



Ezer:
the formation of a Woman

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Day 1: In the Image of the Triune God

Read this passage slowly, imagining you were there, watching this Council collaborate about the creation of *adam*, people.

Larger context: All of Genesis 1.

This passage: Genesis 1:26-27

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Idea: The Trinity

You were created specifically because of the divine council of the Triune God. Give yourself some time and space to think about this...it is staggering! We've been introduced to God in Genesis 1:1; the Holy Spirit in Genesis 1:2; and Jesus remains to be seen, yet is part of creation according to Colossians 1:16,17.

For by Him [Jesus] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

So the Three choose to create *adam* with purpose and blessing (Genesis 2:28).

Words

Adam (pronounced aw-DAWM) is the Hebrew word used here for *man*. It is also used in Genesis 5:2: "He created them male and female; at the time they were created, He blessed them and called them *adam*." It is used generally for "person."

Image is transliterated from *tselem* (TSEH-lem), which means form, image, and likeness.

Likeness is transliterated from *demuth* (dem-OOTH), and means likeness, figures resembling, pattern. This is a feminine noun, whereas the others were masculine. Isn't that fascinating, given that two unique genders reflect the fullness of God's image?

Thoughts

How does this impact your thoughts about yourself? About others?

As you go through your day today, really look at people. Look at the diversity... the features...the design of people. Allow yourself to get lost in the wonder of being created by God.

Ask God to help you appreciate being **His**, being created by His hand.

Adam, (man, person), Strong's Concordance, word #120

Tselem (image), Strong's Concordance, word #6754

Demuth (likeness), Strong's Concordance, word #1823

Day 2: Male and Female

Larger context: All of Genesis 1, Psalm 139

This passage: Genesis 1:26-27

26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Ideas: Gender and the Image of God

The divine council of the Triune God chose to create two genders to fully and comprehensively depict the Trinity. Biblical-relational scholars such as Larry Crabb believe that the core identity of each gender is explained through the unique design of its genitals. Following that logic, the essence of manhood is movement, forward action; the essence of femaleness is receiving, nurturing life. This is why man’s silence and lack of action when he was beside Eve in the Garden (Genesis 3:6) is so devastating for manhood, and why the woman’s desire for beauty, nourishment, and wisdom (Genesis 3:6) apart from God is so devastating for women. Both fell.

Both genders together represent God in His fullness. Genesis 1:27, 28 and Genesis 5:2 explicitly state that male and female together reflect the image of God.

Words

Zakar (pronounced zaw-KAWR) is the Hebrew word used here for *male*.

Neqebah is the Hebrew word for *female* (*nek-ay-BAW*), which means form, image, and likeness.

Created is transliterated from *bara* (*baw-RAW*), and means to choose, shape, or form.

Thoughts

How does this impact your thoughts about your gender? About the other gender?

Consider the essence of your gender--movement into life or nurturing and inviting life. How does this help you understand yourself? How does this ring true with you? Is there anything confusing about it? As you go through your day, talk to God about His design for male and female.

Thank God for your gender! Thank Him that He specifically choose your X and/or Y chromosomes, your bodily design, and delights in His creation of you.

Ponder Psalm 139:13,14.

Zakar (male), Strong’s Concordance, word #2145

Neqebah (female), Strong’s Concordance, word #5347

Bara (create), Strong’s Concordance, word #1254

Day 3: Blessed

Bless you, friend! Bless you for reading, for searching out the truth, for wanting to understand. May God bless you with a deeper knowledge of Himself and His people.

Larger context: All of Genesis 1.

This passage: Genesis 1:28; 5:1,2

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Genesis 5:1,2 When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them “Mankind” when they were created.

Idea: Blessed

I love the phrase coined by Carolyn Custis James: “*blessed alliance*.” Adam and the woman received the smile of the Trinity, their blessing, on their partnership.

Have you ever been blessed verbally by someone? It’s a moving experience. Biblical blessings often involved the bless-er putting his hands on or over a person or group of people, and then speaking words of kindness and prophetic truth over them. As an example, dwell on Aaron’s famous benediction (*bene* = good, *diction* = word) in Numbers 6:22-27:

22 The Lord said to Moses, **23** “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

24 “The Lord bless you and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

27 “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

Thoughts

Consider how God has blessed you, especially this very day. Ponder how your gender is a blessing and a gift directly and intentionally from God, your Designer.

God’s blessing and grace is upon you! Turn toward Him in your imagination. Feel His love and warmth on your face. Hear the kindness in His voice and the Fatherly affection He has for you.

Take some time to bless God! Speak out loud how He has moved you, how you feel for Him, and what you hope your relationship will grow into.

Carolyn Custis James, [Lost Women of the Bible](#), numerous articles and speeches. This is [her](#) phrase!

Day 4: Purpose

He has a purpose for you: you have a mission in this life! Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." What's your mission, your purpose? We will ask this question again at the end of our study.

Larger context: Genesis 2

This passage: Genesis 1:26,28

26Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

28God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Idea: Purpose

The Man and Woman were blessed by God and commissioned together to rule over and subdue creation (Genesis 1:26,28). Many women I speak with are surprised that it's not singularly the Man, but it's actually both of them. They were to be a team, an alliance, in this magnificent work of ruling over creation. God actually points out the Man needs a helper when he is working in the garden (Genesis 2:15, 18).

When, in your experience, have you seen a man and a woman working together as a team to rule, direct, or manage something **well**? What does that look like?

Words

Radah (pronounced raw-DAW) is the Hebrew word used here for *reign*. It's also translated into English words *rule*, *have dominion over*, and *prevail against*.

Thoughts

Look at all the verbs in the verses listed above; circle them. Mankind, as the pinnacle of creation and the image-bearer of God, was to extend influence over all creation, as well as multiply and fill the earth. God was granting mankind a platform to share in His creative, authoritative nature. This blessing and commission were a glimpse into God's being, a way for us to learn about His character. Think of when you've learned about or witnessed a benevolent, righteous ruler.

Imagine the church as it could be if God's men and women worked together as a blessed alliance. What would be different in your church? How would this blessed alliance affect your community for God positively?

The world does not honor God's blessed alliance. Read [Half the Sky](#) this month to ascertain the condition of women in the world today...and prepare to be moved! I was quite distressed by it and would love to partner with men and women all over the world to change the shame of our century. Let's eliminate gender bias and cruelty, in accordance with the nature of God, by fighting against injustice and helping the helpless.

Radah (rule), Strong's Concordance, word #7287

Journal Page

Take some time to journal, reflect, and wonder about what you've read recently. Feel freedom to draw, collage, and doodle your way through the concepts of being made in the image of God, being created male and female, being blessed by Him, and having a specific purpose. Feel free to return to the previous days and gather your thoughts about some of the questions.

Day 5: Ezer, 2 Scriptures & Transliteration

Larger context: Genesis 2

This passage: Genesis 2:18,20

The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a **helper suitable** (*ezer kenegdo*) for him.”

Idea

A transliteration is the process of transforming a word from a language with a different alphabet (Hebrew, in this case), into a readable word in another language (English for us) while still keeping the meaning the same.

‘ê·zer
עֶזֶר
A helper

This is the transliteration for the Hebrew word **ezer**. The top blue is the sound of the pronounced Hebrew, which is AY-zer, as in “razor,” using our alphabet. The middle part is the Hebrew lettering; the bottom, in red, is the meaning of **ezer** in our English language: a helper.

Words

The complete phrase God uses is *ezer kenegdo*, and is not used anywhere else in the Bible.

Ezer is “help” or “a helper.”

Kenegdo comes from *neged*, which means “in front of,” “in sight of,” “opposite to,” or “before.”

