



Peace in the Middle of a Pandemic

The Word of God to Women

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—I want to invite you to open with me to Psalm 113. Before I dive into this text today, let me say two quick things based on this last week. One, many of you may have heard that the governor of Virginia announced Friday that churches could potentially reopen as soon as next week. I’m going to address that in more detail at the end of our gathering. So hang on; we’ll talk more about that at the end.

Second, I want to acknowledge that this has been a hard week emotionally, I trust for all of us, but particularly for our African-American brothers and sisters in our church. I say all of us, because we all, I trust, care about justice and grieve in its absence. And we experience, in what I hope is a holy, God-honoring way, a hatred of evil and injustice. If today wasn’t Mother’s Day, I would likely shift our direction in God’s Word in light of events in our country this last week. But I don’t want to miss this opportunity specifically to encourage women in our church family. So we’re going to wait a week, then Lord willing, next Sunday our plan is to think through issues of justice and racial empathy together, on multiple levels, as a multi-faceted church family.

For today, let me just say in particular to our African-American brothers and sisters that you and your families are not alone. We lament together. We abhor what is evil together. We long for what is good together and are committed to doing justice and loving mercy as a church together in our culture and our country. So I look forward to next week and letting the Word speak into this picture in the world around us.

Today is Mother’s Day and I want us to hear God’s Word specifically to and about women. About a week ago, in our Bible reading, we read one of Heather’s and my favorite chapters in the Bible, Psalm 113. The Bible says in Psalm 113:

- ¹ Praise the LORD!*
- Praise, O servants of the LORD,*
- praise the name of the LORD!*
- ² Blessed be the name of the LORD*
- from this time forth and forevermore!*
- ³ From the rising of the sun to its setting,*
- the name of the LORD is to be praised!*
- ⁴ The LORD is high above all nations,*
- and his glory above the heavens!*
- ⁵ Who is like the LORD our God,*
- who is seated on high,*

⁶ *who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth?*
⁷ *He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,*
⁸ *to make them sit with princes,
with the princes of his people.*
⁹ *He gives the barren woman a home,
making her the joyous mother of children.*
Praise the LORD!

I remember reading those words in a hospital room, after years of barrenness and longing for children, longing that led us to adopt our first son, Caleb, followed by shock and surprise when Heather became pregnant. The day she gave birth to our second son in that hospital, I remember Heather and I reading those words together. But I also remember years of Mother's Days before that being really hard days. Without question, we wanted to celebrate our moms, as well as family and friends who were moms, who had kids. But when it came time for moms to stand and be honored in the church, it felt so lonely to sit there. I wanted my wife to be standing. She was holding back tears because she wanted so badly to stand. It got to the point where we just wanted to skip church altogether so we wouldn't have to sit through that moment.

As one of your pastors, I don't want there to ever be a Sunday when you don't want to be in a gathering of the church. There are other reasons people don't always look forward to this day. Maybe because of a recent miscarriage, or maybe you've lost your mom this last year—maybe even as a result of this virus the last couple months. Maybe you have an estranged relationship with your mom, or maybe between you and one or more of your kids. Or maybe you're a mom who has lost a child, maybe even recently. I think about Wanda Cooper and the heartache she is experiencing today.

I know there are moms all across our church who are familiar with that hurt. I don't know what each of you may have walked through or are walking through right now as you come to this day. But I do know that I want you to look forward every single week to gathering together with the church, because you know there is balm to be found for your wounds every single week in God's Word with God's people, even in the unique gathering like we're in right now remotely.

Here's what I want to do and it's similar to something I did in my first year as pastor here. I want to show you in the next few minutes a summary of what God says in His Word to women. To all women, including moms but not just moms. To all women of all ages. Part of the reason I want to do this is because I see so many lies in our culture being told to and about women. On top of that, I see so much devaluing of and even harm toward women in a MeToo world. It is heart-wrenching to see so many women hurt in so many ways, even—or especially—in the church.

I thought this week, "Well, I don't want to repeat some of the things I said a couple years ago," but then I thought, "Actually, yes I do." I want to say these things over and over and over again, in different

ways, because these truths need to drown out the lies that are being repeated day in and day out to women—and to men about women—in our culture. I want us to hear what God says to and about women.

