you can get on your knees and pray that God would give them a message from heaven.

What do you think would be the most constructive? What does criticism do? Not much, really, does it? So you've got that option. And I can show you again and again in Scripture where the scene was bleak, the men were inept. Sadly, that's so often the case.

Look at 1 Samuel, for instance, the story of Hannah. You're all familiar. Chapter 1 of 1 Samuel.

Remember what state were the men in at that time? Were they in good spiritual state? Well, remember that Eli, the high priest, I mean, he wasn't in great shape, was he? He didn't chastise his own sons. And then his two sons, I mean, they were just worthless, weren't they? I mean, talk about unethical behavior.

They were actually laying with the women that came to the door of the tabernacle.

And they were sticking their hook in and getting that which belonged to God, the fat that belonged to the Lord. They wanted it on their meat. And they didn't want it sodden, they wanted it roast.

And remember, they were just scoundrels, weren't they? And the scene, as far as men is concerned, would just come off the back of the book of Judges. How were men doing? Pretty poorly, weren't they? And here comes Hannah on the scene, and she begins to pray. And she prays and she says, Lord, give me a son and I'll give him back to you.

And that was the turning point, wasn't it, in the history of Israel. Look at verse 9, chapter 1. It says, So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord, and she was in bitterness of soul and prayed to the Lord and wept sore.

And she vowed a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if Thou will indeed look on the affliction of Thine handmaid and remember me and not forget Thine handmaid but will give unto Thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. There he is. He'll be a Nazarite, basically.

And so Hannah says, Just give me a son and I'll set him apart for you and I'll do what's needed in his life so that he's not going to be an Eli and he's not going to be one of the sons of Eli. He's going to be used of God. And of course he began to preach, didn't he, as a young man in a circuit throughout Israel and he began to change the whole scene.

And it was through the prayers of Hannah. And of course there's an Anna as well as a Hannah, isn't there, in the New Testament? In Luke 2, verse 36-38. Again, when men, they'd lost, many of them had lost their messianic hope and here's this lady Anna.

She's waiting for the consolation of Israel. Waiting for the Messiah when everybody else had lost the vision, lost the hope. Hannah hadn't.

Anna was waiting, wasn't she? And so what we're saying is that sisters can have a profound effect through prayer. And then we come to song, Exodus 15. We've got Miriam and expressing to the Lord a song here.

Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider he hath he thrown into the sea.

And so she composes one of the first recorded songs in Scripture. And I'm going to walk away from here. Sorry about your machine here, but I want just to show you something.

Anybody like this particular hymn book? I must say I love the thoughts that are contained in this hymn book. And some of our favorite hymns, guess who wrote them? 130, Inside the Veil. Do you like that one? Elizabeth Dark was the composer of it.

And 123, The Holiest We Enter in Perfect Peace with God. Is that a good one? Well, that was Mary Bowley Peters. 124, I mean, we could just go on and on looking through the hymn book and you will see that many of the richest choices, the expressions of theology, distilled into songs so we can remember it,

were written by women.

124, The Holy One Who Knew No Sin, God Made Him Sin for Us. Isn't that a beautiful song? That was by Hannah K. Burlingham. And we could go on.

And of course, we could do some fresh songs, couldn't we? Well, here's a sister that has a heart of devotion to the Lord. She can express that devotion by writing a beautiful song, can't she? And so again, have sisters affected the meeting that we're in right now? Absolutely. I mean, we sing those songs, we appreciate them, and the source of them is godly sisters.

And of course, we had mentioned the Fanny Crosby's and the Francis Ridley Havergalls and some of the greatest hymns we sing were written by sisters, weren't they? Look at Romans 16. We're just thinking of the practical opportunities of service for godly sisters in the local church, things that they can do. Romans 16, verse 1, I commend unto you, Phoebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Sanceria.