Kenegdo morphs into “suitable” in some Bible translations.

Thoughts

An **ezer** is a helper created in a similar form as Adam (“in front of” or “in sight of”), yet who will be his opposite, as in one side of a polarity that completes a whole. They will look similar yet will form a more complete understanding of the image of God. Together, they make a unified picture of the image of God. God is more fully understood when both male and female are understood.

God is intentional. He creates the woman “as in sight of” Adam, using him as a template of sorts, but makes significant changes. These physical changes define characteristics of our genders. For men, as shown in his sexual organ, his essence is forward movement, hardness or strength, and penetration. For women, it is nurture, life-giving, and invitation. He is hard, she is soft. She opens, he penetrates. Together, they bring life, create beauty, and thrive in love. This partnership reflects the intimacy of the Trinity in all of its mystery.

Do you need to confront any feelings of inferiority or superiority that are culture-driven or wound-driven? Will you allow **God** to define you, rather than your past, your family, your history, or your culture? Can you come to peace with the term *ezer kenegdo*?

Day 6: Ezer, 3 Scriptures: Alliances

Larger context: Isaiah 30:5; Ezekiel 12:14; Daniel 11:34

This passage: Isaiah 30:1-5

“...all who trust in him [Pharaoh] will be ashamed.
He will not help you.
Instead, he will disgrace you.”

Idea

The Woman is called an ezer twice, in Genesis 2:18 and 20. But ezer applies not only to a person, but to a people. The nations representing God’s people, Israel and Judah, got into some sticky military situations. They needed help! They needed an ezer to come to their side and help them win the battle; however, they were not always wise about their alliances. Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel note three of these situations.

Words

An ezer is “one who helps,” but we must discern who is our God-blessed ezer and who is not. This calls for wisdom and maturity.

Thoughts

At one point in their history, Judah made an unholy alliance with Egypt. Oh, was God upset! Rather than consulting with and trusting in their God, they put their trust in the current Pharaoh. God, through the prophet Isaiah, rebukes His people, telling them that this alliance would be devastating. God wanted to be their ezer, but instead, they had chosen another. It was pure betrayal, and God felt the sting.

Not all alliances are good! Wisdom presses on us to listen, to seek God’s advice about our alliances. When we seek help, when we seek an ezer, we need to seek God first!

An ezer is responsive. We see in these verses that other nations were invited to be ezers to God’s people and responded. An ezer hears the cries of someone and responds.

An ezer turns the tide. Her presence makes the difference between loss and victory. Because of the presence of an ezer (person or nation), the outcome of a situation changes for the better--IF God is in it!

How do you respond to the cries for help that are around you daily? There are so many cries in this world--from your own family to the entire world, from confronting sex trafficking to confronting coldness in your own heart, from the need for soccer coaches and Christian politicians to the need for space to be quiet and rest away from others, from microfinance to home budgets, from loneliness to friendship, from homelessness to helplessness. It can overwhelm us so easily!

How do we know how to deal with this cacophony of cries, this constant tide of need? We must go to the Abba Father who knows our limits, gifting, and personalities, and we must sit at His feet and listen. Will you take time this week to listen for His voice, the nudge of the Spirit, the confirmation of circumstances, and the affirmation of those who know you, so you will know alliances are right for you to engage?

Day 7: Ezer, 16 Scriptures: God

Larger context: Deuteronomy 33; see the list of Scriptures below

This passage: Deuteronomy 33:29

Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cover before you, and you will trample down their high places.

Idea

In these 16 Scriptures, God is identified as the Ezer of His people. Let that sink in! God is an Ezer. Ezer is a term, therefore, of great dignity and strength. Women are honored by God's description as an Ezer!

Thoughts

Take time over the next several days to examine these Scriptures, all referring to God as the Ezer of His people.

Reference	Your thoughts and notes
Exodus 18:4	
Deuteronomy 33:7 (poetry)	
Deuteronomy 33:26 (poetry)	
Deuteronomy 33:29 (above)	
Psalms 20:2	
Psalms 33:20	
Psalms 70:5	
Psalms 89:19 (translated strength in the NIV)	
Psalms 115:9,10, and 11	
Psalms 121:1 and 2	
Psalms 124:8	
Psalms 146:5 (related root word)	
Hosea 13:9	

Day 8: Related Words: Eben-ezer, Names

Larger context: 1 Samuel 7

This passage: 1 Samuel 7:12

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far has the LORD helped us."



Idea

The nation of Israel had looked at itself and was devastated by what it saw: a nation ugly in the sight of God and in need of heavy national repentance. Samuel, the judge (leader) of the nation at the time, met the people at a town called Mizpah, where they were eager to confess their sins before God. The nation came together to mourn, to grieve, to fast, to pray, and to call on God.

Israel's arch enemies, the Philistines, heard about this gathering and pounced on the opportunity to annihilate their foes. Talk about a weak moment militarily! Men were crying and grieving, on their knees before God, and then hear the bad news: the Philistines were marching.

The people cried out to Samuel and to God, and God answered them with loud thunder. The Philistines ran for dear life, and Israeli warriors chased after them. To commemorate this victory, Samuel set up an **ebenezer**, a stone of remembrance. Eben-**ezer**.

Words

Eben-ezer: a stone of remembrance, a large pile of rocks to remember when God helped His people. Eben-ezer: Stone-help.

Exodus 18:4: **Eli-ezer**, God is my help (the name of Moses' son).

1 Chronicles 11:28 **Abi-ezer**, my father is my help (one of David's mighty warriors).

Thoughts

The eben-ezer commemorated God's supernatural deliverance of His people Israel.

Think of a time when God was your help, your ezer. Go back through that experience, enjoying God as He helped you.

Gather together some smooth, light-colored stones. Write on them key words that remind you of times when God has been your ezer, or when you have experienced the body of Christ coming to your aid. Place these rocks in a glass container--ever so gently!--so that you can see the writing on the stones. Let this encourage your faith and strengthen your friendships.

Do this with your family, your roommates, or your girlfriends. Have a glass of something and have a Speak It, an evening when you tell your stories of God's faithfulness in times of trouble, confusion, or heartache. Lift up the Helper and Healer of your soul! He is worthy.

Journal Page

Take some time to journal, reflect, and wonder about what you've read recently. Feel freedom to draw, collage, and doodle your way through the Scriptures about **ezer**. Take time to return to the previous days and gather your thoughts about some of the questions.

Day 9: Ezer, Warrior Companion

Larger context: Ephesians 6:10-20

This passage: Ephesians 6:17

Take the...sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Idea

Based on the past several days of Scriptures, we can conclude that an ezer has at least two facets: she is a warrior and she is a companion, a partner.

Thoughts

The ezer--whether the woman, other nations, or God--made the difference in the battle. As we have said, the ezer's presence turned the tide and changed the game. Given that knowledge, consider these questions:

In what ways are ezers warriors? What does a warrior look like in a home or city today?

Do you feel a warrior within yourself?

What is the weapon of an ezer?

What weapons do you use when in battle?

In what ways are ezers companions?

In your life, who has your back? Whose back are you guarding or protecting?

How does this apply to the woman in the garden?

How does this apply to you?

I picture Adam and the woman in the garden, bringing order and ruling over creation. To use a popular expression, she's got his back, and he's got hers. If he is in need, she's the first one he calls, and she's there for him.

According to the Bible, the weapon of a believer is a sword, the Word of God. What does it mean to carry a sword as a woman of God, an ezer? We see several things about the sword of an ezer:

It's responsive. When an ezer heard a cry for help, the sword was drawn with an air-tingling *zing!* Sheathed until then, the sword--the Word--was and is to remain a tool for the advancement of God's Kingdom. It is fearsome and to be wielded with wisdom.

