

Scope and Sequence

# Women OF THE Bible AND Beyond



Written by  
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# Women of the Bible and Beyond

## Stages 5–6

### Overview

By direct examination of Old and New Testament texts, this unit shows that God establishes, enshrines, even emphasises the equal value of women and men.

Since Jesus is the manifestation and revelation of God in the world, in direct relationship with people, it particularly examines the radical interaction of Jesus with a whole variety of women. Furthermore, as the fulfilment of the Old Testament, Jesus provides the appropriate starting point for exploring key examples and relevant teaching on women in the Old Testament.

The unit also invites students to consider the diverse manifestation of Christian faith in the lives of women from the early church, through history, to today. In doing so, the unit will address any negative perceptions of Christianity and women. It will affirm the intrinsic value and dignity of women as it explores the beautiful truth found in the Bible of love, grace and salvation for all.

### Aims

- To establish a biblical understanding of the value and significance of women by direct examination of biblical texts and the Bible's overarching message.
- For students to recognise the radically countercultural way Jesus interacted with a variety of women, and to see how this is preceded and foreshadowed by examples and teaching from the Old Testament.
- To provide a vision of what life as a Christian woman looks like in a variety of circumstances, from the Bible and early church period through to the current day, exploring how women demonstrate living faith, courage, loyalty and wisdom as they shape history.
- For students to recognise the vital role women have played—and continue to play—in God's plan, from Creation and the Fall, throughout the life and work of Jesus and the early church, to today.
- To show that the equal value of men and women is found throughout the Bible's teaching, simultaneously correcting any inaccurate notions that the Bible is outdated, sexist, undervalues or oppresses women.

NOTE: This unit is not designed exclusively for females; it is equally relevant for male students. This is an explicit exploration of the gospel as seen in the witness of women in the New Testament, as Jesus did not come with a different gospel for men and women. A full understanding and appreciation of Jesus is incomplete without considering the radical way he interacted with women and the roles these women played in his ministry. Similarly, a consideration of the significant roles played by women is essential to gaining an accurate understanding of both ancient Israel and the earliest churches.

However, for more sensitive topics, additional resources will be available in the Teacher's manual and Teacher's lounge to facilitate single-sex discussions if necessary.

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<b>ONE</b>  Embarrassing eyewitnesses?	<p>Christianity often gets a bad rap when it comes to its view of women. This lesson invites students to go beyond any assumptions and begin to look at what the Bible actually says. As we turn to God's word for answers, we're also recognising the important role women played—not just as participants in the events, but as trusted eyewitnesses whose testimonies form part of God's word.</p> <p>This lesson focuses on how women were the first eyewitnesses to the crucial event of Jesus' resurrection, among other things. In the ancient world, women's testimony was often dismissed, so the fact that the Bible highlights and trusts their voices is significant. The fact that women are key eyewitnesses was potentially embarrassing in the culture of the time, and yet they were still included. It points to a message that gives men and women equal respect and value by God.</p>	<p>To consider any assumptions students bring to the Bible regarding the place and value of women.</p> <p>To show that women were trusted as eyewitnesses of core gospel events—a radical idea for the time—and that their testimony is an essential part of what we know of God's promises and plan in the Bible.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reflect on any assumptions they hold about the Bible's view of women</li> <li>• learn that the original eyewitnesses of the empty tomb and the risen Jesus were women</li> <li>• recognise how culturally radical it was that male Bible authors and early Christians trusted women's testimony</li> <li>• consider the implication that since the Bible comprises material exclusively made known by women, it shows respect for women</li> <li>• see that women's testimony was also accepted in the Old Testament.</li> </ul>	<p><b>OT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jael</li> </ul> <p><b>NT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary (mother of Jesus)</li> <li>• Mary Magdalene</li> <li>• Joanna</li> <li>• Salome</li> </ul> <p><b>Beyond</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female missionaries</li> </ul>