Picture this like a tour through the Bible. If you're a woman, I want to encourage you to write these things down and hide them in your heart, then come back to them again and again and again—God's Word to you. And if you're a man, I want to encourage you to write these things down. As you do, I want to ask do women in your life feel these truths in their hearts because of the way you treat them?

I should also add that this is not just for adults. This is for teenagers and kids. I don't have the gift of Tot Talks, but kids, these truths apply to every woman of every age. So hear these truths, precious five-year-old little girl. To the extent you can pay attention for the next few minutes, I encourage you to listen. Teenage girls, likewise. Little boys and teenage guys, these truths need to drive the way you treat your mom, the way you treat your sister, the way you treat any girl you may date or one day marry.

Let's dive in; this will be a little different because we're not going to look at just one place in Scripture. We're going to look throughout Scripture. I invite you to follow along in your Bible, then write down these different references.

We'll start in the very beginning of the Bible—Genesis 1:26-28:

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

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

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

1. To every woman in the world, you are dignified and distinguished.

Stop number one on this journey through God's Word to women is that God says to every woman in the world, "You are dignified and distinguished by the design of God."

Let's just start cutting through the lies of this world. You are dignified and your dignity is not dependent on your physical appearance. Your dignity is not dependent upon your career. Your dignity is not dependent upon your marital status. Your dignity is not dependent upon any man or anyone's opinion—even your own opinion, for that matter.

No, to every woman in the world, God says, "You are dignified by My design. You are created..."—what did verse 27 say? —"...in His image..." In the image of God. You are like God in that sense that you resemble Him. Your desire to love and care, your ability to speak and work, your capacity to forgive, nurture and encourage—all of these things in you resemble the God in Whose image you have been formed.

Now, one might say, “But the same thing could be said about men” and that’s part of the point. Male and female, men and women, are both created in the image of God. To use the language in verse 28, both are given dominion in the world to subdue and steward creation together. So from the very beginning of the Bible, God is speaking directly against any kind of male or female superiority or dominance. This applies to any culture, any country or any relationship where man is thought to be better than woman, or woman is thought to be better than man.

In any culture, any relationship, where a woman or a man is treated as inferior, as an object to be used or abused, that goes directly against the design of God. It is not right. It is never right to disparage or belittle women according to God. Sexual inferiority or superiority, misogyny, male dominance, female exploitation—all of these things are sinful violations of God’s Word and there is no place for them anywhere in the world or in our lives.

Men and women possess equal dignity before God and are both distinguished by God. God did not create gender neutral people. He created male and female, both distinguished. This is so important amidst the confusion about gender in our culture. Various women might be tempted to think, “I wish I was a man” or various men might be tempted to think, “I wish I was a woman.” But you need to know that God created you as a woman or man with divine dignity and distinction. Don’t believe the lies of this world. God created you good—actually, “very good” as He says in Genesis 1:31.

We live in a culture where feminism is often equated with downplaying or outright denying this God-given distinction. So much of the message from our culture is that there’s nothing uniquely wonderful about being a woman, but the Bible says there is. God says from the very beginning of the Bible that you are dignified and distinguished. You are beautifully formed as a woman by God and in His image.

Even as I use that word “beautifully,” don’t let your mind immediately wander to the world’s definition of beauty. Look in Proverbs 31 at a picture of biblical womanhood there. There is hardly any mention of her physical appearance, the one thing our culture exalts above all else. Our culture is screaming in thousands of ways, businesses are spending billions of dollars and the entertainment industry is spending countless hours to convince women that their need for esteem, fulfillment and significance is found in looking a certain way.

But the Word of God, in Proverbs 31:30, resounds across our culture: “*Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised*” —a woman who knows she resembles God and represents God with distinguished dignity.

To every woman in the world: you are dignified and distinguished.

2. To every wife in the world, you are an invaluable treasure.

One chapter later, in Genesis 2, God’s Word says to every wife in the world, “You are an invaluable treasure.” Follow along with me starting at Genesis 2:18:

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ¹⁹ Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

*"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."*

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Did you see that? Up until verse 18, everything in the Bible was good—everything. It was very good, Genesis 1:31 says. But when you get to verse 18 of Genesis 2, God said, "It is not good." What's not good? It's not good that the man is alone. According to God, man needs woman and woman needs man. From the start of Scripture we learn that men and women are created to complement one another.