It's powerful and definitive. 1 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Hebrews 4:12 agrees: "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

It's for the Kingdom, not for individual gain or fame. This is not about us.

This is about God partnering with His people to do His work in this world. He alone gets the glory! *Soli Deo gloria.*

What do these 3 points stir up in you?

Day 10: Ezer, All Ages

Larger context: Ezers in all of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments

This passage: See the specific list below

Idea

You are called to be a responder; you are called to partner with someone who cries for your help. Age and marital status do not define an ezer.

Words

Relating to **Deborah**, in Judges 4: *Shaphat*: to judge, govern, decide, vindicate. To act as a law-giver, judge, or ruler. Deborah was a judge, ruling and governing over Israel.

Thoughts

Widows, single moms, girls, single women, young women, older women: are we all ezers? Or do you have to be married and middle-aged, red cheeks and lip gloss intact, able to wield a sword high above your shoulders, and look good in a strapless warrior-princess outfit? Tongue-in-cheek aside, you do not have to look like a comic book character or be a certain age to be an ezer.

God calls women of all ages and circumstances to be His ezers. Look up the stories of these women:

Lydia (textile dealer from a large city; hospitable): Acts 16:13-15,40

Phoebe (deacon of the church): Romans 16:1,2

Deborah (married; prophetess; national judge and leader) and **Jael** (married; assassin): Judges 4 and 5.

The Woman at the Well (Samaritan [racially viewed with prejudice], married 5 times, living with a man): John 4:4-42

Jairus' Daughter and the Hemorrhaging Woman (girl, age 12; older woman, weak physically and broke financially): Luke 8:40-56

Mary Magdalene (former demoniac, contributed to Jesus' ministry, key person during the crucifixion and resurrection): Luke 8:1-3; Mt 27:55,56,61; Mt 28:1-10; John 20:1-18

Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (hard workers for the cause of Jesus): Romans 16:12

Mary, Martha's and Lazarus' sister (single, from a small town, deeply devoted to Jesus, anointed Him before the cross): John 11:28-45; John 12:1-8

Pick a few of these passages, or go through them all slowly. Glean what you can about these women, given the details of Scripture, their times, and their cultures. Every one of them was a very strong woman. Explore how. And get excited about meeting them in Heaven! These are your sisters!

Day 11: Ezer and Dr. Hamilton: Side by Side

Larger context: Genesis 1

This passage: Genesis 1:26a, 27a

Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule....So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Idea

According to Dr. Victor P. Hamilton, "The new creation will be neither a superior nor an inferior, but an equal. The creation of this helper will form one-half of a polarity, and will be to man as the south pole is to the north pole.... Any suggestion that this particular word denotes one who has only an associate or subordinate status to a senior member is refuted by the fact that most frequently this same word describes Yahweh's relationship to Israel. He is Israel's help(er)."

Words

Ezer: verb: to help, succour; noun: one who helps. Also related to *azar*, to help.

Thoughts

Lay aside all the superiority jokes--Adam was the prototype, Eve the perfected model, etc.--and look at gender with fresh eyes. Review Day 2's writing about gender if you need to.

Let's consider what it looks like to be side by side rather than in the classic dominant/superior male - inferior female dynamic.

Side by side means you both listen; you both respect; you both honor.

Side by side means you both operate out of your strengths and you acknowledge each other's weaknesses without derision.

Side by side means your focus is on the goal, not each other, so your environment is more safe sexually.

Side by side means you treat each other as people made in the image of God, not as resources.

Side by side means you get a fuller perspective on an issue because you acknowledge the spectrum from intellect to emotion to intuition to creative problem-solving to pure analysis. It all works together to build a better picture or product or project.

Side by side means you are wholistic and integrated. Side by side means you evaluate a person according to their personhood, not their genitals. The hope is to reflect the entire image of God, and according to Scripture, male and female **together** do that.

Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 175. He is the Professor of Religion at Asbury College.

Brown-Driver-Briggs, <http://biblesuite.com/hebrew/5828.htm>, definition of *ezer*

Day 12: The Ugly Side of Ezer: The Militant

Larger context: John 19:25-27, Luke 1

This passage: Proverbs 14:1, Luke 1:38

Proverbs 14:1 The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.

Luke 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said."

Idea

If you picture a spectrum line, ezer is at the center. Off to one end is a fearsome woman I call the Militant.

Thoughts

We've all known a woman like this. She's pushy and aggressive and you can only take her in small doses. She's the Militant. She makes coffee jumpy, stomachs knot, and people run. She may get a lot done, but she is unpleasant in the doing!

Militant	Ezer
Marked as a bitch [I don't mean to offend you by using this term; it brings up a cultural image.]	Marked by the Spirit's fruit
Inappropriately aggressive: push, push, push	Rest in Jesus' Lordship and timing
So focused on a cause that she misses the souls and spirits of those near her	Cares for and shepherds those around her in the moment, in wisdom and strength
Loud voice, grating, annoying, nagging	Allows God to give her her voice, and uses it well and at His initiative; can wait, can also be forceful and authoritative

Consider Mary, Jesus' mother. What if she had been a Militant?

- ~ She could have "sliced up" Joseph for his wavering
- ~ She could have been defensive and angry when telling people why she was pregnant
- ~ She could have hyper-focused on Jesus and His future, missing the others around her
- ~ She could have been impatient, waiting for Jesus' ministry to begin, pushing Him
- ~ She could have decided she needed power, prestige, and position in Jesus' Kingdom, and pushed for it

I think Jesus' life would have looked different if He was always battling His "militant" mom, but God knew who His Son needed. And He chose Mary.

In what ways do you see yourself in the Militant? In the ezer? Picture Jesus coming to you kindly and gently. Invite Him into your personality, and ask Him to touch parts of you that need rearranging. Journal about this journey of becoming more like an ezer.

Day 13: The Ugly Side of Ezer: The Mouse

Larger context: 1 Peter 3:1-7

This passage: 1 Peter 3:3,4

1 Peter 3:3,4 Your beauty should come from...your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

Idea

If you picture a spectrum line, ezer is at the center. Off to the other end is a quiet, lost woman I call the Mouse. You probably wouldn't even notice that she's there.

Thoughts

Are you afraid to speak up? Have you faded into the background of life, wall-paper and stage props for the lives of others to use so they may live fully? Are you paralyzed or passive, focused on your fears? My friend, you were created to reflect the image of God. There is more to this life, and it is for **you!**

Mouse	Ezer
Invisible	Visible, but not needy or about self-glory
Inappropriately passive	Moving at the Spirit's initiative
Not involved in causes because she doesn't use her voice	Involved in whatever God has for her
No voice	Able to use her God-given voice to affect change, challenge, comfort, love
Afraid to minister to others, consumed by inadequacy or fear	Able to care and shepherd in the moment as the Holy Spirit leads

Let's consider Mother Mary again.

- ~ She could have run away in fear, considering herself unworthy of this calling
- ~ She could have thought the cost was too high and run from her calling, losing her mind
- ~ She could have become fearful, then absent
- ~ She could've been afraid to fail and given up

Do you see yourself in the Mouse? In what ways?

I pray for you today, that you will be happy with your God-given voice and learn to use it; that you will fear less and love boldly; that you will step out in faith and not let fear or failure keep you captive; and that you will become involved in something that stirs you. God bless you, sister!

Journal Page

Take some time to journal, reflect, and wonder about what you've read recently. Feel freedom to draw, collage, and doodle your way through the concepts of being a warrior companion, seeing women of all ages as ezers, and the Militant and the Mouse. Return to the previous days and gather your thoughts about some of the questions and the charts.

