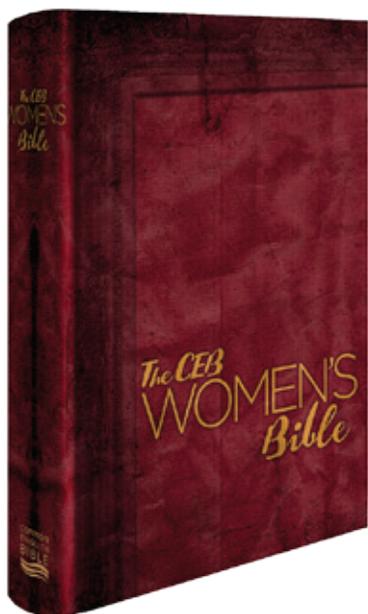


The CEB
WOMEN'S
Bible

THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

The CEB WOMEN'S *Bible*

Available October 4, 2016



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features

Luke

OVERVIEW

"To write a carefully ordered account" of the events that "have been fulfilled among us" (1:1); this is the stated purpose of the Gospel of Luke. The story is one of fulfillment. It's a sequel to God's activity revealed in the Hebrew scriptures and a realization of God's promises proclaimed in the prophets. The theme of fulfillment appears throughout the story, from Elizabeth's affirmation of Mary—"Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her" (1:45)—to the words of Jesus in the last chapter of the book: "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (24:44). The Gospel of Luke understands the ongoing work of fulfillment to be with those who hear and respond to the word of God's kingdom proclaimed through Jesus. That ongoing fulfillment is recorded in the sequel to Luke, The Acts of the Apostles.

Luke has been called "the Gospel of the poor" due to the book's emphasis on matters of social and economic justice for the marginalized and vulnerable. The prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible undergirds this emphasis and is woven throughout the book. Jesus, the main character, is presented in ways reminiscent of a great prophet like Moses. The message of "good news to the poor" and liberation for the oppressed (4:18), the focus on changing hearts and lives through confession and forgiveness, and the pervasive presence of the Holy Spirit underline the strong prophetic impulse at the heart of this Gospel.

As with all God's prophets, Jesus speaks to the concrete social and political issues of the day, which were inherently religious issues as well, calling those in positions of power to serve according to the ethics of the kingdom (or reign) of God, to serve with humility, generosity, justice, sound teaching, and love for God and neighbor (see 11:39-52; 34:1-14). God's kingdom is at the heart of Jesus' proclamation and is a reality that draws near in Jesus and is characterized by relationships marked by love, forgiveness, humility, self-denial, and the fruits that come from "changed... hearts and lives" (3:8) and faithful responses to the good news of the kingdom (8:25). This focus on faithful response—to listen and act on what is heard—is echoed throughout the Gospel (see 8:8, 21; 9:35) and is central to its overall message.

While the nature of Jesus' ministry is prophetic, Jesus is more than just a great prophet. Jesus' identity as God's child is established beginning with the birth narratives and is affirmed in the words spoken at his baptism (3:21-22) and the moment of transformation (9:28-35). The power of Jesus' word is revealed in the stories of physical and spiritual healing and in moments when even demons and forces of nature hear and obey (see 4:42; 8:24-33). And the great fulfillment of Jesus' word is his suffering, death, and resurrection on the third day. The fulfillment continues among those with eyes to see and ears to hear, as the risen Jesus appears on the roads we travel, in the places we gather, and in the breaking of the bread (24:13-49).

CONTEXT AND AUTHORSHIP

The author of Luke is not an eyewitness but is sharing the story handed down by others. The account laid out in Luke is not only "carefully ordered" (1:3) but is also beautifully and skillfully written. Its author, whose identity is unknown, was clearly well educated and

steeped in the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) that was used in synagogues in the Greek-speaking world. This is evident not only in the use of direct quotations, but also in the subtle evocation of literary style and creative blending of sources and theological ideas. Scholars generally agree that the Gospel of Luke was written late in the first century CE, perhaps between 80 and 90. The place of authorship is unknown.

ISSUES OF SPECIAL INTEREST FOR WOMEN

Luke has the most material about women of all the Gospel accounts. Of the forty-two total passages, twenty-three are found only in Luke (for example, 1:39-56; 2:36-38; 7:11-17; 13:30-17). Notice the technique called pairing in Luke, which includes one parable or teaching referring to a man and then another referring to a woman (see 15:4-10). Most of the images and contexts of women are presented in ways typical of the time and place in which they were written. Women are those who bear children, who serve, who listen attentively. Throughout the Gospel, women are lifted up for their faithfulness—often in contrast to the men involved (7:36-50)—and are shown to be among those who stayed with Jesus to the very end (23:27, 49, 55). Elizabeth, as opposed to Sarah, doesn't laugh at the news that she will conceive but rather receives the news with gratitude (1:25; compare Gen 18:12-25). She is "filled with the Holy Spirit" (1:45) and proclaims the presence of the Lord even before her famous son, John, is born. Mary of Nazareth is hailed as "blessed" and "happy" (1:45) and as a model of the faithful response called for at the heart of the Gospel.

The Rev. Ginger Gaines-Crill
Senior Pastor of Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, DC

Introductions

Each book of the Bible has an introduction that covers the historical and cultural situation of the text, including issues of special interest for women.

The Introductions and Reflections for each book were written by the same contributor and are signed.

Reflections

Before each chapter, there will be a brief reflection on the text that ranges in tone from contemplative to something more like a study note.

Portraits

There are character sketches of women in the Bible, named and unnamed, scattered throughout the text. The Portraits are written by a variety of women and are signed.

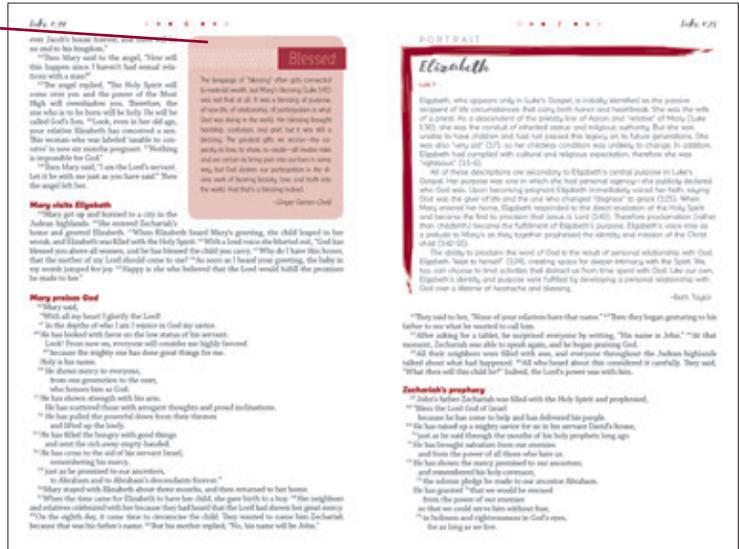
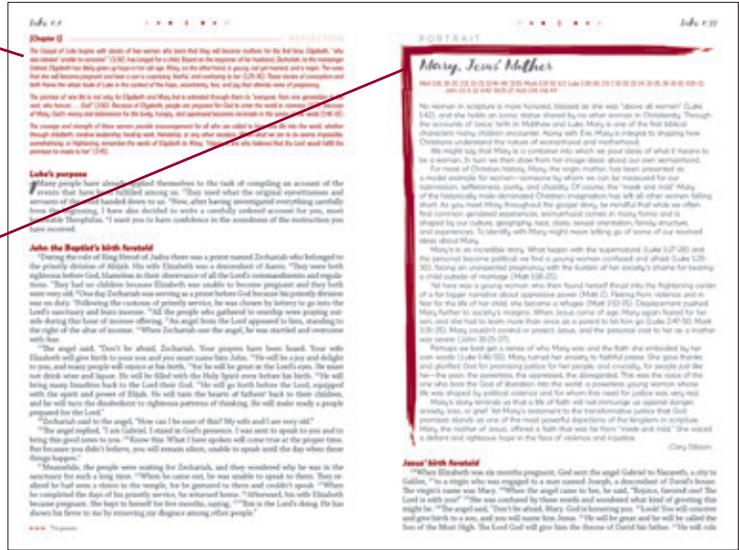
There is also an **Index** of every woman in the Bible, named and unnamed.

