

Prayer Updates

HOSPITALIZATIONS & SURGERIES THIS PAST WEEK

David Delucchi – testing
Ed Borowiec – testing
Janet Godfrey – wrist surgery
Jay Webb – testing, unable to eat
Joan Anderson – infection
John Bowen – UCSF cancer surgery, 5/2, weeks of recovery
Judy Helmle – testing
Pamela Stewart – testing
Robert Walter – RCU (restorative care)
Roger McGary – diabetes, infection
Valerie Franks – bronchial infection
Virginia Fair – RCU (restorative care)

RECENT HOSPITALIZATIONS & SURGERIES:

Chris Sanborn, Eugene Warren, Mary Masters, Nancy Kronander, Robert Walter, Shirley Demaison

HOME WITH THE LORD

Heartfelt prayer is extended to the family of Jorge Garcia in the recent tragic loss of his sister, husband and child in an auto accident.

Please remember Gerry Cutshaw in the recent loss of her dear husband, Carl. Together they served the Lord so joyfully.

A long-time TLC member, Lois Hoffman, who resided in a nursing home in Camarillo, is now present with the Lord.

Pray for peace and comfort of the family of Russ Condry in the passing of his sister, Mary Jane Schanefelt.

Do you or someone you know need a STEPHEN MINISTER?

Stephen Ministers are now available to encourage individuals who have experienced a crisis or loss in their lives. If you know someone who could benefit from this ministry, please call our Pastor of Care, Gary Williams (465-3395). Stephen Ministers receive 50 hours of training.

We want to provide pastoral support...

Please call 465-3395 when someone is hospitalized, scheduled for surgery, becomes a shut-in, or in special need. Prayer support is available through our pastors and numerous prayer groups — call 689-9400. Please pick up a Prayer Update at the Information Desk or Welcome Center.

Decoding the TRUTH

“The Bible and Women”

Message by René Schlaepfer, May 14 & 15, 2006

Is the Bible anti-woman? Was Christianity an attempt by men to gain control over women? Are the gnostic gospels the feminist answer to chauvinist Christianity?

CLAIM *The Church... had subjugated women, banished the Goddess... and forbidden the pagan reverence for the sacred feminine.”*
—The Da Vinci Code, p. 239

1. Were ancient pagans feminist?

CLAIM *“(Ancient pagan religions promoted) the sacred feminine and the goddess, which of course has been virtually eliminated by the Church.”*
—The Da Vinci Code, p. 238

FACT There is no evidence that any major ancient religion was matriarchal

FACT *“The findings of the past 50 years [have] failed to include a single shred of evidence that such matriarchies had ever existed...”*
—Steven Goldberg, Chairman, Sociology Department, City College of New York

2. Were ancient gnostics feminist?

FACT Gnostic texts were not what we would call feminist:

CLAIM *“Peter said, “Women are not worthy of life”. Jesus responded, “Every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.”*
—The gnostic “Gospel of Thomas”

CLAIM *“Jesus said, ‘Pray in the place where there is no woman... that the works of womanhood be destroyed.”* —The gnostic “Dialogue of the Savior”

3. Is the Old Testament anti-woman?

CLAIM *“Genesis was the beginning of the end for the goddess... Eve tasted of the apple... Woman, once the sacred giver of life, was now the enemy”*
—The Da Vinci Code, p. 238

FACTS...

“The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’”
Genesis 2:18

The word translated “helper” is used most often in the Old Testament to refer to _____ (See Psalm 33:20)

“So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over every seed-bearing plant.’” Gen. 1:27,28

Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Huldah (2 Kings 22), and the judge Deborah (Judges 4:4) are called prophets and leaders.

4. Is the New Testament anti-woman?

CLAIM "Constantine and his male successors successfully converted the world from matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity by waging a campaign of propaganda that demonized the sacred feminine, obliterating the goddess from modern religion forever." —*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 124

FACTS...

- Jesus travels with women disciples in Luke 8:1-3
- Mary is Jesus' disciple in Luke 10:38
- Women are first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection in Matt. 28:10

"Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women. I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy." Acts 2:17

- 4 daughters of Philip called prophets in Acts 21:9
- Phoebe and Junia, among many other women, are mentioned as leaders in Romans 16

Challenging passages: 1 Cor. 11; 1 Cor. 14:34,35; 1 Tim. 2:9-15

5. Was the early church anti-woman?

CLAIM "Powerful men in the early Christian church conned the world by propagating lies that devalued the female and tipped the scales in favor of the masculine..." —*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 124

FACT "I find myself alternately amazed and dismayed by The Da Vinci Code's notion that the early church deliberately repressed women and excluded them from roles of leadership... there is no need to resort to fiction to find places for women in the early church." —*Beverly Roberts Gaventa, Professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis at Princeton*

FACT "Amidst contemporary denunciations of Christianity as patriarchal and sexist, it is easily forgotten that the early church was so especially attractive to women that in 370 the emperor Valentinian issued a written order to Pope Damasus I requiring that Christian missionaries cease calling at the homes of pagan women." —*Rodney Stark, professor of sociology and comparative religion at the University of Washington*

FACT "Christianity was unusually appealing because within the Christian subculture women enjoyed far higher status than did women in the Greco-Roman world at large...." —*Rodney Stark*

FACT "Many women, also, being strengthened by the grace of God, have performed numerous exploits." —*Clement of Rome (c. 96), 1.20*

FACT "The virtue of man and woman is the same... Woman does not possess one nature and man another. Rather, they have the same." —*Clement of Alexandria (c. 195), 2.211, 419*

6. What difference does this make?

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

More comments on women from early Christian leaders...