Day 14: Adam's Name

Larger context: Genesis 2, 3

This passage: Genesis 2:7, 3:19, 5:1b,2

Genesis 2:7 Then the Lord God formed a man* from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.
*adam

Genesis 3:19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

Genesis 5:1b,2 When God created man, He made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female; at the time they were created, He blessed them and called them “man*.”

Idea: Adam

From the start, Adam was called Adam, from the more generic term *adam*.

Words

My NIV Bible makes a footnote on Genesis 2:7: “The Hebrew for *man (adam)* sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for *ground (adamah)*; it is also the name *Adam* (see verse 20).”

It also has a footnote on Genesis 5:2, “God called them man”: the Hebrew for the word man in this verse is also *adam*. They--both of them--were called *adam*. *Adam* is used as a general word for mankind.

Thoughts

Adam was taken from the ground. Imagery throughout the Bible of God as the Potter and we as the clay comes to mind when we picture this creative scene. God scoops up dust, the stuff of the earth, and fashions a man. When God breathes the breath of life into Adam, he becomes a living being. We fully acknowledge that only God can create the quarks, atoms, molecules, and bonds necessary to form a person. His are the raw materials, the beauty, and the mystery.

We know that pre-fall Adam was built carefully and intentionally with a heart, mind, soul, and spirit, fully alive (Genesis 2:7) and fully present to God. He knew no shame, no blame, no harm, no decay, no tears (as opposed to Genesis 3 and Revelation 22:3 and 21:4). Eternity was in his heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

He exercised dominion, or loving leadership and stewardship, as he named the animals. What a privilege: to be the Namer, the one who could see all the beasts and birds and give them their name. Do you find it strange that he gave his wife a different name after the Fall? More on that tomorrow. Until then, meditate on what it must be like to be shameless, free, fully known, and fully loved, as Adam was. Think about the honor and privilege of being the Namer.

And by the way...remember your names from God himself: child, beloved, treasure...ezer.

Reference: The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, New International Version, copyright 1983, Kirkbride & Zondervan

Day 15: The Woman's Name

Larger context: Genesis 2 and 3

This passage: Genesis 2:23-25, 3:20; 5:1,2

Genesis 2:23 “This is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” ~Adam speaking

Genesis 2:24,25 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Genesis 3:20 Adam [the man] named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

Genesis 5:1b,2 When God created man, He made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female; at the time they were created, He blessed them and called them “man.”

Idea: The Woman's Name

Woman? or Eve? Does it matter, and in what way?

Words

Skim through chapter two and the first half of chapter three and you'll notice the woman is always called “the woman.”

Adam named her “woman” first, with the name sounding similar to his. His name sounds like “adamah,” a Hebrew word related to “ground.” When Adam and the woman chose to disobey God, part of Adam's curse was aimed at the ground; hers impacted child-bearing and relationships (Genesis 3:17-19). We are reminded in the names of our humanity that we are temporary, dusty people.

Before the woman was created, Adam was given the task and privilege of naming all the animals. In a similar fashion, he named the woman (2:23). But after the curse, Adam changed her name to “Eve,” meaning “living,” for “she would become the mother of all the living.”

Thoughts

Until I began studying **ezer**, I had never noticed that Eve was not “Eve” until chapter 3, **after** the Fall. What do you think about that? Is the timing significant to you? What do you think Adam was feeling or pondering when he changed the woman's name to Eve?

Although we are of the ground, God Himself has lifted Christ-followers to the heights of heaven as we are “seated with Christ in the heavenlies” (Ephesians 2:5-7). What grace! What a high price He paid to elevate us from dusty sin-creatures to beloved children of the Most High God! Consider His love for you in quiet today.

Reference: The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, New International Version, copyright 1983, Kirkbride & Zondervan

Day 16: The Woman Relies on Herself

Larger context: Genesis 3

This passage: Genesis 3:6,7

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Idea

Religions and many men have long condemned the woman for her choice to take the fruit and eat it. In my travels abroad I have heard of modern women being demeaned in the coarsest of terms for this very (ancient) act. The following assumption that every living woman is cursed because of her trivializes all that occurred at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam was there too.

Words

Taavah: desire, even greedily and intensely. “[The fruit] was a delight to the eyes,” “pleasant to the eyes.” To consider it a favorite.

Thoughts

I am such an Eve. Have you noticed her rationale?

1. **It was good for food.** Women, as nurturers, are constantly on the lookout for healthy foods. It is in our nature as givers and nurturers of life that we seek good nourishment to promote life.
2. **It was pleasing to the eye.** We don't know what the fruit was...apple, pomegranate, pear? We **do** know it was lovely. I too love beauty and seek it out everywhere I go, in terrains, objects, and people. Beauty is a balm. Beauty reminds me God is alive!
3. **It was desirable for gaining wisdom.** As I have traveled around the world, I am struck by this one thing: women want to be wise. They crave wisdom! They are full of questions, they diligently seek answers! They want to be better, wiser than people who have gone before them.

Are you like the woman, longing for what is healthy, beautiful, and brings wisdom? Me too. I am an Eve.

Health, beauty, and wisdom are good things, I'm sure we agree. Yet the woman chose to pursue those three lovely things outside the boundaries of God's blessing, and they became perverse, even a means to the death of her spirit. She chose a good-feeling alternative to trusting God, and trusted her own judgment.

Is there something in your life that is a good thing, but you are pursuing it outside God-given boundaries? Talk to God about it. I urge you to confess this thing to God--meaning, to tell Him about it, and agree with Him that it is not good for you. Then repent--meaning, to change your direction. Make a 180-degree turn from this good thing and pursue what is ultimately best: God Himself. Trust Him: if He says this good thing will bring harm into your life, it will. He knows more than you do (Isaiah 55:8,9) and has your good always in mind.

Taavah (desire): Strong's Concordance, word 8378; Brown-Driver-Briggs word analysis on Biblos.com

Day 17: Immobile Adam

Larger context: Genesis 3

This passage: Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Idea

The woman unwisely moved toward what was good for food, beautiful, and would make her wise; the man...didn't move at all.

Words

Im: From *amam*, adverb or preposition, with (i.e. In conjunction with), in varied applications; specifically, equally with." Adam ate "equally with" the woman.

Thoughts

To review: The essence of our being is exemplified in our sexual organs. For a man, the essence is movement, forward-going, strength/hardness, penetration. For a woman, it is nurturing, creating, inviting, life-giving.

Adam was designed to move forward; with that comes the motions of protection and provision. Physiologically man (adam) is created for stress, emergency, and power (see Dr John Gray's YouTube, "When Mars and Venus Collide," for a secular view on stress, gender, and brain science). For example, a man's amygdala, the emergency responder system of the brain, is much larger than a woman's. He is physiologically suited for more stress. This is not gender bias; this is brain science. It makes sense that a core piece of manhood is movement.

When the woman was in conversation with the serpent, Adam didn't interrupt or challenge.

When the woman reached out her hand to take the fruit, Adam didn't move.

When the woman put the fruit to her lips, Adam didn't move.

When the woman offered it to him, Adam ate.

Adam didn't step between the Woman and the snake.

Adam didn't put his hand on hers and talk it through.

Adam didn't say, "Oh no, let's go talk to God about this! We know He doesn't want us to do this. Stop and let's talk to God." "Woman, don't do it! Put it down--God said not to eat this! Come on, let's go."

Instead, Adam was silent.

Eve trusted her own judgment over God's and was deceived; Adam was passive and didn't move. And now we've got a huge mess.