Articles

Throughout the Bible, there are special articles on different topics that are either specific to women ("Birth Control," "Miscarriage," "The Glass Ceiling," etc.) or are more general in nature but that highlight aspects of the experience that are specific to women ("Vocation," "Stress," "Depression," etc.). The Articles are written by a variety of women and are signed.

Other Features

- Full-color presentation page
- Sixteen pages of full-color maps from National Geographic



editorial board



Chris, Judy, Jaime, Ginger, and Rachel

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Rev. Rachel Baughman is a sixth generation United Methodist minister. She is serving currently as Executive Pastor of University Park United Methodist Church where she has been since 2007. A graduate of Texas Wesleyan University and Drew Theological Seminary, Rachel has contributed to and edited a long list of resources for Sparkhouse press. Rachel is a certified Birkman coach and loves consulting with church staffs across the country to improve their mutual understanding and their ability to work well with each other. Her husband, Rev. Mike Baughman, is also a United Methodist minister. They live in the Dallas, Texas, area with four children.

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Rev. Dr. Jaime Clark-Soles received her BA from Stetson University where she studied Philosophy and Russian Studies. She earned her MDiv from Yale Divinity School and her PhD in New Testament from Yale University. She is the author of numerous books and essays, and she enjoys speaking widely and writing for both academic and popular audiences. Her newest book, *Reading John for Dear Life: A Spiritual Walk with the Fourth Gospel*, will be available in September 2016. Currently, she is writing a book on women in the Bible, which will be available in 2017. Jaime also contributed to both Disciple Bible Study and Covenant Bible Study. As an ordained American Baptist minister, Jaime has served in both parish and hospice settings. She is a member of Royal Lane Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. She loves racquetball and cycling and generally staying in motion.

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Rev. Dr. Judy Fentress-Williams received her PhD in Hebrew Bible from Yale University where her dissertation reflects her interest in a literary approach that celebrates the multiple voices and inter-textuality of scripture. She earned her MDiv from Yale Divinity School and her AB in English from Princeton University with certificates in African-American Studies and American Studies. Judy has published many essays as well as a commentary on the book of Ruth for the Abingdon Old Testament Commentary Series. She is also a contributor to Covenant Bible Study. A member of the Society of Biblical Literature, she is an active participant in the Bakhtin and Biblical Studies Group, and she serves on the Advisory Board for the Office of Religious Life at Princeton University. Judy serves as a minister at Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia, and is married to Kevin Williams, MD. They have two children, Samantha and Jacob.

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In 2014, Rev. Ginger E. Gaines-Cirelli became the first woman to serve as Senior Pastor of historic Foundry UMC in Washington, DC. A graduate of Yale Divinity School, Ginger has served a variety of congregations: small and large, urban and suburban. For over 20 years as a pastor-theologian, her ministry has encouraged spiritual growth and engaged discipleship—emphasizing radical hospitality, shared ministry, spiritual practices, and solidarity with the poor and oppressed. She enjoys gardening, yoga, poetry, art, ice cream, travel, and hiking and is married to Dr. Anthony T. Gaines-Cirelli, a Catholic theologian, currently serving the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as a Director in their Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs office. The Gaines-Cirellis live in Washington, DC, with their cat Annie Rose and dog Harvey.

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preface

You're not alone when you open a Bible. God is with you and so are the voices and influences of all with whom you've journeyed through life. Each person comes to the Bible from a particular life experience, which is often formed in a faith community and shaped continuously by relationships with family and friends. This lived experience also includes a personal identity based in gender. It's almost too obvious to say that we're not all the same as individuals or families or faith communities. Yet it might be liberating to admit that we are created by God, who intends this marvelous human diversity and delights in our distinctions. The CEB Women's Bible affirms that the multiplicity of human voices, experiences, identities, and perspectives is a God-given gift.

When you open a Bible, you see that a variety of voices have always been part of God's good creation. As you engage with the biblical writings, it becomes clear that you are surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses" who, in their own way and context, have encountered many of the same things you experience in life today.

By focusing on stories of women, named and unnamed, and by engaging the reflections and topical articles that accompany the sacred text of this Bible, we hope that you—both women and men—will find yourself in a new way. We hope that you'll find yourself in the Bible, in the ongoing story of God's love and grace today, in a way that deepens your relationship with God, self, and others.

The CEB Women's Bible invites us into a deeper conversation with scripture—to question, wrestle with, explore, and receive the words and witness of the biblical texts from wherever we are on our journey. This deeper conversation helps us discover our own voices as we listen to God's voice. We anticipate that readers across genders will be inspired by this resource. As we notice women in scripture who had until now been invisible to us, we train our hearts to notice all of God's people today. And as we seek guidance for our lives, examine our choices, and pour out our yearnings before God, this Bible invites us to ask what it means for us to be faithful in our time.

The translators of the Common English Bible include both women and men, but all eighty editors and commentators for the CEB Women's Bible are women. We represent at least a dozen different denominations and faith communities. Nearly half of us are biblical scholars who train women and men for Christian ministry. We love the Bible, the details of the text, and its interpretation. Nearly half of us are pastors and church leaders who seek to equip our congregations with the knowledge and love of scripture. A few of us are novelists who tell stories about human experience, of life together in relationship and community. All are deeply committed to the power of God's living word.

The CEB Women’s Bible offers a number of useful elements for study and devotion:

INTRODUCTIONS accompanying all the books of the Bible highlight major themes, provide background information about history and culture, and include issues in the book that may be of particular interest to women.

REFLECTIONS are found throughout every biblical book—usually one reflection per chapter, but sometimes more. The reflections carefully and thoughtfully engage the reader with the text. These writings can be used in personal devotions, such as daily scripture reading and prayer. They can also be helpful in worship settings, when leaders and participants dive into the Bible. Small groups can also benefit from the reflections, and an appendix provides additional study questions designed for groups.

SIDEBAR ARTICLES explore more than two hundred themes of particular relevance to women’s experience of scripture. Some are theological in nature, on topics such as the Holy Spirit, suffering, or worship. Others explore timeless social issues including aging, discrimination, immigrants, and reproduction. Still others examine our personal relationships, such as divorce, family, and friendship. All the topical articles invite us to thoughtfully consider the Bible’s relevance for our world today.