Going back to the distinguished reality we've already discussed, we realize in Genesis 2 that men and women are distinct for a reason. That distinction is more than just a difference in physical anatomy. This is not an evolutionary accident here. This is not biological triviality. This is divine design—God creating man to need woman and woman to need man in many ways. Specifically, verse 24 says this takes place in marriage: "*A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*"

Now, I trust we realize we are now going against the grain of another lie that's being sold in our country that is attempting to redefine marriage. God defined marriage from the very beginning of creation. Who do we think we are to come along, thousands of years later, saying, "We've come up with something better"? No!

See why God defined marriage this way. It was for a reason and the reason was greater even than the love and fulfillment that would be experienced between a husband and a wife. Paul quotes from what we just read at the end of Genesis 2, about man and woman coming together in marriage. Then Ephesians 5:32 says, "*This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*" Don't miss this. From the very beginning of creation, God defined and designed a marriage between a husband and a wife to be a picture on the canvas of human history of His love for us.

Husbands are intended to be a picture of Christ in self-sacrificing love for a wife. Wives are intended to be a picture of the church's glad love for Christ. Think about what this means for men and women in marriages. Husbands, you show the world what the love of Christ looks like with the way you

love your wife, so sacrifice your life every day to serve your wife, because that's Who Jesus is and what Jesus does.

And to every wife in the world, you are an invaluable treasure in marriage as a powerful picture of the gospel, apart from whom marriage is not even possible. Contrary to what our world says, you are not optional as a wife in marriage; you are invaluable as a wife in marriage. Contrary to far too much contemporary practice, the church is not trivial and you are not trivial in marriage. You are not to be treated lightly and the church is not to be treated lightly. You are a treasure in marriage to be cherished deeply, as Jesus cherishes His own church.

To every wife in the world, you are an invaluable treasure.

3. To mothers and grandmothers, God is using your life in your home in ways that reach far beyond your home.

Part of the purpose of marriage is multiplication of more people made in the image of God. The first command given to man and woman in marriage is in Genesis 1:28, *“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”* So hear this word from God to mothers and grandmothers: God is using your life in your home in ways that reach far beyond your home.

At this point we could literally go from page to page, seeing mothers like Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel in just the first book of the Bible. We could go on to see Naomi and Ruth. We could see the mother in Proverbs 31, whose children rise up and call her blessed. Elizabeth, the mother of John. Mary, the mother of Jesus. But I want to tell you instead about Timothy, a man who took the gospel all over the known world in his day.

Timothy went to Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Troas, Philippi, Berea, Athens, Thessalonica, Corinth, Macedonia and Rome. In all of those places, Timothy played a pivotal part in the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church in the first century, eventually settling down as a pastor in Ephesus. We have two books in the Bible named after him, specifically written to him.

You say, “Why are you telling me about Timothy? I thought we were thinking about mothers and grandmothers.” Well, we are. Let me read 2 Timothy 1:5, as Paul writes this to Timothy: *“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.”*

Why did Timothy have faith in Christ that resounded to the fame of Christ that made a massive difference in the world? As best we know, Timothy's dad was likely not a follower of Christ. Timothy had sincere, authentic faith because he had seen it modeled and passed on to him by a mother and a grandmother in his home in ways that would reverberate far beyond that home. Mothers and grandmothers, I want to remind you that God is using your life in your family in ways that reverberate far beyond your

family. Just like everything else we're seeing in God's Word today, this is being undercut and undervalued—even contradicted—in our culture.

Now to be clear, when I talk about home, the Bible is not saying here whether or not a wife or mother should work outside the home. We certainly don't know whether Timothy's mother or grandmother worked outside the home. That's not the point here. The point is God is saying, "Don't undervalue, don't ignore the value of a mother's work in her children's lives, starting in her home." We live in a day when even the idea of being a mom, or prioritizing all that mothering involves, is actually seen by many as servile, second class, even a waste of someone's life. I hope we realize that kind of thinking is not just biblically wrong, it is practically absurd. Few things are more important in this world than the formation of children, which is the foundation upon which so much in this world is built.