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<b>TWO</b>  Sinners and saints	<p>Jesus' family tree mentions 5 women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary.</p> <p>Three of those were from nations that were considered enemies of Israel (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth).</p> <p>Three had what were considered sexually immoral histories (Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba).</p> <p>One was a non-Jew (who became a well-respected convert—Ruth).</p> <p>Finally, Jesus' mother, Mary, while a very faithful Jew, was an unmarried virgin when she became pregnant with him (Mary will be a focus of Lesson 3).</p> <p>God's word shows no shame in Jesus' mixed family history; indeed, it draws attention to it by including these women in Jesus' genealogy—when a genealogy usually included only the male ancestors.</p> <p>Jesus' own family tree thus shows that God's salvation plan used people of all circumstances, and his grace is open to all who have faith.</p> <p>The lesson will acknowledge the failures of men in the royal line—particularly David—to treat women with dignity and respect, and contrast this with Jesus, who was a very different King.</p>	<p>To illustrate how the inclusion of the five women in Jesus' family tree reflects the significance of women in God's salvation plan, regardless of their background.</p> <p>To recognise that unlikely people and circumstances can become examples of God's ability to work through those viewed by the world as flawed and weak.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learn how counter-cultural it is to include women in a first century Jewish genealogy</li> <li>• get to know the 'sinners and saints' in Jesus' family tree</li> <li>• examine how God used even the most troubled situations in Jesus' own family line to illustrate redemption in action throughout Israel's history</li> <li>• consider the faith of these women as an example for Christians today.</li> </ul>	<p><b>OT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tamar</li> <li>• Rahab</li> <li>• Ruth</li> <li>• Bathsheba</li> </ul> <p><b>NT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'The bleeding woman'</li> </ul> <p><b>Beyond</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacey Sturm, a Christian musician who had a difficult journey as a teenager</li> </ul>

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<b>THREE</b>  Sin and salvation	<p>Equal value of the sexes is established in the creation of Adam and Eve as being in the image of God.</p> <p>One implication of the equal worth of men and women is that, from the time of Adam and Eve, all are deemed to be sinners, regardless of their sex.</p> <p>The pregnancy of Mary with the Saviour-child was the fulfilment of this salvation plan.</p> <p>Mary composes her song of revelation and praise, showing complete trust in God's astounding promise.</p> <p>God's overarching story of salvation incorporates the stories of these two women.</p>	<p>To establish that men and women are created equal in value, status, autonomy and responsibility.</p> <p>To show that God's promise that one born of a woman will crush the serpent (Satan) is fulfilled in Mary's pregnancy with Jesus.</p> <p>To consider Mary's role in God's salvation plan and her astounding trust in God's revelation to her as the one chosen for this purpose.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore the biblical foundation and concept of both men and women as being 'in the image of God'</li> <li>• reflect on how Eve's autonomy means she is equally accountable for her sin</li> <li>• consider the significance of the promise made in Genesis 3 about the crushing of Satan/evil through a descendant of Eve</li> <li>• identify the connection between God's promise about Eve's descendants and Mary's pregnancy—two women, one story</li> <li>• reflect on the faithful response of Mary to God's calling.</li> </ul>	<p><b>OT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eve</li> </ul> <p><b>NT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary</li> </ul>

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<b>FOUR</b> Instruments of insight	<p>Throughout the Bible, God assigns various leadership roles to both men and women. This lesson will consider incidences when the role of judge (in the Old Testament) or prophet (in both the Old and the New Testaments) was held by a woman.</p> <p>Although these roles were predominantly held by men, the Bible presents the appointment of a woman to such a role without particular emphasis or surprise.</p> <p>Prophets are people chosen by God to speak for God with his authority. They may be given insight into future events or to explain God's past actions.</p> <p>From the Old Testament, the prophetic roles of Miriam, Deborah and Huldah will be examined.</p> <p>The role of Anna as the first named prophetess in the New Testament will also be explored.</p> <p>The pattern of women partnering with men in different ways is illustrated in each of these cases. Therefore, case studies will also refer to men.</p>	To explore how God has used women in leadership and prophetic roles throughout salvation history.	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand the leadership roles of judge and prophet</li> <li>explore the lives of females given prophetic roles at crucial moments in salvation history in both the Old and early New Testaments</li> <li>dispel any notions of male exclusivity in being recipients of God's authoritative insight</li> <li>consider the significance of Anna as the prophet who bridges the Old and New Testament</li> <li>see that God repeatedly uses men and women in partnership for his plans</li> <li>recognise how women continue to play roles in proclaiming God's truth to advance the news of God's salvation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>OT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deborah (and Barak and Jael)</li> <li>Miriam (and Moses and Aaron)</li> <li>Huldah (and Josiah)</li> </ul> <p><b>NT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anna (and Simeon)</li> </ul> <p><b>Beyond</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amy Orr-Ewing (and John Lennox)</li> </ul>