Do you need to listen to Jesus, the ultimate Man in your life, who is urging you to put something down, to stop something, to end a relationship, to turn away from a conversation that is doing you harm? **Jesus moved** on your behalf by bravely, sacrificially going to the cross. He put His own sorrow aside and moved. He faced the pain, the agony, the separation from God, and the chasm of death...and then **He kept on moving**, right up out the grave! Now He is seated in Heaven, full of life and power (Revelation 1), and **He will keep moving**, one day coming back for us (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). He moves! You can count on Him.

Im (with), Strong's Concordance, word #5973; Brown-Driver-Briggs word analysis on Biblos.com

Day 18: Hide and Blame

Larger context: Genesis 3

This passage: Genesis 3:7-13

I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid....The woman You put here with me, she....”

Idea

The man and the woman, realizing they were naked, worked hard to cover up. They took what was available--fig leaves--and sewed them together (how creative!). Then they hid, acknowledging for the first time that awful feeling: “I was afraid....” Adam also indicates shame: “...so I hid.”

The human race has been doing this ever since! **Cover, hide, and blame.** Cover it up...hide it...don't let anyone know...keep it a secret.

And then they blame! God asks the man, who confesses and blames Him and the woman; He asks the woman, who confesses and blames the serpent. It was like this: “I had a part in this, but it was _____’s fault.” And ultimately, the man blames God! “The woman **You** put here with me--she gave me some fruit of the tree, and I ate.”

Words

3:8 “hid” is *chaba* (khaw-BAW), and is also used as “becomes hard, concealed, hides, hushed, secretly” in the Scriptures. According to the NAS Exhaustive Concordance, it means “to withdraw, to hide.”

3:8 “afraid” is *yare'* (yaw-RAY) and means to be afraid, to fear, to stand in awe of; dreadful; morally, to revere.

Thoughts

The intimacy in the Garden between God and the people, and the man and the woman disintegrated into fear, shame, hiding, and blame. Do you see these same trends in your relationships?

If we are living out of this curse--covering, hiding, and blaming--it is time to be free through the cross. God's response to the people includes two things: consequences and pursuit. He sets up the curses in 14-19, but He also sets up the hope for a Savior in 3:15. Jesus the Christ will be (future tense for them) God's strong provision to rescue humanity from Satan and sin.

“You're as sick as your secrets, and your secrets will keep you sick.” ~My favorite AA saying. Do you need freedom from some of your cover-hide-blame secrets? Talk to God about what's happened in your life. Accept your part of the responsibility, do the hard work of forgiveness, and then get free! Find a Bible-based counselor or friend who can walk you through getting free. It's worth it! And remember: 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Yare', Strong's Concordance, word #3372; *chaba*, #2243; NAS Exhaustive Concordance, Copyright 1998; Brown-Driver-Briggs word analysis on Biblos.com

Journal Page

Take some time to journal, reflect, and wonder about what you've read recently. Feel freedom to draw, collage, and doodle your way through the concepts of names and the Fall. Take time to return to the previous days and gather your thoughts about some of the questions.

Day 19: An Ezer's Identity: the Sword

Larger context: Ephesians 6:10-20, Hebrews 4:12, Matthew 4:1-11

This passage: Ephesians 6:17

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Idea

Even in the Garden of Eden, there was an enemy present. In Gethsemane too: the enemy was near. That makes me wonder: given the military imagery and context of *ezer*, what is the weapon of an *ezer*? What weapon can we picture the woman handling as she comes to the side of her co-worker? The tool of any believer is a sword, which is the Word of God. Its purpose? To help us stand against the devil's schemes (defensive); to bring the truth and freedom of God's Kingdom (offensive)!

Words

Machaira: a short sword or dagger. From Thayer's Greek Lexicon: "a small sword, distinguished from the large sword, and curred, for a cutting stroke; distinct also from **ξίφος**, a straight sword, for thrusting; but the words are frequently used interchangeably."

Thoughts

What does the Holy Spirit use as a weapon in the hand and heart of a believer? The Scriptures. Hebrew 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joint and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." When Jesus was tempted, He repeatedly said, "It is written..." (Matthew 4:1-11), and Satan was defeated. In some mysterious way, God's very words bring life (Genesis 1), last forever (Matthew 24:35), and are never unfulfilled (Isaiah 55:10,11). What He speaks is irrevocable, definite, and powerful beyond what I can comprehend. My words fade and I make mistakes; God's words are perfect. Perfect!

So if the Scriptures are the sword the Spirit uses, how well do you know the Scriptures? Do you feel well-armed, or vulnerable? Are you a confident Bible-quoter or anemic? Do you know how to discern when the Spirit wants you to bring out your sword, or how to use it? Sometimes people use the sword cruelly in the Name of God, rather than simply taking a stand. Go back to the Militant or Mouse pages (Days 12 and 13) and reflect on how you quote the Bible.

Take some time to identify ways you can know your Bible better. Do you need a Bible in modern, rich language? I recommend [The Message](#) by Eugene Peterson. My church uses the English Standard Version; there are Bibles written so the books are in chronological order; and there is a Bible written as a story, a novel. Take your pick and enjoy!

An *ezer* uses her sword as the Holy Spirit prompts her. In order to clearly hear the Spirit, you must make space and time for Him. He is the Person of the Trinity who is **in** you, directing you, training you, loving you, counseling you, and filling you with Jesus' teaching. What do you need to alter in your life so that you can better hear the Spirit? Do you need to form new habits (like talking with Him as you exercise or walk through your office or home) or break old ones (just talking to yourself)? May the Spirit guide you now as you ponder this.

Day 20: The Blessed Alliance is Broken: The Change in the Swords

Larger context: Genesis 3; Hosea 2:14-23; Isaiah 54:5

This passage: Genesis 3:16

I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.

Idea

Our swords were never meant to be used on our partners; they were to defeat the enemy (defensive) and advance the Kingdom (offensive). But in the history of men and women (and that's a long history!), we see the trend of oppression of women by men (read the book Half the Sky). Since the Fall, we have turned our swords on each other, and we have been slicing each other up ever since.

Words

Arar: Cursed; to bitterly curse.

Mashal: to rule, have dominion, reign (over) (Genesis 3:16)

Thoughts

When Adam and the woman broke their trust covenant with God and took the cheap alternative of trusting themselves, the bliss and safety of the Garden of Eden was lost forever. God said they would die, but they didn't die physically immediately; they died spiritually. The beautiful childlike freedom they had enjoyed was gone. I had pictured them back to back, swords at the ready, light in their faces and discovery all around, bringing order to the world, ready to fill it with children and beauty and peace, ready to bask without inhibition in the love and affection of their Father God. Now, after the curses, my picture changed: they swung their swords from facing outward toward the world to facing inward toward each other, and grievously, the genders have moved from being partners to being adversaries.

When God pronounces a curse, prepare to be devastated. What God says is powerful, as we have seen, and when He speaks, life moves to line up with His words. So in Genesis 3, everything changed. God cursed the serpent (3:14,15), and aspects of the woman's life (3:16) and Adam's life (3:17-19).

Is God mean? It may feel that way, but try this perspective: pain causes us to feel our great need for God and helps us to be aware of His pursuit of us. We look to Him in our pain, and He responds with relationship and affection.

"Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." Ouch. We want his attention, we crave his affection, we want him to fill an inner heart space ... but we are left unsatisfied. He cannot fill the void; he too is a broken being. Rather than mutual joy and service and tender love, we live in a broken system. It's a dance of domination and desire: the Militant response corresponds with the angry woman who is not loved well and gets reactive, and the Mouse response corresponds to the withdrawing woman who is dominated. What does this stir in you?

Half the Sky, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, Vintage Books, 2009. *Arar*, Strong's Concordance, word #779. *Mashal*, Strong's Concordance, word #4910.