Being a mother or grandmother is in no way servile, second class or a waste. It is a wonderful calling to build the next generation. This is not intellectually restraining. It is the highest teaching and training that exists in the world. This is not a limitation or a waste of a woman's life or gifts. It is the application of those gifts in ways that lead to the multiplication of good for children and all they will do in the world, in ways that will carry on far after you or even they are gone.

I have yet to meet a grandmother or mother who has regretted pouring her life into her children. And I have yet to meet a child who wishes his or her mother or grandmother would not have raised him or her in love. I guarantee you, Lois and Eunice here did not regret pouring their faith and lives into their children, into their son, into their grandson. I guarantee you they had no idea how their work in their home would echo far beyond their home.

So to mothers and grandmothers, hear God saying that He is using your life in ways you cannot imagine. So press on. Persevere. Amidst long days and sleepless nights, amidst the delightful days and the dark days, hear God saying to trust that your love for your children and grandchildren is never, ever, ever in vain.

And by the way, single moms or moms whose husbands are not followers of Christ, be encouraged. Notice how Timothy's dad is not mentioned here. If you are doing this task alone, know that God is your ever-present help. When you feel like you're falling short, know that God promises to sustain, strengthen and uphold you with His right hand, using your life in ways you can't see in the day-to-day struggle. Lean into Him and His love for you. Lean into His promises to you.

4. To singles, your life is a unique and beautiful portrayal of the gospel for a unique and powerful purpose in the world.

Now, all of that leads to this next affirmation, knowing that not every woman and not every mom is a wife. So hear God's Word to singles. Your life is a unique and beautiful portrayal of the gospel for a

unique and powerful purpose in the world. This will apply to both single men and single women, but I'm speaking particularly today to single women.

We just talked a few minutes ago about how marriage is a picture of the gospel. If I'm hearing that and I'm single, I would want to portray the gospel in my life. So I might be thinking, "Does that mean I'm limited in my role in portraying the gospel in the world?" That is not the case, because your life as a single is a unique and beautiful portrayal of the gospel in many ways and here are just two.

One, your life—as long as you are single—portrays the Christian's ultimate identity in Christ. Many in the world would say, "We need someone—a husband, a wife, a boyfriend or girlfriend—to complete us." But the Bible clearly teaches that we are complete, regardless of marital status. The Bible teaches in places like Isaiah 54, John 3 and Revelation 19 that the Lord is a husband to His people Who is more satisfying and more eternal than any husband or wife could ever be.

In this way, there is a sense in which the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ are even more powerfully portrayed in singleness than in marriage. Singleness says to the world, "Christ is my pleasure, so in Him I have everything I need," in a way that marriage does not portray in the same way, even though marriage is good in all the ways we've already seen. This is why Amy Carmichael in her singleness once said, "There is joy—joy found nowhere else—when we can look into Christ's face when He says to us, 'Am I not enough for thee, Mine own?' with a true, 'Yes, Lord. Thou art enough.'"

Singleness, for both women and men, portrays the Christian's ultimate identity in Christ and singleness portrays the Christian's eternal identification with the church. The Bible teaches that all familial relationships in this world, including marriage, are passing away, as wonderful as these relationships are. Only a relationship with Christ and His church is eternal. Jesus Himself taught in Matthew 22:30 that marriage is temporary, but relationship with Him is timeless. So married people are only married in this life, then for billions and trillions of years we will all be single.

Singleness in this sense uniquely and beautifully portrays our eternal state with Christ as a member of His church which serves a unique and powerful purpose in the world. First Corinthians 7 exhorts singles to stay single as long as possible because There is a level at which you're less distracted in your affection for Christ and less hindered in the mission of Christ. So, Lord willing, we'll get back to that chapter in due time.

Let's look at a list of single men and women in the Bible, seeing that there a uniquely powerful purpose in God's good plan for singleness. Think about Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul, Mary, Martha, Miriam, Lydia—we could keep going. Single men and women—and women in particular today—you may be tempted to think on this Mother's Day that because you're not married or because you're not a mother, then you are not fulfilling God's design in some way. Do not believe that lie.

