

Does Christianity Denigrate Women?

What does it mean to denigrate?

To deny, to devalue, disparage, to belittle the worth or importance of someone.

What does it mean to be a woman?

Being born female. An adult female. Whose physical bodies are organised around the gestation of new life.

Question the Question

Clarify: Do they mean Christianity? Or churches, 'Christian' men, or certain Bible passages?

Probe: **Why do you even think it's wrong to denigrate women?** Where do you get that idea from? It's Christianity that tells them it's wrong.

Acknowledge the Problem

Acknowledge how churches and 'Christian' men have denigrate women: Abusive husbands and pastors; women's voices silenced; women at fault for men's sins etc

What does the Bible teach?

So-called 'Texts of Terror': Gen 2-3, 3:16; David and Solomon - multiple wives; Eph 5: marriage 1 Tim 2.

Ask them to consider: **is that a fair assessment of the Bible's overall teaching, or have you just been selective?**

A Brief Biblical Overview

Old Testament:

Genesis 1:27

Man and woman in image of God. Equal in dignity, value, worth.

Genesis 2:18

Created from man to be his helper: but not a derogatory term: you help someone when you know better than them on some issue. God also a helper: Ps 46:1; Ex 18:4; Deut 33:26

Fit for him - same but different. Not just different. Not second class, but from his bone and flesh.

Genesis 2:24

It is the man who is to leave his family (not woman as in traditional marriages). It is a one flesh union - not an asymmetrical one.

Genesis 3

Eve is tempted but Adam held responsible.

Eve is the messianic seed bearer. If the gateway for sin, also the gateway of redemption. If Eve then Mary.

Messianic seed bearers:

The barren, the unloved woman, the cheated. God picks those others discard.

Genesis 3:16

Structure and words same as Gen 4:7. Men and women are 'Created but also corrupted' (Keller).

Siege warfare:

Deut 20:13-14, 19: You protect women and children in warfare, you don't kill them. Creation an object lesson

Deborah and Huldah

Deborah: Judges 4-5; Huldah: 2 Kings 22:14ff

Women of influence who male leaders turn to for advice/encouragement at the least.

Books of Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs:

Either wholly or partially from a specifically female perspective. Song of Songs gives voice to the woman's sexual desire - as much as the mans.

Proverbs

Chapter 31: the excellent wife, but also v1-2: a mother tells her son, the king, what he should and should not be doing.

New Testament

Jesus

Matthew's Genealogy: Patriarchal... and yet: Key women, all of whom are outsiders.

Luke's birth narratives: Mary's response contrasted to Zechariah's. Picture of Elizabeth, Mary and Anna prophesies highly positive.

Women in his ministry: 12 male disciples, but Luke points out Mary, Joanna wife of Chuza, Susanna and 'many others' who provided for him financially 'out of their means'- Luke 8:1-3.

His teaching and parables: uses women as illustrations of the good; commends the poor widow's gift - greater than all the rich men; Mary and Martha: Martha is fulfilling the traditional female role, but it's Mary that Jesus commends (Luke 10:38-42); His interaction with woman at the well: (Jn 4) - she becomes an evangelist. His attitude to the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8) - forcing the men to realise they are not her moral superior.

His miracles: repeatedly heals women.

His compassion to women: widow's son raised out of compassion for her (Luke 7:11-17); weeps with Mary and Martha at the tomb of their brother Lazarus.

Jesus and the worship of women: he receives their worship; when anointed by a sinful woman he elevates her as he exposes a man, a Pharisee, for his lack of love.

Witnesses to his Resurrection: Women first witnesses to the resurrection:they believe, the men doubt.

Women and Acts

- Dorcas raised from the dead- Acts 9:36-42
- Philip's unmarried daughters prophesying - Acts 21:9
- Lydia - worked outside the home, becomes a host for Paul and the church - (Acts 16:11-15)
- Priscilla and Aquilla - husband and wife ministry team with the woman named first at times.