Day 21: The Ezer's Destiny: the Cross

Larger context: Psalm 130; Romans 6:11-14; Isaiah 61:1-3; Psalm 22

This passage: Romans 6:23; Luke 9:23-25

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus our Lord.

Luke 9:23-25 If anyone wants to come after Me, he must take up his cross daily and follow Me.

Idea:

The curses are not the end of the story. God has created a pathway to Him through Jesus' cross. We are redeemed! Through Jesus, we can be God's daughters. We can be family.

Words

Stauron: Cross. An upright stake; the Roman instrument of crucifixion.

Thoughts

The story continues! God, with loving kindness toward us, made a way for us to be close to Him again. No longer must we be isolated from God and each other because of the Fall; we have a Rescuer, and He is Jesus.

After the curses, God "made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). How horrified they must have been to see an animal die (for the very first time in history!) and their skins used as clothing! But this is a pre-figuring of Jesus. Let me explain.

God is holy--sinless, pure good, all perfection. We, on the other hand, are "fallen," anything BUT holy, pure good, and perfect. And the result of our fallenness? Death. So how can we, His created beings, exist in His holy Presence? We can't, without His intervention.

Jesus, God's Son, was sent to Earth with a mission: to rescue humanity. Through His intimate obedience and pure heart, He qualified to be the perfect sacrifice for mankind. His blood was shed on the cross, where He died. He was buried, but three days later, He rose from the grave! If we put our faith in Him, we too can die to our sinful nature and live for Him, ultimately rising from the dead to live eternally with God in Heaven. As Jesus met all the requirements of God's laws, He was the One offered as a sacrifice, perfect and blameless, to bring us back into God's Presence. We can now be clothed in His love as Adam and Eve were clothed with the animals.

Jesus says, "If you love Me, you will obey Me" (John 14:15). He asks that we, as His followers, take up our cross daily and follow Him. The cross symbolizes sacrifice and boundless love. What does that look like for you? Pray about this. Perhaps God is asking you to stand in a culture that doesn't like Christians; to leave your luxuries; to do something for Him; to love Him even though you are mocked. Ask Jesus to show you how to take up your cross every day.

So in one hand, ezers carry the symbol of their identity, the sword; in the other hand, we carry the symbol of our destiny, the cross.

Day 22: How Women See Themselves

Larger context: Colossians 3:1-17, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

This passage: 2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Ideas

Women have different views about themselves for a spectrum of reasons. Many feel they are like this donkey I saw in Addis Ababa: intentionally hobbled, tied in order to keep them in line, limited, unable to leave the pack or run free.



I think God calls us to be something radically different than that. As His ezers, we are responsive women, sword and cross in hand, eyes on Him, ready to do His will in the world.

Words

Kainos: new, fresh, unused, novel. New in quality (innovation), fresh in development or opportunity. New, which as recently made is superior to what it succeeds.

Thoughts

Believe it, sister: if you are a Christian, you are a daughter of God. You are not a diva; you are a daughter. You are a citizen of Heaven. God's Spirit has brought your spirit to life, and you are a new person in Christ!

Shed your old ideas. There are voices and forces in your past that have defined you; now, let God define you. You are a child of God, His treasure, called Beloved, worth the life of His Son!

Invite Him into your deep, wounded places of identity. He is a healer. He asked Thomas to put his hands into His wounds, so that Thomas would know Him and believe (John 20:24-29). Invite Him into your own woundedness: do you notice workaholicism? Perfectionistic tendencies? Performance? Earning the right to be loved? Explosive anger? A past replete with sexual sin? Pride and prejudice? Despair, or feeling worthless? Self-destructive habits? Addiction? These are symptoms of the disease called sin. Let Him in. Let Him heal. Let Him love you.

Kainos, Strong's Concordance, word # 2537. HELPS Word-studies, #2537. Thayer's Greek Lexicon.

Journal Page

Take some time to journal, reflect, and wonder about what you've read recently. Feel freedom to draw, collage, and doodle your way through the concepts of the swords and the cross. Definitely take time to journal about how women see themselves! Take time to return to the previous days and gather your thoughts about some of the questions.

Day 23: In Him, We Have a New Possibility: Restored Relationship

Larger context: John 14

This passage: John 14:16, 26; Galatians 3:28

John 14:16: And I will make prayer to the Father and he will give you another **Helper** to be with you for ever....

John 14:26: But the **Helper**, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will be your teacher in all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Idea

Jesus came to redeem mankind, to challenge the curse and rise victorious. He did it! We are redeemed (1 Peter 1:18), so let's act like it.

Words

Lutroo': to release on receipt of ransom; to redeem, release, liberate. To restore "something back, into the possession of its rightful owner - i.e. rescuing...."

Thoughts

When I was a child, my family and I ate at a local restaurant occasionally. The waitress would leave our paper check at the table; we would present it to the cashier as we were leaving. The cashier would take the check, pronounce the amount of expense, we would pay, and then she would put our paper check on a sharp spindle. The hole in it pronounced it "redeemed": we had paid for our food. Jesus has done the same for us: He took the paper law, presented it to His Father, paid the amount for our sin (it cost Him His life!), and now we are redeemed. The holes are in Jesus' hands and feet and side. We are paid for and set free for Him.

We do not have to operate under the curse of sin and death any longer: we are free and alive in Christ, filled with the ultimate Helper, the Holy Spirit. He can lead us into healthy, fruitful relationships and Kingdom work that reflect the original vision of Genesis 2: the blessed alliance. Fruitful partnership to the glory of God! Effective mission designed by Him for our personalities and gifting (Ephesians 2:10)! It's all possible through Jesus.

So let me get personal: if you are still living out of the curse, you are choosing to stay there! Do you want to get free of the curse? You were made for freedom (Galatians 5:1, followed by the entire chapter on freedom and the Spirit). The only way is through the cross. Live for Jesus, die to yourself. Lose your life for Him, so that He may give you real life.

And as you journey in freedom, keep in mind that brothers are not your enemy; the enemy (Satan) is your enemy (John 10:10)! But they may be misinformed, as I once was, or misunderstand this concept. Pray for peace between the genders, and fruitful labor for the Kingdom. Pray for the blessed alliance to rise once again!

Lutroo', Strong's Concordance, word #3084. Quote from William Barclay.

Day 24: Impact: the Married Ezer

Larger context: 1 Peter 3, Ephesians 5, Proverbs 31:10-31, John 14

This passage: 1 Peter 3:1-7

1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Ideas

Peter is writing to Christians in the Greco-Roman culture in which women were property and the father was the ruler of his home, with the right of life or death over his family (see the Roman law "*patria potestas*"). What he writes here is actually lifting women UP. He identifies Christian women as co-heirs in Christ (in a society where they had **no** rights!) and reminds Christian men **not** to use their physical, legal, and cultural power to dominate. He reinforces this with a caution that living in domination over their wives would affect their spiritual lives.

Words

Sugkleronomos: co-inheritor; being a fellow heir, joint heirs together, participant.

Asthenes: weak, in a state of depletion; refers to a lack of necessary resources.

Thoughts

According to Peter and Paul, a beautiful marriage reflects the community of the Trinity: in mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21), there is a fellowship and intimacy that pulses with harmony, respect, listening, and action ("Let **us** ..." from Genesis 1; John 14:9,10,26,31).

If you are married to a non-believer, what is your role as an ezer wife? Peter's advice may have come from his own marital experience: he says to win your husband to faith with your deeds (not your words). Let him see your kindness, your grace, your faithfulness, your good deeds, and see Jesus in you. Single man Paul adds that if an unbeliever leaves, let him go (1 Corinthians 7:15,16); you are free. Paul also recommends single-minded devotion to the Lord, so he thinks being single is more desirable than being married (1 Corinthians 7: 29-35).