PORTRAITS include character sketches of over one hundred named and unnamed women in the Bible. These profiles range from powerful women, such as Esther, who inspire us to make a difference in the world, to overlooked women, such as Noah’s wife, often invisible but crucial to the larger story. Still other profiles invite us to see the story anew through the eyes of a central figure, such as Jephthah’s daughter or Mary Magdalene. Each profile encourages us to see both biblical and modern women with greater appreciation for their particular gifts and challenges of faith.

An appendix includes **STUDY QUESTIONS** on select biblical narratives. There’s also an **INDEX** of all the women in the Bible, named and unnamed.

Our aspiration is that the CEB Women’s Bible comes alive for you as a truly living word to change your heart and life. In the process, the Bible speaks to you, and you speak to the Bible.

If you always turn to the Bible for comfort, may you also discover bracing courage in these pages as you read of Esther or the unnamed midwives who defended Moses. If you are annoyed with the Bible’s patriarchy, may you find refreshing affirmation as you explore articles such as “Sisterhood,” “Leaving a Legacy,” and “Matriarchs.” If you find scripture spiritually nurturing but irrelevant to the trials of our world today, may you encounter remarkable resonance with issues of war and peace, money and leadership. And if you experience the Bible as interesting but inaccessible, may you be richly fed by its nurturing spirit; for our deepest longings around body image, calling, friendship, and fulfillment are not new. They are vividly alive in scripture.

The Bible is our story; it’s your story. There’s a part of that story that only you can tell. We invite you to add your voice—your thoughts, opinions, insights, prayers—to the voices of women who have spoken the good news throughout the centuries and who are helping the Bible speak today. In the pages of the Bible, we find that we are not alone. Indeed, we find our very selves in a new way.

Jaime Clark-Soles

Judy Fentress-Williams

Rachel Baughman

Christine Chakoian

Ginger Gaines-Cirelli

Ephesians

Paul's letter to those in Ephesus aims at shaping Gentile churches in Christ. The designation "in Ephesus" (1:1) is missing from the most reliable manuscripts. This may indicate that Ephesians was originally a circular letter, distributed to multiple churches in Paul's name, and may also explain why the advice given is more general in nature. Ephesians shares much in common with Colossians, including similar passages (e.g., Eph 3:1-13; Col 1:24-2:5) and a reference to Tychicus (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7), one of Paul's secretaries who may have written down and then circulated both letters while Paul was in prison (Eph 3:1; 4:1; Col 4:10, 18).

Most scholars agree, however, that Ephesians was written not by Paul but by a disciple of Paul in his name. These scholars compare Ephesians with the seven undisputed Pauline letters to show that Ephesians uses longer sentences, different grammatical constructions, and unique terms (e.g., 1:18-23; 4:15; 5:6-14). The theology of Ephesians is also distinct. For example, Ephesians assumes a fully realized and present resurrection for believers rather than a future one (2:6), focuses on sin as discrete acts (1:7) rather than sin as a powerful master (e.g., Rom 7:7-25), and shifts the Christian perspective from the local, congregational body of Christ (e.g., 1 Cor 12) to the cosmic body of Christ, where Christ is the head (4:9-10). In addition, whereas Paul expended vast energy and emotion on the issue of Jewish-Gentile relations, for Ephesians that conversation lies in the past (2:11-18).

The Rev. Judy Lambert Fogg
Associate Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity
at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, CA



[1:1-23]

Ephesians opens with a cosmic perspective, describing God's eternal "hidden design" (1:9). Christian churches inherit this secret plan when God seals "them with the promised Holy Spirit" (1:13) that incorporates them into the universal body of Christ. The author affirms the local churches by giving thanks for their faith and love (1:15) and praying that they see "the hope of God's call" in their own faith body (1:17-18). The letter then resumes the perspective of God's power in Christ, who is "far above every ruler and authority" (1:21). Moving from God's cosmic plan to the local church and back to the cosmic Christ connects all small house churches to something greater than themselves. Though they may experience scarcity or social and political marginalization, God fills these churches with divine resources through Christ (1:23).

Greeting

1 From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will.

To the holy and faithful people in Christ Jesus in Ephesus.^a

² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The believers' blessings

³ Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven. ⁴ God chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in God's presence before the creation of the world. ⁵ God destined us to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ because of his love. This was according to his goodwill and plan ⁶ and to honor his glorious grace that he has given to us freely through the Son whom he loves. ⁷ We have been ransomed through his Son's blood, and we have forgiveness for our failures based on his overflowing grace, ⁸ which he poured over us with wisdom and understanding. ⁹ God revealed his hidden design^b to us, which is according to his goodwill and the plan that he intended to accomplish through his Son. ¹⁰ This is what God planned for the climax of all times:^c to bring all things together in Christ, the things in heaven along with the things on earth. ¹¹ We have also received an inheritance in Christ. We were destined by the plan of God, who accomplishes everything according to his design. ¹² We are called to be an honor to God's glory because we were the first to hope in Christ. ¹³ You too heard the word of truth in Christ, which is the good news of your salvation. You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit because you believed in Christ. ¹⁴ The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance, which is applied toward our redemption as God's own people, resulting in the honor of God's glory.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁵ Since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, this is the reason that ¹⁶ I don't stop giving thanks to God for you when I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to you. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God's call, what is the richness of God's glorious inheritance among believers, ¹⁹ and what is the overwhelming greatness of God's power that is working among us believers. This power is conferred by the energy of God's powerful strength. ²⁰ God's power was at work in Christ when God raised him from the dead and sat him at God's right side in the heavens, ²¹ far above every ruler and authority and power and angelic power, any power that might be named not only now but in the future. ²² God put everything under Christ's feet and made him head of everything in the church, ²³ which is his body. His body, the church, is the fullness of Christ, who fills everything in every way.

[2:1-22]

REFLECTION

Salvation in Ephesians indicates a change of status and identity. The believer is no longer an "alien," having no place and no rights, but becomes a "citizen," belongs to God, and belongs to a chosen people (2:12, 19). In the ancient world, each person's identity and status were relational: they depended on the status of the person "over" them. They had only as much status as their head of household, the head of their city, or the head of their temple. Women and slaves vicariously shared the social esteem of their husbands and

►►► ^aThe location of Ephesus was added in some later manuscripts, probably to make the opening of this letter similar to the others in the collection of Paul's letters. ^bOr *mystery* ^cOr *the fullness of times*

masters. Male citizens of a city or state vicariously shared the reputations, identities, and statures of the city and state rulers. A new “citizen” or a new member of household (by marriage, birth, or purchase) shared the city ruler or householder’s identity and took up new responsibilities under that “head.” Likewise the new Christian vicariously shares God’s status through Christ.

How do women and slaves receive this message of Christ’s salvation? Euphoria! They now belong to the highest power in the cosmos, become “citizens” and intimate members of God’s household family, and are built into a sacred, universal temple of worship!

This divine, salvific transfer from the bottom of the social scale (for women and slaves) into the eternal Christ’s body is an unthinkable elevation in status.

Saved from sin to life

2 At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. ²You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God’s will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. ³At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else.