Are there any sisters that are servants of the local assembly? Are there? Oftentimes, the ones that carry the Lord are sisters, aren't they? That you receive her in the Lord as becometh saints, and that you assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you. For she hath been a succorer of many and of myself also. What does that word mean? To secure, it means to comfort, to visit with tenderness and to be a helper and a carer or whatever.

It's used at visiting the sick and needy and showing special tenderness and care. And it says that she had been, if you want to put it this way, a comforter of many. And he says, the many that have been affected by this sister and the empathetic spirit that she has and when she goes and visits, she just oozes compassion and comfort and care.

And he says, and myself also. In other words, I personally have experienced the love and the compassion and the comfort that this sister has given. Of course, he went through a lot of things, didn't he? Shipwrecked and beaten and all the rest of it.

And yet, here's a sister that just showed tremendous sympathy and comfort. And so, there's another example. Somebody who's pointed out, ministry of sharing, hospitality.

Look at Acts chapter 16. Acts chapter 16 and verse 16. And it came to pass as we went to prayer, a certain, that's not the right verse.

Verse, Acts 16 and verse 40. And they went out of the prison and entered into the house of Lydia. The house of Lydia.

And when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed. So, here's this lady, Lydia. And she, when Paul goes into Macedonia, having seen the vision of the man of Macedonia.

Yeah, this is where I wanted to look before. Verse 14, Acts 16 verse 14. It tells us a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God hearders, whose heart the Lord opened and she attended to the things that were spoken of by Paul.

And when she was baptized and her household, she besaw us saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us. And so, the idea was that when

Paul went into Macedonia, I don't know where he was lodging, perhaps at his own expense somewhere.

I mean, to put it in modern parlance, maybe he was staying at the Holiday Inn or somewhere like that, I don't know. But basically, this lady Lydia gets saved and immediately, upon her salvation and baptism, she wants to be involved in the work of the gospel. Somehow, she wants to invest in this that's been so precious to her own soul.

And she says, she constrained us to check out of your room and come here. I want the base of your operations in the city of Philippi to be my home. And so, while he was there, he stayed in the household of Lydia.

Of course, it wasn't just Lydia. There were other people there, obviously. She was very wealthy, probably had servants, all the rest of it.

But he benefited from the hospitality of this particular sister. And she showed that to the missionary team. They all stayed there.

And again, how many traveling preachers to this day have been incredibly blessed by the ministry of hospitality, the sisters who have opened their home to the people of God. And last night, we experienced that, didn't we? When Lydia, it was Jane and her household. I know Bob had something to do with it, too.

But I can tell you who the one that was doing all the work was. And you won't mind me saying this, Bob. It was Jane, right? And we talked about Priscilla and Aquila before.

Let's look at Acts 18. In verse 2, again, Paul now departs from Athens and he comes to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, and his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome and came to them.

And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them. So he took up lodgings with them. So they began by caring for Paul and giving him lodgings.

Look at verse 18. It says, And Paul, after this, tarried there yet a while, and then took his leave of the brethren and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila, having shorn his head in censure, for he had a vow. So they began to team up and they went with them.

And then what we're going to find is that this couple, look at 1 Corinthians 16, as you look through the New Testament, their home wasn't only open to the Lord's servants, but often was the first place that a church met in a particular region. The churches of Asia salute you, Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord with the church that is in their house. You see, when a work is starting, pioneering, we're in Ireland, we were pioneering, we started two assemblies over there.

And guess where the church met when it started? In our house. By the way, we had five kids and they were little kids. And I don't know about ladies here, but my wife, if we're having people over, she wants everything looking perfect.

So every Saturday night, we were out there mopping the floors, getting it ready, because on Sunday morning, the whole assembly was coming in. Every Wednesday was the same. And it's a lot of work to have the church in your house.

It really is. And yet, this couple, Aquila and Priscilla, wherever you find them, in the New Testament, their address has got hit to have been their mailman, because their address is constantly changing. And every time, the church is meeting in their house.