Can you braid your hair (1 Peter 3)? Of course. This is not about legalism or revolt: look at the intention of the text. Prostitutes of their day wore braids; thus, the principle is to dress and adorn yourself appropriately.

Submission is to be mutual, as modeled by the Trinity. It is not about dominance; it is about serving each other symbiotically. Paul recommends women work on showing respect, while men work on showing love (Ephesians 5:21-33). The women of that day may have been unsure about how to handle their new freedom in Christ, and so Paul explains the beauty of safe submission, which is submission to a Christian man who will die for you, as Jesus died for the church. To be in a marriage like that is truly a taste of heaven.

One more thought: an ezer is strong enough to challenge her man and wise enough to love him well, with tenderness and service and joy and play and companionship. Can your husband rest in your presence? Can you serve him without condemning him? Are you full of grace and truth?

Sugkleronomos, Strong's Concordance, word #4789; *asthenes*, Strong's Concordance, word # 772; HELPS Word-studies, word #772

Day 25: Impact: the Single Ezer

Larger context: Romans 16, John 12:1-8 (single Mary, sister of Lazarus and Martha)

This passage: Romans 16 (see details in “Thoughts”)

Romans 16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

Ideas

Adam and the woman were male and female. Where do single sisters fit in this model?

Words

Sunergos: a companion in labor; one who labors with another in furthering the cause of Christ.

Thoughts

Ezers, as responders, are often in pairs or on teams. Feel the freedom to team up with another woman or a brother to advance the Kingdom.

Look at the various partnerships mentioned by Paul in Romans 16. He mentions women throughout the chapter:

Phoebe, “a deacon/servant of the church in Cenchrea. ...Receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and ... give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.”

Priscilla (partnered with Aquila), “my fellow workers in Christ Jesus”

Mary, “who worked very hard for you”

Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord (female pairing)

Persis, “another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord”

Rufus’ mother “who has been a mother to me”

Julia (verse 15)

Nereus and his **sister**

Look through these and categorize them, woman-woman, male-female, brother-sister, son-mother, and unknown. Make some notes as you consider these women and their roles. What are your reflections as you see these women in their sundry situations? How does this encourage you?

One recommendation from my single sisters: find a place to nurture and be nurtured. It is in you to express you and to be loved. The church needs your love.

Single moms, I too have been in your shoes. Keep walking! I encourage you to root out any bitterness; do the hard work of forgiveness; train your children; and bring in consistent male voices of integrity into their lives. Get some good support from other Christian folks too.

Is there a ministry you’ve been waiting to start until you were married? You have the freedom to start ministry NOW. Paul, our single brother, enjoyed the freedom his singleness gave him to work on behalf of the Kingdom. (Read his thoughts about the benefits of singleness in 1 Corinthians 7, and follow up with tomorrow’s reading.) I know many single women who wish they were married, and I know many married women who wish they were single. So what’s my conclusion? Embrace your place. Seek the Kingdom. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Realize your value as God’s daughter and **live your life!**

Sunergos, Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, word #4904; Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, word #4904

Day 26: Impact: the Widowed Ezer, the Most Powerful of Us All

Larger context: 1 Timothy 5:3-16, James 1:27, Luke 21:2-4

This passage: Titus 2:3-5

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

Ideas

With exceptional freedom, this ezer has the time, wisdom, and networking to shake the world for the Kingdom!

Words

Kalodidaskalous: teacher of that which is noble, honorable, and good. A teacher of the right.

Thoughts

Your power is hard to fathom! You have lived a full life and gleaned wisdom from your experiences, from people, and from watching. You have time and space to pray, to teach, to train, and to rest. You have the relational skills to disciple and mentor other younger women. You have the networks in place to serve your neighborhood, community, and city. And now, with technology as it is, you can impact the entire nation, even the world! You are a powerful ezer!

I heard the story of some widows in Africa near where I've worked. They were left to die, outcasts, their families unable to support them due to famine and hardship. It was awful! The local pastor got the women together, taught them to pray, and so they began to meet to pray. God, in His mercy and delight (I can just see His smile), began to answer their prayers very specifically. The women gained status and strength in their community as their prayers were visibly, lavishly, lovingly answered. Praise God.

I will never underestimate the power of gray (or dyed gray) hair!

Share your wisdom, your knowledge, your life lessons. Meet with others, pour out your life! Give your perspective. Write and publish Bible studies; tackle your community's issues; ask younger women to come have coffee, and talk to them about working out their faith in family life.

Why be available like this? Why make the effort? This world needs ezers who are circumspect sages, willing to invest in people and community. Without you, our lives will be so much harder. And we would love to bless you with our energy, questions, and vision.

The Kingdom is waiting to advance, and you are a key player. Draw your sword! And thank you.

Kalodidaskalous, Strong's Greek Concordance, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, word # 2567.

Journal Page

Take some time to journal, reflect, and wonder about what you've read recently. Feel freedom to draw, collage, and doodle your way through the concepts of restored relationship and the impact ezers can have on our culture. You might want to return to the previous days and gather your thoughts about some of the questions.

Day 27: Proverbs 31:10-31

Larger context: Proverbs 31

This passage: Proverbs 31:10-31

Idea

Have you read Proverbs 31:10-31? It's a description of a solid, capable, wise, hard-working, godly woman. She is an ezer in her family, community, and region.

Words

Eshet chayil: woman of valor!

Thoughts

So what does a godly woman look like? Does Scripture give us a more intimate look into the life of an ezer? As we read through Proverbs 31:10-31, we see an ezer at work in her home, in her area of business, and in her city. Read through this passage, looking at her characteristics. And make no mistake, she was working AND raising a family AND loving her (honorable) man AND impacting her city and region (largely through commerce). A woman of valor!

But understand the context: this is an ode to a marvelous woman, a poem, a song of praise. This is not a to-do list! This is not your assignment! Proverbs 31 is a **blessing**, something men memorized to speak with a beaming smile over their wives as they delighted in their wives' valor. It's an older Jewish way of a husband looking lovingly at his wife, twinkle in his eye, and saying, "Yes!" with a fist pump. As Rachel Held Evans writes, it's a "You go, girl!" (p.88).

But how do we western women usually understand P31? "No longer presented as a song through which a man offers his wife praise, Proverbs 31 is presented as a task list through which a woman earns it" (p.76). Because of this distortion, many women I know can't stand the P31 woman. With a roll of their eyes, they say, "Ugh, she just makes me feel so guilty!" Let's reclaim her with a hearty cry: woman of valor! Sister, friend!

In what ways does this woman look like an ezer to you? In what ways are you similar, and in what ways are you different? How does her description inform your thoughts about an ezer at work...at home...in her city?

One of my favorite passages describing what a mature person looks like is in the book by the Scazzeros called Emotionally Healthy Spirituality. Check out pages 45-46. There they put into words concepts of emotional and spiritual maturity that can easily guide your journey to being a woman of valor! One day, maybe we can see each other from across the room and say with a smile, *Eshet chayil!* And we will give all the glory to our God.

Eshet chayil mi yimtzta v'rachok mip'ninim michrah

An accomplished woman, who can find? Her value is far beyond pearls.

Rabot banot asu chayil v'at alit al kulanah

Many women have done worthily, but you surpass them all.

Day 28: Impact on Work

Larger context: Colossians 3, 2 Corinthians 2:14-16a; The Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20

This passage: Colossians 3:23

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men ...

Ideas

You have a voice!

God has gifted you.

You are commissioned to do His work. Go get 'em!

Words

Ergazomai : to work, trade, do; to be engaged in or with

Thoughts

You are His change agent for this world. The gospel is good news, and the world needs to hear it! Can you speak and be the gospel in a winsome way?