⁴⁻⁵However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that he has for us. You are saved by God’s grace! ⁶And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus. ⁷God did this to show future generations the greatness of his grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus.

⁸You are saved by God’s grace because of your faith.^d This salvation is God’s gift. It’s not something you possessed. ⁹It’s not something you did that you can be proud of. ¹⁰Instead, we are God’s accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

The reconciliation of God’s people

¹¹So remember that once you were Gentiles by physical descent, who were called “uncircumcised” by Jews who are physically circumcised. ¹²At that time you were without Christ. You were aliens rather than citizens of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of God’s promise. In this world you had no hope and no God. ¹³But now, thanks to Christ Jesus, you who once were so far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us.

¹⁵He canceled the detailed rules of the Law so that he could create one new person out of the two groups, making peace. ¹⁶He reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross, which ended the hostility to God.

¹⁷When he came, he announced the good news of peace to you who were far away from God

Grace

Grace is God’s unmerited love, favor, mercy, and action in our lives. It’s by this grace that we receive new life in Christ. God’s grace is pardon for the things we did wrong and power to grow day by day in the image of Christ. By grace we are forgiven, healed, redeemed, restored, transformed, and made alive. By grace we are saved!

Grace is countercultural in a society where the ideal is to earn everything you have. We strive to prove our worth as good wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, employees, friends, neighbors, members of society.

If we are not careful, these same cultural tendencies can influence how we understand our relationship with God. We may despair that we are not “good enough” to be saved. We may fall into thinking we need to prove our worthiness or earn God’s favor. Ephesians 2 reminds us that God’s merciful action in our lives does not come about because we deserve it or earn it. We are saved by grace because God deeply loves us. As recipients of this lavish gift, may we in turn be bold in extending grace to those around us.

—Amy Diane Spaur

▶▶▶ ^dOr through his faithfulness

and to those who were near. ¹⁸We both have access to the Father through Christ by the one Spirit. ¹⁹So now you are no longer strangers and aliens. Rather, you are fellow citizens with God's people, and you belong to God's household. ²⁰As God's household, you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹The whole building is joined together in him, and it grows up into a temple that is dedicated to the Lord. ²²Christ is building you into a place where God lives through the Spirit.

[3:1-21]

REFLECTION

Everyone wants to be in on a secret, to be part of the "in crowd." And the author invites the readers in, sharing with them God's revealed hidden plan (3:3). Although Paul is suffering humiliations in prison (3:13), God grants the believers who hear his gospel access to the confidential knowledge and unlimited riches of strength, glory, and love through the Spirit (3:16-19). And here is the secret: the God of "every ethnic group in heaven or on earth" has united Jews and Gentiles into one body, Christ's (3:15). If, like Paul, the Ephesians felt themselves to be "the least of all God's people" (3:8), particularly in such a competitive society as the Roman Empire, hearing God's classified plan to call "the least" likely and unite them with all of God's people is a huge morale boost. God also entrusts them with a new vocation: to "preach the good news about the immeasurable riches in Christ to the Gentiles" (3:8).

Paul, apostle to the Gentiles

3This is why I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ for you Gentiles.

²You've heard, of course, about the responsibility to distribute God's grace, which God gave to me for you, right? ³God showed me his secret plan^e in a revelation, as I mentioned briefly before ("when you read this, you'll understand my insight into the secret plan^f about Christ). ⁵Earlier generations didn't know this hidden plan that God has now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets through the Spirit. ⁶This plan is that the Gentiles would be coheirs and parts of the same body, and that they would share with the Jews in the promises of God in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ⁷I became a servant of the gospel because of the grace that God showed me through the exercise of his power.

⁸God gave his grace to me, the least of all God's people, to preach the good news about the immeasurable riches of Christ to the Gentiles. ⁹God sent me to reveal the secret plan^g that had been hidden since the beginning of time by God, who created everything. ¹⁰God's purpose is now to show the rulers and powers in the heavens the many different varieties of his wisdom through the church. ¹¹This was consistent with the plan he had from the beginning of time that he accomplished through Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹²In Christ we have bold and confident access to God through faith in him.^h ¹³So then, I ask you not to become discouraged by what I'm suffering for you, which is your glory.

False Humility

False humility is a form of pride, one into which women are often socialized. False humility can take the form of deflecting compliments because acknowledging strengths or gifts is seen as prideful, or downplaying abilities to keep others from looking or feeling bad. By being self-deprecating, a woman wearing false humility can even seek to puff herself up by fishing for compliments—also known as manipulation.

False humility keeps us separated from each other. It prevents engagement and offering gifts that build community and promote unity. In this way, false humility is more concerned with the self and real or perceived limitations. True humility acknowledges one's own gifts as well as those of others, keeping the focus on the good of the whole community.

A passage like this one in Ephesians 4 helps us understand true humility in the context of the unity of the body of Christ. The body is a helpful metaphor for helping us to understand that we are all equipped differently, but no body part is more or less important in "building up the community" (Eph 4:29). Growth becomes impossible if we're always tearing ourselves down (4:26).

—Audrey Nicole Hinds

Married to Christ

Paul describes two ideal relationships to which we should aspire: the relationship between Christ and the “body of Christ” or the church, and the relationship in a marriage. In each we find mutual respect, love, support, and unity. Paul’s description of the relationships in terms of speaking to each other with “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (Eph 5:19) is how we might enjoy being greeted at home or in church. Reality, however, can be much messier because relationships involving actual humans do not exist in the ideal.

Some of our ugliest disagreements occur in the places we want to be the most safe: our homes and our churches. Because our families and churches are so close to our hearts, they can become vicious and painful battlegrounds. When this happens we may try to fix the situation. If things become too destructive, we may need to leave. Often, however, a lot of territory exists between fixing and leaving. Within this territory we find give-and-take, soul-searching, forgiving, and asking for forgiveness, sharing with friends, and prayer. In the end, Christ is our constant fount of faithfulness remaining in loving relationship with the church, a messy but often wonderful body.

—Sharon Ann Alexander

Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁴This is why I kneel before the Father. ¹⁵Every ethnic group in heaven or on earth is recognized by him. ¹⁶I ask that he will strengthen you in your inner selves from the riches of his glory through the Spirit. ¹⁷I ask that Christ will live in your hearts through faith. As a result of having strong roots in love, ¹⁸I ask that you’ll have the power to grasp love’s width and length, height and depth, together with all believers. ¹⁹I ask that you’ll know the love of Christ that is beyond knowledge so that you will be filled entirely with the fullness of God.

²⁰Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us; ²¹glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always. Amen.

[4:1-5:14] REFLECTION

Paul continues to explore what God’s secret good news means. Regardless of social status, racial identity, cultural barriers, or different individual gifts, God makes one body out of many unrelated people. All are united under “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all” (4:5). To realize this good news in the church on a daily basis seems impossible. But Paul insists that believers must live differently—we must become what God has already created in Christ. How can the church do this? Paul commends practicing “humility, gentleness, and patience” (4:2) with each other. Paul counsels accepting “each other with love, and . . . preserv[ing] the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together” (4:3). This kind of unity requires a change of mind, thought (4:17), and habits (4:22). Christians must leave behind their well-developed but corrupt desires to “get more”

and to “get ahead” by pursuing “whatever feels good” (4:19). Christ provides for the members of his body “according to God’s image in justice and true holiness” (4:24). Christian habits of mind and behavior must conform to God’s justice by attending to the genuine needs of “the least of all God’s people” (3:8).