And of course, the day may come that we have to go back to that, especially many places where the church is under persecution, that's where the church meets, in the house. And so, certainly, hospitality is a great ministry. I was reading in my quiet time this morning, 2 Kings chapter 4, about the Shunammite woman.

Remember the Shunammite woman? And she kept seeing this guy walking past, and she said she perceived he was a man of God, and she invited him in. And then she said to her husband, let's build a little chamber for him, with a bed, and with a desk, and with a lamp stand. And so, the ministry of Elisha the prophet, was certainly helped by this Shunammite woman, opening her home in hospitality.

So we see that both in Old Testament and New Testament. What about sharing, not only hospitality, but sharing financially? Look at Luke's Gospel, chapter 8. And I realize the Lord Jesus owns the cattle on a thousand hills, the sheep in every mine, the gold in every mine, all the rest of it. The Lord Jesus, but when he was here, as the dependent man on earth, once he gave up being a carpenter, how did he live from day to day? Who bankrolled the ministry of the Lord Jesus and the Twelve? Well, Luke's Gospel, chapter 8, tells us, verse 2, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven demons, and Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

In other words, the Lord Jesus' ministry was bankrolled by these ladies. Are you thankful for that? I mean, let's be honest. I know that he could turn water into wine, and he could turn five loaves into fish and feed.

But those were special miracles. It wasn't the everyday thing. Every day, they still had to feed twelve hungry guys.

Right? And where did the funds come from that? There was a bag, obviously, and somebody held the bag. That was Judas. And so there were funds there.

You don't read of him having offerings or collections, do you? Don't read that anywhere. So where did it come from? Well, a lot of it came from the ministry of these women who ministered out of their substance. When the Lord Jesus pointed out in the temple about giving, what was it that he pointed out? Who was it that was the object of his attention? Remember the widow that gave her mite? I can tell you from personal experience, we've been involved in full-time Christian work since 31st of May, 1984, was the last paycheck that I received from the electricity board.

And our longest-standing person who has stood with us over these years is a widow from England. Every single month, since 1984, she has sent us a small gift every month. Last week, we got two gifts in the mail, and our kids were the ones that noticed it and pointed out, Dad, are these two widows? And yes, they were.

Isn't that amazing? God's faithful. There's no question about it. But so often, the Lord's work, guys, they want all the bits and gadgets and all the rest of it, but sisters with hearts that love God and want to serve the Lord are often the ones that are so generous in supporting the work of the Lord.

The Methodist revival, we've already mentioned the impact of Susanna Wesley, but there's another lady that we don't hear as much of, but had a profound impact in the Methodist revival. Her name was Selina, the Countess of Huntington. And she was part of the aristocracy.

She actually used to have gospel meetings in her drawing room, and even invited the King of England to come and hear the gospel. And Wesley and Whitfield would come and preach and all the rest of it. But she basically bankrolled the Methodist revival because there were so many people getting saved, and they would have these special preaching meeting houses that they would build, and where are they going to get the money for doing that? Well, she was the one that was basically building all these Methodist chapels that you see all over the British Isles.

And so again, we just say the generosity of sisters. And look at not only their sharing with hospitality, financially, but sharing through good works. Look at Acts chapter 9. The ministry of Dorcas.

Acts chapter 9, verse 36 following. It says, Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did.

And it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died, whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber, and for as much as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent to him two men desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter rose and went with them, and when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber, and all the widows stood by him weeping and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them. See that? I mean, she was known for her charitable deeds, her good works, and when she died, people wept.

She lived so as to be missed, didn't she? And there were people showing all her handiwork. Look at all the clothing that she provided for widows and all this kind of stuff, and what a blessing she was. And there's so many things that we can do if we just have a heart for it.