Your life is a unique and beautiful portrayal of the gospel today for a unique and powerful purpose in the world.

5. To the waiting, God is your all-powerful, all-wise hope.

God says to the waiting, “I am your all-powerful, all-wise hope.” What does God’s Word say to women who are waiting? I use that word “waiting” in different ways. Maybe that waiting involves resting in singleness, even as you may desire marriage. Or maybe that waiting involves longing for children, when for any number of reasons you are unable to have them.

It’s interesting that the Bible is filled with stories of women who struggled with the heartache of not having children for many years. I think about Sarah, Abraham’s wife, who was 90 years old before she became pregnant (Genesis 18). That’s a long time. We see infertility in Isaac’s wife Rebekah (Genesis 25:21) and in Jacob’s wife Rachel (Genesis 29:31). We see Hannah weeping for a child in 1 Samuel and Elizabeth longing for a child in the Gospel of Luke.

Needless to say, women who struggle to have children biologically don’t find themselves alone in the Bible. I’ve shared how Heather and I are familiar with this journey. This is why I emphasize that God is your all-powerful, all-wise hope. If you are struggling to have children, I want to encourage you that God is indeed all-powerful. Part of the purpose of God in many of these stories of barrenness is to increase the faith of these women and their husbands as they look to God and trust in Him.

Infertility is a reminder that God alone can open the womb and provide children. He alone is all-powerful. And just like we read in Psalm 113:9, He has power to give the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. But that’s also the struggle, right? Because if God is able to do this, then why does He sometimes not do it? That was certainly what Heather and I were praying together for years. “God, we know and believe You’re able to give us children. So why are You not doing it?”

The answer to that leads us to the second part of this truth from God’s Word: He is all-wise. Waiting leads us to trust in the wisdom of God, not just in the power of God, , believing that in His wisdom, God is working in ways we cannot see and may not understand.

Heather and I were talking about this during our makeshift date night at home this last week. God used years of waiting to lead us to adopt, then in miraculous ways to have a child biologically, then to adopt again, then to have another child biologically. He used all of that to lead us in a way we definitely had not planned. We began another adoption process last year, were matched with a precious little boy, then just three days before going to pick him up and bring him into our home, a global pandemic hit.

So what we’re doing? We’re waiting. Again. And we’re praying. Again. Our prayers are the same. “God, we know You have power to make this happen, to bring us to our child on the other side of the world. So why don’t You do it?” We know, we know, we know He’s wise and faithful. He’s shown that time and time again. But in all honesty, it still doesn’t make waiting easy. Not for me, anyway. I’m pleading every day, “God, please make a way, where there is no way, so I can bring my son home.” As I’m pleading, I’m trusting and telling my wife that our God is our all-powerful, all-wise hope.

There are so many different directions here. Maybe your waiting involves children who may not be walking with God right now. As a mom in Christ, there's nothing more you want for your children than for them to be in Christ. So for those of you who are waiting in this way, I exhort you to press in. Persevere in praying. Don't stop praying with hope and longing for your child's salvation, knowing that God hears your prayers day in and day out.

I say to every person who is waiting, particularly everyone on this Mother's Day who's waiting in some way, don't stop pleading, honestly going before the Lord and believing in every moment that He is your all-powerful, all-wise hope.

6. To the widow, God is your never-failing, always-faithful Provider.

I know there are women all across and beyond this church whose husbands have died, maybe even in this last year—maybe even over the last couple months because of this virus. I want to remind you, straight from God, that He is your never-failing, always-faithful provider.

I'm thinking of widows to whom God has been careful to give clear, continual and comprehensive instructions in His Word for your care. He loves you. He's committed to you. Throughout the Old Testament, God commands His people to provide for widows in certain ways. We saw that at the end of this last year in Ruth and Naomi.

In the New Testament, in 1 Timothy 5, God tells the church how to honor and help widows in concrete ways. The book of James says true religion looks after widows, because God, according to Psalm 68:5, is the Protector of widows. He's the One Who upholds the widows specifically in Psalm 146:9 and the One in Whom the widow can always trust (Jeremiah 49:11).

