

GREATER THINGS - PART 5

Scripture used: [Acts 18:24-26 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Scripture and the early Christian Church in the Greco-Roman world had a powerful and revolutionary message to women: not only do you matter, but you are indispensable. This brings to mind our current situation when many workers deemed “essential” during the coronavirus emergency are not really treated as such. Many of these healthcare, transportation, service, and critical infrastructure workers are women. Our Scripture offers a powerful blueprint to break this pattern and reminds us that Jesus’ sacrifice is for women and men, and that both women and men are equal witnesses to the liberating work of the Holy Spirit. God’s intention for the church is that women and men would work together in close partnership, and that the light of God’s goodness and love would shine forth brightly from these redeemed relationships. Both men and women have a key role to play.

KEY POINTS

- 1) Women in the ancient world were disposable. Many baby girls were discarded. A woman was seen as being useful only as a complement to a man. Things are different today, but we still face distrust, anger, and accusations between women and men both at home and in the workplace. Scripture first reminds us of the importance of women. The account of John the Baptist, who is a pivotal figure in the Gospel of Luke, emphasizes the spiritual legacy and identity from both John’s father and mother. The angel Gabriel in the Annunciation tells Mary that she is favored by God. Women are empowered to be witnesses of the faith and yield great influence in shaping people and events.
- 2) The Church challenges women to have big dreams, to think about what they can do, not fixate on what they cannot do. The Church is incomplete without women’s vision and action. In [Luke 2:37b-38](#), the Gospel of Luke honors the importance of Jesus being recognized and blessed by both a matriarch and patriarch of Israel, and the Scripture celebrates Anna’s tenacity and resilience. Historically, Thomas Edison’s mom took an “addled child” and empowered him to become a celebrated inventor. Such is the faith and impact of women throughout history.
- 3) Women and men need to work together. [Acts 2:17](#) reminds us that the Spirit poured on sons and daughters. Our Scripture describes two protagonists, Priscilla and Aquila, who were an Early Church missionary married couple. Their presence strengthened the early church, and the Bible does not shy away from giving greater prominence to the wife, because of her greater leadership and contribution to ministry. The husband delights in his wife’s shining with her teaching gifts. Contemporary relationships are often adversarial: “somebody is right, and then there is the husband”. The Church has a different opinion: in every partnership, collaborative effort, and marriage, there is the necessity and opportunity to form a redeeming relationship between men and women.
- 4) Sometimes, because of past pain, injustice, or abuse, women can also become oppressors, and contribute to adversarial relationships between women and men. Instead, we all need healing, liberation, and mutual respect. Divided we fall and we bequeath dysfunction to the next generation. United we rise. We must work on relationships across gender, support and celebrate women, and teach our daughters and sons to dream big dreams. Together, we can live out our value that “everyone matters to God, so everyone matters to us.”

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What has been your experience about how you have seen women honored or dishonored in your family, workplace, and/or the church? What examples stick out most for you?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - The church has at times had a very negative reputation for being overly patriarchal, and this reputation has been earned at times in history. Yet, Jesus’ treatment of woman was revolutionary in His ministry, and the early Church had remarkable examples of women in leadership, which are affirmed in the Bible. Consider [Acts 18:24-26 \(NLT\)](#), and ministry of Priscilla and Aquila. What does it mean to you that the leadership and teaching gift of women were honored in the early church? What implication does it have for you in your current family, work, and ministry context?
- 3) **DO** - Consider one thing you can do to work toward a more redeemed relationship between men and women in your own life. If there is a specific person that comes to mind, lift her or him up!