When we were in Georgia, we were in a small community, and the local paper, they had a obituary column every week, and there was a sister in our assembly that used to get these booklets, and there were lovely booklets for bereavement with Bible verses and all the rest of it, and she would look up the address of every person mentioned in the obituary column and send a bereavement booklet to the family from the chapel. We had more letters back about those things than anything else we did. Just one sister saw a need and just got involved in it.

This is a small community, right? Somebody could do that. That would be a great ministry. The booklet is called *When Loved Ones Are Taken in Death*.

It's an excellent booklet, but what a work this person did. Look at Philippians chapter 4. Not only in the area of sharing and good works, but sisters can be involved in evangelism. I shared with you yesterday that I got saved as a result of a girl witnessing to me at work, and I was raised Catholic, but I was so disillusioned with the hypocrisy in the Catholic Church that I had said I would never have anything to do with Christianity again.

I said, if that's Christianity, I'm done. I have no interest, and I would not have gone into a church for anything, but I met somebody at work, and she had something different. I could tell.

Whatever it was, she had something I didn't have, and through her testimony, I got saved. So, Philippians 4, verse 3, it says, And I entreat thee also, a true York fellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel. Clement also, and with other of my fellow laborers whose names are in the book of life.

Help those women which labored with me in the gospel. Can women have an effective ministry as soul winners? Some of the best evangelists I know are women who are tremendous in personal work. Great.

There's one lady in Georgia, Joyce Baranowski. Some of you may have met her, but when Joyce comes up to you and starts offering you one of these bracelets with the colors of the different gospel kind of illustration or whatever, who's going to refuse her? She's got such a sweet disposition that you're not going to say, get away, I don't want that, and she just has a tremendous way of sharing the gospel with people. And we could multiply that lots and lots of times.

And of course, I started out as an open air preacher, and whenever I did an open air, there was always several sisters that would stand around looking interested and listen, and they'd be watching for people that would kind of gather. And as soon as I'd finish speaking, they'd walk over and say, well, what do you think of what this guy said? And it was amazing. They were so effective.

Actually, probably it's more effective than I was in what I was doing. And so Paul says, these women have labored with me in the gospel, and we thank God for the impact of godly sisters. I don't know how many here got to know the Lord as a result of the impact of a woman.

We've already thought about mothers and the impact they've had, but maybe there's others here that came to know the Lord because they met a woman, and I'm not advocating missionary dating. I want to tell you this, that my wife, I was absolutely besotted with her. I thought she was the most beautiful thing that ever walked the earth, and I was determined when I met her that I was going to marry her.

As soon as I saw her, I said I'm going to marry that girl. And my wife had made a decision before she ever met me. She drew a line in the sand.

She said, I will never ever date an unbeliever. And so it didn't matter what I said. There was no way she was going to do it.

And it was only when I got saved, and even then, she didn't believe me. She said, I'm looking for signs following. And when she was sure that I was the real deal, then we started going out together.

So again, I'm not advocating missionary, but I'm saying the impact of a woman is quite profound in areas of gospel. And then of course, we've already, we won't necessarily turn there because time is getting by here, but we've already talked about that in home order that women can share the scriptures with men. For instance, we had the story of Apollos in Acts 18 verse 26.

Remember that Apollos spoke and as he spoke, he was mighty in the scriptures, but there were some missing pieces in his theology. He only knew about the baptism of John. His message only went so far.

And so Priscilla and Aquila took him home. And they, it says, expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And there's no question in my mind that Priscilla knew her Bible as well as Aquila did.

And the fact that I'm saying to you that women cannot address the assembly in teaching, I'm not advocating that women be barefoot and pregnant and don't know your Bibles. You know, forgive me for

using that phrase, but I mean, I'm not advocating that. And the fact that many occasions where I've given ministry and afterwards a sister has come up to me quietly and said, brother, that was really good, but have you ever thought about this verse? And it opened up a whole new avenue of thought that I'd never even considered.

You see what I'm saying? We're advocating, we want everybody in this assembly to know the Bible well. And there'd be lots of opportunities. When I get saved, it was through this girl at work.