Unity of the body of Christ

4 Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God. ²Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, ³and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together. ⁴You are one body and one spirit, just as God also called you in one hope. ⁵There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶and one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.

⁷God has given his grace to each one of us measured out by the gift that is given by Christ. ⁸That’s why scripture says, *When he climbed up to the heights, he captured prisoners, and he gave gifts to people.*¹

⁹What does the phrase “he climbed up” mean if it doesn’t mean that he had first gone down into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰The one who went down is the same one who climbed up above all the heavens so that he might fill everything.

¹¹He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. ¹²His purpose was to equip God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ ¹³until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God's Son. God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴As a result, we aren't supposed to be infants any longer who can be tossed and blown around by every wind that comes from teaching with deceitful scheming and the tricks people play to deliberately mislead others. ¹⁵Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let's grow in every way into Christ, ¹⁶who is the head. The whole body grows from him, as it is joined and held together by all the supporting ligaments. The body makes itself grow in that it builds itself up with love as each one does its part.

The old and new life

¹⁷So I'm telling you this, and I insist on it in the Lord: you shouldn't live your life like the Gentiles anymore. They base their lives on pointless thinking, ¹⁸and they are in the dark in their reasoning. They are disconnected from God's life because of their ignorance and their closed hearts. ¹⁹They are people who lack all sense of right and wrong, and who have turned themselves over to doing whatever feels good and to practicing every sort of corruption along with greed.

²⁰But you didn't learn that sort of thing from Christ. ²¹Since you really listened to him and you were taught how the truth is in Jesus, ²²change the former way of life that was part of the person you once were, corrupted by deceitful desires. ²³Instead, renew the thinking in your mind by the Spirit ²⁴and clothe yourself with the new person created according to God's image in justice and true holiness.

²⁵Therefore, after you have gotten rid of lying, *Each of you must tell the truth to your neighbor*^l because we are parts of each other in the same body. ²⁶*Be angry without sinning.*^k Don't let the sun set on your anger. ²⁷Don't provide an opportunity for the devil. ²⁸Thieves should no longer steal. Instead, they should go to work, using their hands to do good so that they will have something to share with whoever is in need.

Authority

There's no denying that passages like Ephesians 5:22-24 are used to hurt women, particularly when we emphasize wives who submit without also emphasizing husbands who love sacrificially (5:25). If we take the Bible seriously but also affirm the equality of women and men, we have to decide what to do with this passage.

We can reject it because we believe it contradicts the core of Jesus' teaching. We can ignore it because we consider it an irrelevant holdover from another culture. We can see it as Paul's attempt to use a cultural idea (the patriarchal marriage) to talk about a transcendent truth (the church) and focus on the kernel of truth within. What do you choose? Are there other options? What would make this passage good news for you? For both men and women? For the church?

—Elizabeth Corrie

²⁹Don't let any foul words come out of your mouth. Only say what is helpful when it is needed for building up the community so that it benefits those who hear what you say. ³⁰Don't make the Holy Spirit of God unhappy—you were sealed by him for the day of redemption. ³¹Put aside all bitterness, losing your temper, anger, shouting, and slander, along with every other evil. ³²Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, in the same way God forgave you in Christ.

5Therefore, imitate God like dearly loved children. ²Live your life with love, following the example of Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us. He was a sacrificial offering that smelled sweet to God.

³Sexual immorality, and any kind of impurity or greed, shouldn't even be mentioned among you, which is right for holy persons. ⁴Obscene language, silly talk, or vulgar jokes aren't acceptable for believers. Instead, there should be thanksgiving. ⁵Because you know for sure that persons who are sexually immoral, impure, or greedy—which happens when things become gods—those persons won't inherit the kingdom of Christ and God.

Be children of light

⁶Nobody should deceive you with stupid ideas. God's anger comes down on those who are disobedient because of this kind of thing. ⁷So you shouldn't have anything to do with them. ⁸You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord, so live your life as children of light. ⁹Light produces fruit that consists of every sort of goodness, justice, and truth. ¹⁰Therefore, test everything to see what's pleasing to the Lord, ¹¹and don't participate in the unfruitful actions of darkness. Instead, you should reveal the truth about them. ¹²It's embarrassing to even talk about what certain persons do in secret. ¹³But everything exposed to the light is revealed by the light. ¹⁴Everything that is revealed by the light is light. Therefore, it says, *Wake up, sleeper! Get up from the dead,^m and Christ will shine on you.ⁿ*

[5:15-6:9] REFLECTION

Ephesians assumes every human social role (husband and wife, father and children, master and slave) reflects the role of Christ (father, husband, master) in relation to the eternal church (family, household). Thus Ephesians argues that a husband "is the head of his wife like Christ is head of the church" and "the savior of the body" (5:23). In this way, complex familial and social relationships exemplify God's great order. This assumption is problematic. It essentially makes patriarchy (the male head of household or church or state) a divine institution.

But is patriarchy a divine institution? Scholars have shown that patriarchy was a standard organizational principle in first-century Mediterranean societies, and that those societies endorsed the human patriarchies through divine laws: the gods all seemed to endorse men at the helm. In contrast, many early Christian churches proclaimed a social order that went against the social standard and even contradicted what scholars call "the household codes" in Ephesians (5:22-6:9). For example, in Galatians Paul himself holds up the early Christian baptismal formula as the new organizational principle instituted by Christ: "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male or female" (Gal 3:28). This Christian liturgy stands in stark contrast to the "standard" patriarchal order.

How do we begin to understand two contradictory ways of organizing the church as Christ's body? Ephesians may have imported the patriarchy of household codes to provide a familiar set of guidelines to churches in need of clear codes of conduct. Elsewhere in the letter, Paul reminds churches that God "does not distinguish between people on the basis of status" (6:9). In other words, Ephesians may adopt the patriarchal structures of the day, but it also declares that Christ governs the whole body. Does Christ institute the same male head of household that human culture does? Or does Christ's ultimate status reorder society according to the destruction of social distinctions of status? Should the church reflect the culture's gender, racial, and class hierarchies? Or does the body of Christ reorder inherited social hierarchies by seeking new ways of relating to one another in Christ? In the history of Christianity, faithful men and women have pursued various versions of each set of codes.

Submission

Of the traditional monastic vows—poverty, chastity, and obedience—many committed monks find obedience to be the most difficult. This comes as a surprise to those who suspect it would be chastity. In a world that insists that we should have whatever we want, whenever we want it, we may lack practice in the art of obedience. We may even find Paul's instruction to submit to each other downright archaic!

But any kind of healthy community life—marriage, family, church—invites participants to set aside their own preferences and priorities for the sake of the whole. Submission and self-sacrifice are often uncomfortable but are genuine means of love wherein we discover true Christian freedom. Far from the ability to do whatever we want, whenever we want it, Christian freedom is the capacity to live fully in harmony with God and others—especially when you can't have everything you want. Paul is quite radical in his suggestion that husband and wife ought to submit to and sacrifice for each other. In doing so, they reflect the love of Christ, who freely gave himself up for the church.