"The virtue of man and woman is the same. For if the God of both is one, the Master of both is also one. There is one church... their food is common... marriage is an equal yoke... they have common graces and a common salvation... Woman does not possess one nature and man another. Rather, they have the same." —*Clement of Alexandria (c. 195), 2.211, 419*

"For you [women] too, have the same nature promised as your reward... as do men. The Lord promises you the same advancement to the dignity of judging." —*Tertullian (c. 198), 4.15*

"...The mercy of Christ, and the heavenly grace that would follow, was equally divided among everyone — without distinction of gender..." —*Cyprian (c. 250) 5.401*

"Women prophesied also. Of old, there was Miriam... Deborah... in the days of the apostles, there were the daughters of Philip... Therefore, if there is among you a young man or woman who has obtained that gift, let that person be humble, that God may be pleased with him." —*Apostolic Constitutions (c. 390), 7.481*

Resources

Philip G. Davis, *Goddess Unmasked: The Rise of Neopagan Feminist Spirituality*

Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*

Daily Meditations

Brief daily devotions based on this weekend's message

Memory Verse: "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:26-28

Monday

Write down two things you learned about the Bible and women in last weekend's sermon.

- 1.
- 2.

How has last weekend's sermon impacted your thinking about women and the Bible?

Read Galatians 3:22-29. What common problem do we all have according to verse 22?

What is the ultimate solution to this common problem?

What do you learn about our equality in Christ in this passage? How can you apply this to your life?

Thank God today that He is has provided forgiveness and salvation for you. Ask Him to give you wisdom as you study the Bible this week. Pray that what you learn will make a difference in your thoughts and actions.

Tuesday

Read Romans 12. I love this chapter. In it we find instruction for how we should interact. Often we're so focused on changing other's actions that we forget that the first line of change is ourselves!

Write down four things you learn in this passage about the qualities that should characterize your interaction with others.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How does this passage speak to equality in the body of Christ? How have you seen this in action?

What impact would it have on the church if this passage were fully applied? What impact would it have on your life and relationships?

Thank God today that He has designed the Church to function as one. Go over the list of qualities you wrote down today. Ask God to help you make those a part of your interactions with people today. Pray that you will be an agent of unity.

Wednesday

Read 1 Corinthians 12 & 13. It's a lot of reading for one day but it's important to see these chapters in context. 1 Corinthians 12 further explains the idea of the Church functioning as a body. How do you see the unity that we have in Christ expressed in chapter 12?

Wednesday (continued)

Why do you think this is important for people to know? How does this truth impact your view of equality in Christ?

What connection is there between Paul's discussion about the body of Christ and the famous love passage in chapter 13?

How does love impact equality? How can you apply this to your relationships?

Thank God today that He knows how you are made. Thank Him for the gifts He has given you. Pray over the relationships you are in. Ask God to increase and purify your love for those people. Pray that God's love will spill over and impact those around you.

Thursday

Read Philippians 2:1-11. What do you learn about equality in these verses? What do you learn about humility in these verses?

In what ways do you struggle following the example that Christ set for you?

It is counterintuitive for us to link equality and humility. Think about this combination. What power do you see in this example?

Think about your life. In what ways is your attitude "the same as that of Christ Jesus"?

Spend some time praying over these verses. Ask God to show you where you need to conform your attitude to His heart. Pray that as you seek to live the dichotomy of humility and equality that you will be a light and encouragement to those around you.

Friday

Read Micah 6:8. According to these verses what does God ask equally of all of us?

Spend time today thinking and praying over each aspect of this verse:

Think about what it is to "act justly". How do you live that in your life? Ask God to teach you what it means to "act justly".

Think about what it is to "love mercy". How do you live that in your life? Ask God to teach you what it means to "love mercy".

Think about what it is to "walk humbly with your God". How do you live that in your life? Ask God to teach you what it means to "walk humbly with your God".

Thank God today for the Bible. Thank Him for His lavish and complete love for you. Pray that you'll live openly before God and accept His training and teaching in your life. Ask Him to use you to make a difference in the Church.

Saturday

Please finish up any devotions that you may have skipped and work on this week's memory verse. Please pray for the services this weekend, that God will use them for His glory and reach our community with the hope of God's grace and love.