

# 4. Gender Imagery in The New Testament

## Objectives

- Explore the New Testament with a gender lens
- Prepare to lead meaningful discussion with training participants, staff and community members on scriptural passages related to gender

**(Estimated Session Time: 1 hour)**

## Session Flow and Description

### **Introduction - 10 minutes**

- Share objectives for the session with participants.
- Read the excerpt from Dorothy Sayers in Handout 2.4a.

### **Individual Work: Activity 2.4a, Jesus challenging Gender roles - 20 minutes**

- Give participants the list of gender distinctives in Jesus' ministry.
- Ask them to read the list and the Scripture passages, choose three or four, and reflect on why Jesus used each particular image and way of life to illustrate his parable or teaching.
- Ask participants to make notes and be prepared to share in the plenary session.

### **Plenary Group: Gender Imagery - 30 minutes**

Bring out the rich potential in the imagery and Jesus' lifestyle by having participants share insights from their individual work.

## Discussion Questions

- Who was Jesus talking to in the passage?
- Who is he talking to now?
- Why do these images and lifestyle choices translate across genders, millenniums and cultures?
- What do they tell us about some sources of Jesus' education?
- How does the fact that Jesus, a man, who spoke the way he did, challenge us to transform gender relations and intentionally focus on enlightenment for both genders?

## Materials

## Handouts

- Handout 2.4a, Reflection by Dorothy Sayers
- Activity 2.4a, Jesus Challenging Gender Roles

## Facilitator Preparation

- Make copies of Handout 2.4a for participants.
- Make copies of Activity 2.4a.
- Prepare copies of discussion questions and assignments for small group work.
- Review all Scripture passages used in this session and record your observations and insights.

## Reflection by Dorothy Sayers

Dorothy Sayers, a Christian author, wrote:

Perhaps it is no wonder that women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this Man – there never has been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never flattered or coaxed or patronised; who never made arch jokes about them, never treated them as either, “The women, God help us!” or “The ladies, God bless them”; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously; who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity

to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unselfconscious. There is no act, no sermon, no parable in the whole Gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess from the words and deeds of Jesus that there was anything “funny” about woman’s nature.

14 Dorothy Sayers was a Christian scholar, novelist and thinker. She is counted amongst the “Oxford Christians,” most notably including C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams and J.R.R. Tolkien. Her essay, “Are Women Human?,” on women’s rights and role in a male-oriented society, was published after her death in 1978, under the same title by Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill.

## Jesus Challenging Gender Roles

Please take a moment to reflect on the following gender distinctives in Jesus’ life and what they mean to you as a man or as a woman working today in community development. Make notes and be prepared to share your thoughts and insights in the plenary session.

The following references<sup>15</sup> offer important passages for further study and reflection. Here are some questions to think about as you consider these examples: Which stories about Jesus illustrate his concern for women? How did he challenge the roles society expected women to fulfil? How does Jesus’ example differ from the way we see women treated today in various cultures and places?

### Scripture Reference

Scripture Reference	Your Observations and Insights
Jesus was touched by a woman with an issue of blood. Instead of rebuking her, he welcomed her, despite Jewish law that said she was unclean  (Matt. 9:20-22; Mark 5:24-34; Luke 8:42-48).	
Women travelled with Jesus and supported him financially  (Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:1-3).	

<p>All four Gospels record a prostitute having the honour of anointing Jesus at a Pharisee luncheon</p> <p>(Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:37-39; John 12:1-8).</p>	
<p>Jesus' teachings and parables included things familiar to women, such as wedding feasts, childbirth, yeast, sewing and grinding corn</p> <p>(Matt. 9:16; 13:33; 22:2-14; Luke 17:35). He even used feminine imagery to describe God (Luke 15:8-10).</p>	
<p>Jesus' teachings were meant to appeal to both men and women. He often emphasised a point by telling two similar stories, or using two images, one with a man and one with a woman</p> <p>(Matt. 24:39-41; 24:45-51 and 25:1-13; Luke 11:5-9; 11:29-32; 17:34-36 and 18:1-8).</p>	
<p>Jesus' female followers were the ones who stayed with him during his crucifixion</p> <p>(Mark 15:40-41).</p>	
<p>Jesus' female followers were the first ones to arrive at the empty tomb</p> <p>(Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1-2; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-9).</p>	

Jesus taught women about the kingdom of God, despite cultural constraints that provided only men with religious education. Jesus had women followers in a time when women were not supposed to be in public unless on a domestic errand, much less in public in the company of men unrelated to them. Women ended up being Jesus' most loyal followers, staying with him during his crucifixion after all his male disciples left. Women were the first to witness his resurrection, in a culture that did not value women's testimony.

(See Scripture references listed on the preceding pages.)

---

Revision #1

Created 10 February 2024 07:29:59 by Pooja Thyagi

Updated 10 February 2024 07:31:03 by Pooja Thyagi