And guess who disciplined me at work? The same girl. She told me where to start, where my first steps in the Christian life, how to have a quiet time, what to look out for when I read in the Scriptures, all this kind of stuff. You see what I'm saying? There's tremendous opportunity and persona, but again, within the bounds of Scripture.

Suffering. Women have an amazing capacity, don't they, to suffer pain. I think that's why they have babies and not us, because they seem to have a greater capacity to suffer than men.

I don't know, maybe it's just me, but I think that, don't you? And you think of the women in church history and what God has allowed them to go through and what a testament they've been. Remember Corrie Ten Boom? Remember her in this concentration camp and all the rest of it? And she comes out with a statement like this, there's no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still. Does that minister to your heart? I'll tell you, that ministers to my heart.

What about Joni Eareckson Tarder? Remember her, a young girl, prime of life, jumps in a swimming pool and breaks her neck, don't she? And again, her gracious ways have had an impact. First martyr of the Salvation Army and walking in Surrey was a woman. And you look at Foxe's Book of Martyrs, lots and lots of examples of that.

Not only that, I want to just say this too. When I go to preacher places, I don't know if you realize, but preaching is a two-way street. In other words, preachers feed off the audience.

Sometimes it's kind of, you feel like bottom feeders, you know what I mean? Slim pickings. Sometimes I preach in places I think I'm in a mortuary. The dead in Christ will rise first.

Well, it just looks like the dead, I mean, just kind of look there, zoned out, maybe they had too many donut holes at coffee break, I have no idea. But there's just this diabetic coma look about them, I don't know. But I tell you that there are places that I go and there are people that I preach to.

I think at one assembly there's a sister, and she, when you're preaching, she is watching you, she never takes her eyes off you, and as you're quoting scripture, she's mouthing the verses. And everybody I've ever spoken to, I was in England for meetings earlier this year, and there's a kind of a circuit of assemblies in Leeds area where I'm from, and so I was talking to a couple of brothers that speak in these assemblies, and I'd spoken to them, and I said, which assembly do you like preaching in the most? And they all said the same one, Hare Hills Gospel Hall. And I said, why? And they mentioned a lady's name.

I said, well, say more. They said, well, she's so encouraging, that when you go there, it seems like you preach better because she is so with you as you're speaking, and it's like she's coming off the seat of you, she's so excited at what you're saying, and I just love preaching there. And I said, you know what's amazing? If you were to ask me the same question, I'd tell you exactly the same answer.

That's the assembly I like preaching in the best, and it's because of that sister. One sister affects the caliber of the preaching in that assembly. So I hope, our time is gone, but I do hope this, and we haven't talked about worship, we think of the woman that anointed the feet of the Lord Jesus, remember that? And the whole room was filled with a beautiful aroma, and I wonder how many times the silent worship of the sisters fills heaven itself with a beautiful aroma when the men have nothing to say.

But I'm saying all these things because I want you to be encouraged that God has a work for every person in this room to do, and that we can make a profound difference in the life of a local assembly for a guy. Obviously, you've got lots of opportunities to serve it, but for sisters, don't let the devil get the upper hand by focusing your attention on the tree that you cannot eat from. Look at the trees.

Say, Lord, you've given me such opportunity, such bounty, so much to enjoy in the service of the Lord, I want to enjoy the trees, and I'm not going to spend my time focusing on the tree. And I really believe that God can really use you as a sister to affect this assembly for years to come. Isn't that a good thing? I'll tell you, it's a great thing.

What an opportunity, what a privilege to serve the best of masters, the Lord Jesus. And you'll never be sorry. These ladies that we've been looking at, they've been recorded on the pages of Holy Scripture, and they'll never be forgotten.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but God's Word will never pass away, and we'll always remember a Lydia. We'll always remember a Hannah and an Anna, and maybe the Hebrews 11 is still being written, perhaps.

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