His arms to hold the wounded,
His hands to touch the broken,
His voice to speak for the vulnerable,
His heart to raise a family,
His joy to be in relationship,
His anger to confront injustice,
His eyes to see possibility,
His bank account to fund aid and empowerment,
His woman!

Remember the Proverbs 31 woman. She was diligent at home and at work. Please don't be intimidated by her: remember, she had a staff! (Her handmaidens. Ah, to have a staff of handmaidens...bliss.)

Review the verses on Day 27 about her. Highlight or star all the verses that concerned work. Think through these questions:

What was her work ethic like?

What was the quality of her work?

How did her work extend her influence?

She was a light in her community and was trusted because of the quality of her work and integrity of her ethics. Consider that as you think about what you do. Is your work excellent? Are you someone who does such a fine job that other employees begin to respect you and trust you? Can you graciously and humbly respond to them in such a way that when the door does open for you to talk about faith, that they will sit back and truly consider God? (Note: God alone moves in hearts to create new life; you cannot force, cajole, or argue someone into believing. God must work. We simply cooperate and speak when the Spirit moves us. Peace to you as you speak!)

Ergazomai, Strong's Concordance word #2038.

Day 29: Impact on Church: A Redeemed Church

Larger context: John 17, Jesus' High Priestly Prayer; Romans 16

This passage: John 17:23, Galatians 3:27-29, Romans 8:17, 1 Timothy 5:1,2

John 17:23 I in them and You in Me, May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.

Galatians 3:27-29 ...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

1 Timothy 5:1b,2 Exhort [an older man] as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

Ideas

Men and women working together, side by side, as family, for the sake of God's Kingdom. Is it possible? Absolutely. It is a vision of unity first put into words by Jesus just before He went to the cross (John 17). It's what Paul lived out (Romans 16) in his ministry. It's what Jesus signaled when He told Mary Magdalene to go tell The Boys that He had risen. We can work together.

Words

Heis: one, a primary number. In opposition to *many*. The neuter form *hen* is used in John 17:23.

Thoughts

In Christ there is no male nor female, but many of our churches don't act that way. Are we in disobedience, tripped up by gender issues? Let us look with fresh eyes at the Scriptures. Let's accept and receive and respect the gift of gender...but then let's refocus our eyes onto the Kingdom of God. This means our focus and energies can turn from gender to the cross and the Kingdom.

So men and women working side by side becomes less about gender, more about the cross. Less about gender, more about the Kingdom! Are we willing to acknowledge our prejudices and fallacies to God and His church, and begin the process to reconcile and refocus? Are we willing to view and interpret Scripture, looking for the original intent and cultural context? (I don't see many Christian women still veiled, for example, or seated on cushions because it is their time of the month. Rarely now do women sit in one area of church, men in another.) If so, I believe we will find that God created male and female to work side by side, reflecting His image in fullness and wholeness, **together**. Either gender in domination gives an incomplete, lopsided picture of God's image. The call is to unity; the path is through the Spirit; and the world is waiting.

Heis, Strong's concordance, word #1520; Thayer's Greek Lexicon; Englishman's Concordance.

Day 30: Impact on Mission

Larger context: **Matthew 28:16-20**

This passage: **Matthew 28:19,20**

Matthew 28:19,20 As you are going, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.

Ideas

An ezer is a responsive, partnered warrior. All ezers are on mission, beloved warriors with their swords drawn while they're on their knees. What cry do you hear?

Thoughts

Home	Business	Writing, farming, creating art, tutoring
Neighbors	Economic opportunity	Hosting, feeding, listening, being kind
Community	Combatting injustice	Holding babies in the hospital
School	Marriages	Working on behalf of trafficked victims
City	Region	Taking care of your aging parents
Area	State	Praying consistently, fasting for your nation

Loving the poor, managing people well in your company, creating job opportunities, being a faithful spouse, resting and playing...the opportunities for doing God's work are endless. Spend some time thinking and praying about what stirs you. What are you passionate about? What energizes you, what makes you feel alive?

And may I say one thing? **Being a mother is a worthy mission!** Developing your children's character is a vital mission. Take time and care to develop your little people! You are co-laboring with the Spirit as you love and train them. As they get older, show them through example and participation in age-appropriate activities what it looks like to be on mission.

How do you know which call is yours? How did you know that it's THAT cry to which you should respond? There are so many cries in this world that we can become overwhelmed.

We must learn to listen. In order to listen, we must slow down, which is no small feat, and get into quiet. As Ruth Haley Barton says, "Let solitude do its good work" ([Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership](#), chapter two: What Lies Beneath). We must listen to what God has to say. He has specifically made you, gifted you, equipped you, humbled you, and allowed life to shape you; He can use your past, your scars, your dreams, your strengths, your abilities. Is there a theme in your life that is being repeated? Do your thoughts continually revert to a certain topic? Pay attention to these things. Give Him the voice He deserves in your life, and then go. Do it. Be brave!

And as you go, open up your life and create a hospitable place, so that you may encourage others to be whole-heartedly God's also. "Making disciples" can sound very religious; it means to help someone progressively grow into the truths and lifestyle of a Christ-follower. As you grow, they see. Then we are all stimulated to expand our souls in belief and practice. So, dear reader, what is your mission? I'm praying for you to know...and go.

Day 31: Conclusion

Larger context: Psalm 103; Psalm 86:15-17; Psalm 46

This passage: Zephaniah 3:17, Proverbs 31:30

Zephaniah 3:17

The LORD your God is with you,

He is mighty to save.

He will take great delight in you,

He will quiet you with His love,

He will rejoice over you with singing.

Proverbs 31:30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Idea

Take some time away to pray and listen for God's direction.

Words

We've had enough words! :-)

Thoughts

Congratulations on finishing this study! I have one more main thought to leave you.

Psalm 46:10 reads, "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" Consider this verse as an invitation into the heart and mission of God. First, you must be still, quiet your self, and settle into the knowledge that He is God. Breathe it in; let that knowledge inform your thoughts, your life, your work, your time, your relationships.

Then see that out of His heart rises His mission: to be exalted among the nations of the earth. As His ezers, let's join with Him, swords in one hand and crosses in the other, to bring the knowledge and freedom and purpose of the Trinity to the world. From the very beginning, He has wanted us to be in relationship with Him, trusting Him, free in Him. What is your part in showing His heart to the world?

After all you have read, prayed through, discovered, and wondered about, consider now this question:

Where in (y)our world is a cry rising for a warrior to help?

I am praying for you as you pursue the heart and voice of God in this question. I trust He will give you an answer, and send you out to be His salt and light (Matthew 4:13-16)!

Still your soul.

Draw your sword.

Take up your cross.

May God richly bless you as you advance His Kingdom where He calls you.

Journal Page

Take some time to journal, reflect, and wonder about what you've read recently. Feel freedom to draw, collage, and doodle your way through the Proverbs 31 and the larger impact of ezers in the workplace, the church, and mission. You might want to return to the previous days and gather your thoughts about some of the questions. I hope this study has truly blessed you and enriched your understanding of God, His design for you, and your identity and destiny in Him.

Some books on this topic that you may enjoy:

A Year of Biblical Womanhood, Rachel Held Evans

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, Scazzero and Scazzero

Exclusion & Embrace, Miroslav Volf: chapter on Gender Identity, Abingdon Press

Half the Sky, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women, Carolyn Custis James

Lost Women of the Bible, Carolyn Custis James

Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership, Ruth Hailey Barton

Men and Women: Enjoying the Difference, Dr. Larry Crabb

I doubt you will agree with everything you read in all of these books. I don't either. But enjoy them, allow them to stimulate your thinking and engage in meaningful dialogue with friends and colleagues.