So to the widow on this Mother's Day, hear God reminding you right now that He is your never-failing, always-faithful Provider—never failing, always faithful.

7. To women who are hurting, God sees your sorrows and hears your cries.

I've already mentioned many of the ways various women might be hurting today. In those ways—and in so many others I haven't even mentioned—God sees your sorrow and hears your cries.

Did you know that in all of ancient Near Eastern literature—including the Bible and beyond the Bible—as far as I know, there's only one woman whom deity addresses directly by name. It's in the Bible, but it's not a woman we think of as one of the most significant women in the Old Testament. Instead, it's a woman named Hagar, essentially a slave who had been harshly treated. She fled and found herself in a wilderness when God called her name. Listen to her response in Genesis 16:13: *“So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, ‘You are a God of seeing,’ for she said, ‘Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.’”* Then later, at another moment in the wilderness, when her baby boy looked like he was about

to die, God spoke to her again, saying in Genesis 21:17, *“What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.”*

To women who are hurting, God sees your sorrow and hears your cries. This truth makes me think about women today who are hurting in a variety of ways. Some feel belittled, others feel broken, some feel abandoned, some have been abused, others feel alone—and you wonder if God sees your sorrow or hears your cries. I want you to hear Him say, “Absolutely I do.”

Remember Psalm 56:8 that says, *“You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle.”* I love that. God counts your tossings in the night. Women, do you ever have a restless night? Know that your God on high knows every time you toss and turn. He knows every single tear you shed. And He doesn’t just know and see and hear you, He promises to help and uphold you in the midst of your hurt, especially when you’ve been hurt by others’ sin against you, as well as when you sin against Him.

8. To women who are struggling with sin and guilt, God forgives you by faith.

Do you ever feel like you’re failing as a mom, a wife or a single woman? Do you ever feel like you just can’t measure up to whatever standard you have in your mind? Maybe you look on Facebook and see all these other people who seem to have it all together, then you start to think, “I just can’t keep up.” You start thinking of all these areas where maybe you feel like you’re falling short, then before long you’re weighed down either by sin or by just a low-level sense of guilt that you can’t seem to shake.

There are all kinds of places I could go to in Scripture here, but one woman who immediately comes to mind is Rahab, a woman who was known in the Bible as an example of faith and who was also listed in the family lineage of Jesus. Yet we remember that Rahab’s profession at one point was prostitution. You didn’t want to be Rahab when you looked at her Facebook profile.

The same could be said for a variety of other women in Scripture. Think about the woman caught in adultery who was about to be stoned. Think about Eve, from the very beginning of the Bible. From Genesis 3 on, we see sin in women and we see love and grace in God—over and over and over again.

This is great news on Mother’s Day, because not one woman listening right now is without sin. Not one woman or man is without sin or can measure up to God’s holy standard. As a result, each one of us deserves separation from God. But the good news of the Bible is that God on high loves you, no matter what could be included on your Facebook profile. He sees it all—not just that which you want to project. He sees and knows it all, including all the secrets no one else in the world may know. God knows it all, but still God loves you.

God on high has made a way for you to be forgiven of all your sin and have the slate wiped clean, so you can be free from all your guilt. God has sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for your sin, to rise from the grave in victory over death. God has not given you a list of things to do in order to earn His love.

God has not called you to measure up. This is such good news. God has called you to trust in the One Who measures up for you, to trust in His love and His lordship over your life.

If you have never called out for God to save you from your sin and guilt, if you've never put your faith in Him as Lord, then I want to invite and urge you to do that today. Women and men, if you are not right before God, by His grace, you can be right before Him today, restored to relationship with Him where you experience forgiveness of all your sin and freedom from guilt.

Know this, Christian sister, especially in those moments when you are reminded that you are not perfect, when your sin may rear its head in any number of different ways in your thoughts, desires, words or actions, do not forget that Jesus has paid the price for that sin. You stand before God forgiven, a child of His, by faith. That's the greatest news any one of us could hear on Mother's Day.

9. To women who are facing the impossible, God is your strength.

Are there any women listening today who feel like you can't do it all, who feel like marriage or motherhood or singleness are hard? Are there any women who feel like these days have been even harder? Do you ever feel like life in this world of sin and suffering is overwhelming?