Can Paul's notion of submission be abused? Certainly. For instance, it has been and continues to be used to endorse or at least ignore domestic violence. We must guard against any forms of submission that elevate human power to oppress or do violence, any form of submission that empowers one voice at the expense of another. Ultimately we submit not to human will but to the will of God, which is good and acceptable and perfect.

—Bonnie Scott

Be filled with the Spirit

¹⁵So be careful to live your life wisely, not foolishly. ¹⁶Take advantage of every opportunity because these are evil times. ¹⁷Because of this, don't be ignorant, but understand the Lord's will. ¹⁸Don't get drunk on wine, which produces depravity. Instead, be filled with the Spirit in the following ways: ¹⁹speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; sing and make music to the Lord in your hearts; ²⁰always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹and submit to each other out of respect for Christ. ²²For example, wives should submit to their husbands as if to the Lord. ²³A husband is the head of his wife like Christ is head of the church, that is, the savior of the body. ²⁴So wives submit to their husbands in everything like the church submits to Christ. ²⁵As for husbands, love your wives just like Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. ²⁶He did this to make her holy by washing her in a bath of water with the word. ²⁷He did this to present himself with a splendid church, one without any sort of stain or wrinkle on her clothes, but rather one that is holy and blameless. ²⁸That's how husbands ought to love their wives—in the same way as they do their own bodies. Anyone who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹No one ever hates his own body, but feeds it and takes care of it just like Christ does for the church ³⁰because we are parts of his body. ³¹*This is why a man*

will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two of them will be one body.^o ³²Marriage is a significant allegory,^p and I'm applying it to Christ and the church. ³³In any case, as for you individually, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and wives should respect^q their husbands.

6 As for children, obey your parents in the Lord, because it is right. ²The commandment *Honor your father and mother* is the first one with a promise attached: ³*so that things will go well for you, and you will live for a long time in the land.*^r ⁴As for parents, don't provoke your children to anger, but raise them with discipline and instruction about the Lord.

⁵As for slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling and with sincere devotion to Christ. ⁶Don't work to make yourself look good and try to flatter people, but act like slaves of Christ carrying out God's will from the heart. ⁷Serve your owners enthusiastically, as though you were serving the Lord and not human beings. ⁸You know that the Lord will reward every person who does what is right, whether that person is a slave or a free person. ⁹As for masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Stop threatening them, because you know that both you and your slaves have a master in heaven. He doesn't distinguish between people on the basis of status.

[6:10-24]

REFLECTION

In Paul's famous verses on the armor of God in 6:10-24, the metaphor and the message are at odds again. Armor is what the occupying Roman soldiers wore so they could act as violent instruments of oppression and injustice. Ephesians uses these military symbols to represent truth, justice, the good news of peace, faith, salvation, and God's word (6:14-17).

Gender

It may seem incongruous to read Paul's "household codes" (rules for how to govern one's family and small society units) from Ephesians 5, in light of his own words in Galatians 3:28 and the larger New Testament context that seem to invite a more equal worldview when it comes to gender and gender roles. When Paul writes, "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28), he says that Christ has blurred the boundaries of race, religion, and even gender. While the household codes seem to reinforce societal norms for the roles of the household, the reader is invited to imagine a new reality in light of the incorporation into one body through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. As I read this I ask myself, Where was God seeking to break through, and where did human minds anxious about the ways God was seeking to work limit God's proclamations? In addition, which household codes were appropriate and specific to the community Paul was preaching to, and which ones were meant to apply for all of Christian history?

—Laura Rossbert

Put on the armor of God

¹⁰Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and his powerful strength. ¹¹Put on God's armor so that you can make a stand against the tricks of the devil. ¹²We aren't fighting against human enemies but against rulers, authorities, forces of cosmic darkness, and spiritual powers of evil in the heavens. ¹³Therefore, pick up the full armor of God so that you can stand your ground on the evil day and after you have done everything possible to still stand. ¹⁴So stand with the belt of truth around your waist, justice as your breastplate, ¹⁵and put shoes on your feet so that you are ready to spread the good news of peace. ¹⁶Above all, carry the shield of faith so that you can extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word.

¹⁸Offer prayers and petitions in the Spirit all the time. Stay alert by hanging in there and praying for all believers. ¹⁹As for me, pray that when I open my mouth, I'll get a message that confidently makes this secret plan^s of the gospel known. ²⁰I'm an ambassador in chains for the sake of the gospel. Pray so that the Lord will give me the confidence to say what I have to say.

Final greeting

²¹Tychicus, my loved brother and faithful servant of the Lord, can inform you about my situation and what I'm doing. ²²I've sent him for this reason—so that you will know about us. He can reassure you.

²³May there be peace with the brothers and sisters as well as love with the faith that comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴May grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ forever.

Father

The relationship between parents and children is the second of three household relationships discussed in Ephesians 5:22–6:9. In the Greco-Roman world, the man (as husband, father, and owner) was the ruler of this domestic world. Paul makes a bold move, then, when he writes in 5:21, “Submit to each other out of respect for Christ.” Although the relationships remain hierarchical rather than strictly equal, Paul introduces the concept of reciprocity based on God's relationship to us in Christ. Children are expected to honor their parents (quoting the Ten Commandments), but fathers are to not provoke children to anger. The father's duty to the children is to raise them with “discipline and instruction” so the children will know the right way to live (6:4). This echoes the wisdom tradition of Proverbs 4 where the father is seen as a teacher whose instruction in God's ways will lead the child to wisdom and all its benefits.

—Cynthia Campbell

profiles

The following are examples of profiles found in The CEB Women's Bible. The contributors have written about named and unnamed women in the Bible, and these profiles are placed throughout the text. Following these examples are the Indexes of every profile included in The CEB Women's Bible. Additionally—in the finished Bible—there is a listing of every single woman, named and unnamed, in the Bible.

Woman Caught in Adultery

John 7:53–8:11

The story of the woman caught in adultery can be viewed as a text of terror or a text of liberation, or both. The story is not in the original version of the Gospel of John, since our oldest manuscripts of the Gospel omit it. Other ancient manuscripts place it after John 7:36, John 21:25, or Luke 21:38.

On the one hand, the text shows the precarious situation of any woman in a patriarchal society where a woman is not free to determine her own sexuality apart from a male authority figure, whether father or husband. We have certainly all read news stories of the stoning to death of women in our own times. In such societies, the woman does not have control of her own body; adultery is a broad term that does not always include the woman's full consent and can even include rape. A woman also pays a higher price for infractions (notice that no one is questioning the male adulterer). Jesus skewers the "good old boys" network where "boys will be boys" while women must remain pure.

As a liberating text, it raises the woman to equality with the judgmental religious authorities and invites all of them to leave their various sins (one being no better or worse than another) and embrace abundant life. Much ink has been spilled guessing at what Jesus wrote in the sand. What do you think?

–Jaime Clark-Soles

Mary Magdalene

**Matt 27:55-56, 61; 28:1-11; Mark 15:40-41, 47; 16:1-8;
Luke 8:2-3; 24:10; John 19:25; 20:1-2, 11-18**

Mary Magdalene serves as gratitude's unofficial spokesperson. Jesus changed the course of her life, freeing her from issues that had long tormented her. In return, she led the ranks of women who followed him and supported his work. She enabled Jesus' ministry in the best sense of the word.