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<b>FIVE</b> Loyal learners	<p>In the historical setting of Jesus' time on earth it was not common for women to be students of rabbis (religious teachers). Jesus broke down this barrier, praising Mary (when invited to her house) for joining the males to sit and learn at his feet, as was the practice of students.</p> <p>Women are described as being part of the broader group of disciples travelling with Jesus. Three are explicitly named: Mary Magdalene, Joanna wife of Chuza, and Susanna. Women also helped finance the travels of Jesus and the 12 male disciples.</p> <p>The Gospels explicitly and unashamedly draw attention to the fact that of all the disciples, only some women and John were present at Jesus' death. This was a torturous and gruesome event, and they loyally and courageously stayed with him.</p>	<p>To explore how Jesus broke cultural barriers by including women as disciples.</p> <p>To explore how women demonstrated loyalty, courage and faithfulness at key moments in Jesus' crucifixion.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand the historical significance of Jesus allowing women, like Mary, to sit at his feet as students, breaking cultural barriers of the time</li> <li>learn about the broader group of women disciples, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, who travelled with and supported Jesus' ministry financially</li> <li>recognise the key role of women and John as the only disciples present at Jesus' death, demonstrating their loyalty and courage during this torturous and gruesome event</li> <li>recognise that women were key witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, thereby they were trusted to confirm the historicity of these events</li> <li>explore the parallel between the women at Jesus' death and Old Testament figures like Esther who displayed courage and loyalty in pivotal moments</li> <li>explore the loyalty and courage of contemporary Christians who willingly risk and lose their lives for their commitment to following God.</li> </ul>	<p><b>OT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Esther</li> </ul> <p><b>NT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mary and Martha</li> <li>Susanna</li> <li>Joanna</li> <li>Mary (mother of Jesus)</li> <li>Mary Magdalene</li> <li>Salome</li> </ul> <p><b>Beyond</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Martyrs</li> </ul>



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<b>SIX</b>  Totally transforming truth	<p>Jesus' longest recorded conversation in the Gospels is with a socially rejected, religiously dubious, culturally despised Samaritan woman at a well.</p> <p>Jesus reveals to her that he is the Messiah and is 'living water' for eternal life.</p> <p>The Samaritan woman is told worship will soon be 'in the Spirit and truth' not in a temple.</p> <p>Jesus broke a firm social norm by speaking alone with a woman, especially a Samaritan who'd had five husbands and now lived with a man who wasn't her husband.</p> <p>She was transformed by this encounter and evangelised the whole town—telling others about Jesus and what he had said.</p> <p>The people of her Samaritan town offered hospitality to Jesus—a Jew (and therefore an historical 'enemy' of the Samaritans)—and came to trust that he 'really is the Saviour of the world'.</p> <p>The story of Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader, is told which serves as a comparison and contrast with the Samaritan woman. Even the most respectable, religious people need to be told the truths of Jesus so that they too might be transformed and go on to tell others.</p>	<p>To examine how Jesus reveals his identity and mission through encounters with both the socially powerful and the marginalised, and how these encounters lead to personal transformation and the spread of the good news.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand the significance of Jesus breaking social norms in speaking extensively with the Samaritan woman in John 4</li> <li>explore Jesus' revelation to her that he is the Messiah, source of 'living water', and the fulfilment of temple-based worship</li> <li>reflect on the woman's transformation and her role in evangelising her town, leading them to accept Jesus as the Saviour of the world</li> <li>recognise that true belief results in transformation and the desire to tell others the good news</li> <li>understand that Jesus' mission was not only about social change but about transforming all people—both insiders and outsiders. This is seen in John 3, where Jesus offers salvation to Nicodemus, a respected religious man, in contrast to the Samaritan woman in John 4, who was culturally and socially marginalised.</li> </ul>	<b>NT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Samaritan woman</li> <li>Nicodemus</li> </ul>



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<b>SEVEN</b>  Unseen stars	<p>In God's plan, significance is not tied to being well known or powerful.</p> <p>God works to achieve remarkable and precious things through the often humble and unseen ways of women.</p> <p>God's word reveals the wise, prayerful, hospitable, nurturing women behind some of the most famous of God's leaders. This is true of Samuel, David, Jesus and Timothy.</p> <p>Today, God uses the unglamorous but faithful actions of many little-known women to fulfil his plans for the world.</p>	<p>To highlight the vital role of humble women throughout history who, through often unseen roles of wisdom, prayer, friendship, hospitality and motherhood, have been instrumental in advancing God's purposes.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore how God's purposes are advanced through individuals who may be largely unseen or unnamed, focusing on women whose quiet faithfulness played a significant role in the biblical narrative</li> <li>• consider the example of Abigail in acting wisely and supplying counsel to David</li> <li>• see the significant place of prayerfulness in God's plans through the example of Hannah</li> <li>• recognise the value of friendship and hospitality, via the example of Mary and Martha</li> <li>• consider the importance of motherhood with a focus on Timothy's mother and grandmother—Lois and Eunice</li> <li>• recognise how women continue to play important, yet sometimes humble roles in advancing God's salvation plan throughout history.</li> </ul>	<p><b>OT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abigail</li> <li>• Hannah</li> </ul> <p><b>NT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary and Martha</li> <li>• Lois and Eunice</li> </ul> <p><b>Beyond</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern 'unseen stars'</li> <li>• Imogen—single foster carer</li> </ul>