If so, hear God's word to probably the most prominent woman in the Bible—Mary—as she considered a task for which she did not feel worthy and for which she did not see a way for it to happen. God said to her in Luke 1:37, *"Nothing will be impossible with God."* In other words, "For that to which I call you, I promise to empower you." Mary responds in verse 38, *"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. So let it be to me according to your word."*

If I could, I'd just like to share some bad news with the women all across this remote gathering today. On your own, you cannot do that which God has called you to do. You cannot be the single woman God has called you to be. You cannot be the wife or mom God has called you to be. You cannot be the woman God has called you to be.

But here is the good news: God has not called you to do any of these things alone because for that to which He calls you, God promises to empower you. So to any woman who feels overwhelmed right now, be overcome by the reality that the God of the universe is your strength.

Then based upon that reality, hear this final word to women on Mother's Day:

10. To every sister in Christ, do not underestimate your significance in making the gospel and glory of your God known in the world.

I wish at this point we had time to do another survey of all the women whom God used in the Bible for the display of His goodness and glory in the world, from Abigail to Deborah to Esther in the Old Testament, plus others in the New Testament.

I don't think we realize how radical Jesus and Christianity were regarding women in the first century. In ancient Greece, a respectable woman couldn't even leave the house unless she was accompanied by a man. A wife couldn't eat or interact with males. Women had the social status of slaves. Ancient Rome wasn't much different. Sadly, I trust we realize there are many places in the world where these realities remain for women. We have church members around the world who live in conditions like these today.

Into that kind of culture in the first century, Jesus stepped on the scene and raised the status of women to entirely new heights—in His interactions with Mary and Martha, with a Samaritan woman at the well and scores of other women. Jesus contradicted any anti-female culture and set a standard for the church to follow. This is why we see Lydia, Phoebe, Priscilla, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Euodia and countless other unnamed women in Scripture whose lives were instruments in God's hands for the spread of the gospel and glory of God through the world.

I think about all the ways this plays out around the world today. I think about unique and essential roles women have in the ministry and mission of the church, reaching women all around the world. So many different examples come to my mind, but we don't have time. All of this, though, brings us to this reality for everyone who believes the Bible.

Let me speak directly to brothers in Christ here at McLean Bible Church. May you and I never underestimate the significance of our sisters in making the gospel and glory of our God known right here in Metro Washington, DC and among the nations. McLean Bible Church family, let's nurture a culture where women are set up to thrive in ministry, in homes and workplaces, in the church and the world.

Sisters in Christ, according to God's Word, do not underestimate your significance in making the gospel and glory of your God known in the world. Believe this Word, not the lies of this world. Believe this Word and follow His ways, not the ways of this world. Spend your life as a woman for the spread of God's worship in the world.

Let me ask you to bow your heads with me. As you do, I want to ask everyone, women and men alike, no matter what age. These are the most important questions I could ask anyone on Mother's Day. Do you know God? Do you have a relationship with God through faith in Jesus? Do you know that you are forgiven of all your sin and that you've been restored to a relationship with Him? Do you know that if you were to die today, you would have eternal life in heaven?

Do you know that beyond a shadow of a doubt? If you don't then I want to invite you to pray, "God, today is the day I confess I have sinned against You. Today I believe Jesus died on the cross for my sin and that He rose from the dead so I could have life. Today I put my trust in You. Today I enter into relationship with You as Lord of my life. Lead me as a woman, lead me as a man, for Your glory and my good, now and forever."

I pray that many would be putting their faith in Christ right now. I think about moms who I know people are praying for to come to know Christ, that today would be the day. And not just moms—anyone. That’s why I want to give you just a moment in quiet reflection where you are. Women, I want you to let these truths soak in. Just hear God speak His truths over you. And men, I want to ask you to pray, “God, how can I show these truths better in the way I love women, the way I care for and treat the women in my life?”

O God, we pray that You would lead us to be the women and men You’ve created us to be. I pray particularly today that You would help us honor women in all the ways we’ve seen in Your Word. We pray that our lives, homes and church would be a reflection of Your Word to and about women. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

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