Gratitude fueled her actions. With courage the fleeing disciples couldn't muster, Mary Magdalene stayed near the cross during his crucifixion. She and other women refused to abandon him even during that gruesome, soul-gouging event.

Gratitude drove her to the tomb near dawn, brokenhearted, clutching spices to anoint the corpse. The disciples cowered in a hidden room, mired in uncertainty, while Mary Magdalene put herself where she believed she was most needed.

The beauty of her faithfulness was rewarded with one of the most gripping scenes in the Bible. Mary Magdalene saw her Lord newly resurrected. Hers was the first name Jesus spoke. One of the last still with him when he died, she was one of the first to see him alive again. Mary Magdalene was a woman of action. She followed, observed, served, supported, provided, bent to look into the empty tomb, stood when she heard her name.

Genuine gratitude isn't stagnant. It moves. It acts. And it responds when Jesus says, "Go tell the others."
–*Cynthia Ruchti*

Tabitha

Acts 9:36-42

Tabitha (Dorcas) is the only woman in Acts to be identified by name as a disciple. Further, in Acts 9:36 the term used for "disciple" (mathetria) is the only occurrence of the feminine form of the word in the Christian New Testament.

In this account, being a disciple includes engaging in good works, showing compassion, and caring for those in need. The urgent request from the disciples in Joppa, the presence of crying widows, and Peter's decision to come to her to raise her from the dead suggests how integral Tabitha was to this community.

–*Kendra Weddle Irons*

Prominent Women from Antioch

Acts 13:50

Throughout the book of Acts, women of high social and economic standing supported the development of the early church (16:14-15, 40; 12:12). In Acts 13 we see that the same power wielded by prominent women was also used, in some cases, to persecute. In many ways and places, women were considered second-class citizens in the cultures represented in Acts, but it's important not to generalize about women's experience overall. In this text, it's clear that the women held considerable sway to be mentioned even before the city's leaders. Whatever power we have can be used for good . . . or for ill.

–*Ginger Gaines-Cirelli*

Lydia

Acts 16:14-15, 40

Although Lydia appears only briefly and has only one speaking line, she played a prominent part in the early church. As a Gentile God-worshipper, she had gathered at the place of prayer with other women who already worshipped the God of Israel. Lydia adopted Christianity and started the first church on the European continent, in the city of Philippi. She formed this church in her house with her family members and perhaps women who worshipped with her on the riverbank. Lydia, a successful businesswoman, used her financial and leadership gifts for the church. Her story parallels that of powerful men in Acts (the God-fearing centurion Cornelius in Acts 10; the synagogue official Crispus in Acts 18:8): she is the head of her home, and when she converts, so does the rest of her household. In the Philippian church Lydia sets the stage for ministerial leadership that includes women as equals, indicated later by Euodia and Syntyche serving among the church's co-leaders (Phil 4:2-3).

–*Jann Aldredge-Clanton*

Jephthah's Daughter

Judg 11:29-40

The human sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter is one of the most horrific and heartrending stories in the Old Testament. The fact that Jephthah is praised in other biblical texts (1 Sam 12:11; Heb 11:32) highlights tradition's treatment of this painful story as one of sacrificial faith.

But if you pay attention to the story you recognize that God neither asked Jephthah to sacrifice his daughter nor praised him for doing so. This suggests that Jephthah made decisions based on his own ideas of what God desired, not on anything God had revealed. That a father's murder of his only daughter is lifted up as a model act of faith betrays something very broken within the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Even if we were to accept the traditional interpretation of the story, Jephthah's daughter should also be found in biblical lists among those of extraordinary faith. She knew and affirmed her father's vow and willingly offered her life in order to fulfill it. The assumption of the text, as with the similar story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22, is that human sacrifice is a lesser evil than breaking a vow to God. The difference is that God intervened at the last minute to save Abraham's son, but God did not save Jephthah's daughter.

The text tells us that an annual tradition arose among Israelite women to recount the story of Jephthah's daughter. But to what end? It isn't difficult to imagine this practice as a way to indoctrinate women to allow themselves to be harmed by their fathers, brothers, or husbands—even to the point of death—because it's the faithful thing to do. Such ways of thinking persist even to our own day with women accepting abusers' violence without question, refusing to leave, and even choosing to return to men who will kill them.

It's certainly wishful thinking, but perhaps that annual gathering of ancient Israelite women existed for the purpose of speaking what is for us the unknown name of this brave daughter, and also to say, Never again.

—*Wil Gafney*

10 Secondary Wives of King David

2 Sam 15:16; 16:21-22; 19:5; 20:3

In the crisis of Absalom's coup, David fled Jerusalem with his entire household, "but he left ten secondary wives behind to take care of the palace" (15:16). Imagine their terror at not only being left in harm's way but also being tasked with tending the unguarded royal residence. These abandoned women, low-status members of David's harem, reappear in the narrative as dehumanized objects of the rebel's aggression when Absalom rapes them in a shockingly public manner (16:21-22). Their collective devastation haunts the notice in 2 Samuel 20:3 that, when David returned triumphant to Jerusalem, he removed these women—tainted by rape—from his household, placed them in a guarded residence, and made them live like widows for the rest of their days. Their presence in the David story is a memorial to all women who suffer sexual assault in war zones and who live with the stigma of that violence ever afterward.

—*Jan Quesada*

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about the CEB

The King James Version of the Bible was published in 1611. For two centuries the KJV competed for readership with the Geneva Bible. However, by the nineteenth century in America, the KJV would be described as the “common English Bible,” because it was the most widely used translation of Christian scripture. Numerous translations have appeared since that time. However, it has proved difficult to combine concern for accuracy and accessibility in one translation that the typical reader or worshipper would be able to understand. Therefore, readers in the twenty-first century, four hundred years after the creation of the KJV, need and deserve a new translation that is suitable for personal devotion, for communal worship, and for classroom study.

The Common English Bible (CEB), completed in 2011, is a fresh translation of the Bible. Some editions include the books of the Apocrypha that are used in Anglican, Orthodox, and Catholic congregations. The translation is sponsored by the Common English Bible Committee, which is an alliance of denominational publishers, including Presbyterian (USA), Episcopalian, United Methodist, Disciples of Christ, and United Church of Christ representatives.

One hundred twenty biblical scholars from twenty-two faith traditions worked as translators for the CEB. In addition, members of seventy-seven reading groups from congregations throughout North America reviewed and responded to early drafts of the translation. As a result, more than five hundred individuals were integrally involved in the preparation of the CEB. These individuals represent the sorts of diversity that permit this new translation to speak to people of various religious convictions and different social locations.

The translators, reviewers, and editors represent the following faith communities: African Methodist Episcopal Church, American Baptist, Anglican, Baptist, Baptist General Conference, Church of the Nazarene, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Free Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Free Methodist, Mennonite, Moravian, National Baptist, Presbyterian (USA), Progressive National Baptist, Quaker, Reformed Church in America, Reform Judaism, Roman Catholic Church, Seventh-day Adventist, United Churches of Christ, and United Methodist. The CEB is truly a Bible created by churches and for the Church.