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<b>EIGHT</b>  Culture shock!	<p>Christianity was transformative in creating a culture that respects women as equals. Christianity was favoured by women as seen in the large number of early converts being women.</p> <p>Jesus radically upturned the cultural understanding of leadership, defining it, through his teaching and example, as sacrificial service.</p> <p>This had positive flow-on effects in the inclusion of women in ministry, opportunities for education, and marriage as partnership where both parties have equal value.</p> <p>This is still not the reality in all cultures today.</p> <p>If we 'throw off' or 'move on' from our Christian heritage, then we lose the cornerstone on which the equal value of men and women in our culture has been built.</p> <p>The failures of the church at times to reflect the teaching of God in regard to equal value will be admitted.</p>	<p>To examine how Christianity has been transformative in promoting the equal value of men and women, rooted in biblical teachings from Genesis onwards.</p> <p>To recognise that beyond being learners, some were called to roles of leadership in Jesus' ministry, the early church, and throughout history as vital contributors to God's mission.</p> <p>To reflect on the ongoing cultural impact of Christianity in valuing and respecting women as equals in marriage and education, and their valuable contribution to God's mission.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand how Christianity transformed cultural views on women, promoting their value and dignity, as reflected in the large number of women among early converts</li> <li>reflect on the Bible's foundational role in acknowledging the equal value of men and women in modern culture</li> <li>consider ways these teachings manifest in, and benefit, their world with particular reference to leadership, marriage, education and human rights</li> <li>understand that the affirmation of women as having equal value with men is not universal in different cultures</li> <li>see that the actions of the church have not always aligned with the example and teaching of Jesus. NB: This point will be developed in the final lesson.</li> </ul>	<p><b>OT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Song of Songs</li> </ul> <p><b>NT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phoebe</li> <li>Junia</li> <li>Lydia</li> <li>Paul's female 'partners in the gospel'</li> <li>Women generally in the early church</li> <li>Deaconesses</li> <li>Wives</li> </ul> <p><b>Beyond</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women today</li> <li>Dorothy L Sayers —one of the first female graduates of Oxford, and writer</li> </ul>

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<b>NINE</b>  What it's not	<p>Having established the dignity and value of women from biblical examination students now have a context within which they can explore some more controversial ideas in the Epistles and church history.</p> <p>This lesson will not force teachers or students to draw fixed conclusions. Rather it focuses on equipping students with the skill of understanding a Bible passage using its immediate context, the overarching biblical narrative, the historical context, and linguistics where relevant.</p> <p>Issues explored include participating in church leadership and teaching, and submission in marriage.</p> <p>Students are now more equipped to understand that the Bible's teaching does not compromise the worth and important contribution of women in Christianity.</p> <p>Additional, optional resources will be provided in the Teacher's manual to address some topics that may not be considered necessary for all classes.</p>	<p>To review the biblical teachings of this unit and apply this as students examine debated biblical passages about the place and role of women, examining historical and linguistic context, and engaging with a range of faithful Christian perspectives.</p> <p>Rather than demanding fixed conclusions, it encourages the skill of considering biblical teaching from a rigorously informed, respectful perspective as opposed to jumping to fixed conclusions without thoughtful consideration of information.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand how Jesus' words and actions toward women shape a consistent, respectful, and inclusive biblical ethic</li> <li>gain a deeper understanding of how biblical teachings in the Epistles about women, including submission in marriage and participation in church leadership, do not undermine their value in Christianity</li> <li>explore the historical and cultural context of the Bible's teaching to aid interpretation, recognising that difference in roles is not a difference in worth between men and women</li> <li>identify ways in which the Bible has been misused in church history to justify the oppression, mistreatment, exclusion or silencing of women</li> <li>develop the ability to interpret and apply passages using the overarching biblical narrative, the context of a verse or passage, and relevant historical context</li> <li>recognise that the church's treatment of women has not always reflected the teaching of the Bible.</li> </ul>	<p><b>NT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review examples from previous lessons, including Jesus' female disciples and early leaders like Priscilla, Phoebe, Junia</li> </ul> <p><b>Beyond</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women in all situations, including female students</li> </ul>