ACCURACY AND CLARITY. The CEB translators balance rigorous accuracy in the rendition of ancient texts with an equally passionate commitment to clarity of expression in the target language. Translators create sentences and choose vocabulary that will be readily understood when the biblical text is read aloud. Two examples illustrate this concern for accuracy and clarity.

First, *ben 'adam* (Hebrew) and *huios tou anthrōpou* (Greek) are best translated as “human being” (rather than “son of man”) except in cases of direct address, where CEB renders “human one” (instead of “son of man” or “mortal”; e.g., Ezek 2:1). When *ho huios tou anthrōpou* is used as a title for Jesus, the CEB refers to Jesus as “the Human One.” People who have grown accustomed to hearing Jesus refer to himself in the Gospels as “the Son of Man” may find this jarring. Why

“Human One”? Jesus’s primary language would have been Aramaic, so he would have used the Aramaic phrase *bar enosha*. This phrase has the sense of “a human” or “a human such as I.” This phrase was taken over into Greek in a phrase that might be translated woodenly as “son of humanity.” However, Greek usage often refers to “a son of x” in the sense of “one who has the character of x.” For example, Luke 10:6 refers in Greek to “a son of peace,” a phrase that has the sense of “one who shares in peace.” In the Greek of Acts 13:10 Paul calls a sorcerer “a son of the devil.” This is not a reference to the sorcerer’s actual ancestry, but it serves to identify his character. He is devilish—or more simply in English “a devil.” *Human* or *human one* represents accurately the Aramaic and Greek idioms and reflects common English usage. Finally, many references to Jesus as “the Human One” refer back to Daniel 7:13, where Daniel “saw one like a human being” (Greek *huios anthropou*). By using the title Human One in the Gospels and Acts, the CEB preserves this connection to Daniel’s vision.

Second, the phrase “Lord of hosts” (*Yahweh sebaoth* in Hebrew; *Kyrios sabaoth* in Greek) appears hundreds of times in older Bibles and persists as an idiom in translations that preserve King James usage. This archaic translation is no longer meaningful to most English speakers. The CEB renders *Yahweh sebaoth* and *Kyrios sabaoth* as “Lord of heavenly forces,” which conveys accurately the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek phrases by using contemporary English language.

English speakers, especially when telling a story, writing a letter, or engaging in conversation, make frequent use of contractions. As a result, translators have often used contractions, particularly in direct speech, in the CEB. However, formal genres of literature typically do not include contractions. As a result, translators did not include contractions in contexts such as (a) formal trials or royal interviews (socially formal situations), (b) much divine discourse (e.g., Hos 11:9; Exod 24:12), and (c) poetic and/or liturgical discourse (several types of psalms).

TEXTS. Translators of the Old Testament used as their base text the Masoretic Text (MT) as found in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and the published fascicles of *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*. For some books the Hebrew University Bible Project was consulted. Judicious departures from the Masoretic Text, based on ancient manuscript (e.g., reading with the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1 Sam 10:27b or Deut 32:8) and versional evidence (e.g., reading with the Septuagint in Gen 4:8), were sometimes necessary. In those situations, in which one may postulate two literary editions of a biblical book, or in which there are major or lengthy differences between the Masoretic Text and other texts or versions (e.g., 1 Sam 17), the CEB translated the edition that became canon in the Masoretic Text.

Translators of the New Testament used as their base text the eclectic Greek text known as Nestle Aland, the twenty-seventh edition, which was published in 1993.

Translators of the Apocrypha faced a more complicated set of choices. Translators generally used the base text presented in the Göttingen Septuagint. For those books not yet published in the fascicles of the Göttingen Septuagint, translators used the 2006 revised edition of Rahlfs’ Septuaginta, edited by Robert Hanhart. However, in those instances in which Hebrew texts have survived

and offer a better reading (e.g., in Sirach and Tobit), the translator noted alternative readings to the Greek Septuagint. Second Esdras presents a special problem, explained in a footnote about the Latin text.

FOOTNOTES. Translators decided, in certain instances, that they should explain their translations or textual decisions. However, notes are kept to a minimum and are rendered with utmost concision. Such notes when present offer: (a) evidence from ancient texts and versions (e.g., LXX; MT men of); (b) brief philological comment (e.g., Heb uncertain); (c) explanations

of anomalies in versification (e.g., Acts 8:37: Critical editions of the Gk New Testament do not include 8:37 Philip said to him, “If you believe with your whole heart, you can be.” The eunuch answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is God’s Son”); (d) citations of the Old Testament in the New Testament; and rarely (e) alternative translations (e.g., Or everyone). In those instances in which the Old Testament is cited in the New Testament, the quoted text is set in italic font.

MEASUREMENTS. When possible, the CEB converts linear and spatial dimensions to feet and inches. Thus archaic terms such as rods, cubits, spans, handbreadths, and fingerbreadths are replaced with feet and inches. For example, Genesis 6:15 gives the dimensions of Noah’s ark in ’ammah or “forearms.” Most translations since the KJV use the archaic English cubit to translate ’ammah: “the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.” The CEB translates the dimensions of the ark as “four hundred fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty-five feet high.”

The CEB prefers to transliterate (rather than translate) measurements of capacity, both wet (e.g., bath) and dry (e.g., homer), as well as measurements of weight (e.g., kikkar). When feasible, a footnote is allowed to calculate the rough equivalent in a U.S. English measurement, such as quarts.

Monetary values are inherently relative, and prices are constantly changing. Therefore, the CEB prefers to transliterate (rather than translate) monetary weights (e.g., shekel) and coins (e.g., denarion).

Months in the biblical lunar calendar are transliterated, with a footnote to indicate the approximate month or months in the Gregorian solar calendar (e.g., Nisan is March–April).

PRONOUNS. In ancient Hebrew and Greek a pronoun is often bound with the verb. If the translator is too literal, the English reader loses the antecedent of the pronoun so that one cannot tell who is speaking or acting in the sentence or paragraph. This problem occurs throughout much biblical literature. The CEB addresses this issue by substituting a noun for a pronoun, but only when the antecedent is clear. Because this problem and its resolution are so common, the CEB usually does not offer footnotes to identify these substitutions. CEB translators also use gender-inclusive or neutral syntax for translating pronouns that refer to humans, unless context requires otherwise.

CONSISTENCY. Although translators often try to use the same English word for a Hebrew or Greek word, many words in any language offer a breadth of meanings that do not readily correlate with a single word in the target language. For example, the Hebrew word *torah*, which has often been translated as Law, is often better translated as Instruction. The same could be said for *Sheol* (Hebrew) and *Hades* (Greek). The CEB translates these two terms as “grave” or “death” and “underworld” or “hell,” respectively depending on context. A mechanical selection of any one term for words that involve semantic breadth would preclude a translation sensitive to the originating literary context.

The women and men who participated in the creation of the CEB hope that those who read and study it will find the translation to be an accurate, clear, and inspiring version of Christian scripture.

The Editorial Board of the Common English Bible
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***The CEB Women's Bible
is available October 4, 2016,
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***If you have any questions
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ISBN-13: 978-1-5018-3501-8



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