

***THINK EQUAL  
AND  
BUILD SMART***

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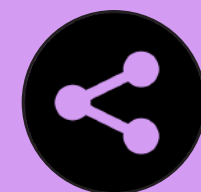
-Dr Latha Christie

*Research states that women empowerment is the key to creating strong economies. If women are needed for building the kingdoms of this world, why waste half of the talent we have for building the Kingdom of God?*



This year's theme for International Women's Day—Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change—caught my attention. If thinking equal and building smart is much needed for building a nation, how much more for building the Kingdom of God. But can we think equal in Christendom? There is a widespread belief that the Bible is sexist and that Christianity promotes a patriarchal society. As a female preacher and speaker, I often have to face this sensitive issue. Once after a speaking engagement, a friend asked me: Is not the Bible against women preaching? Though I managed to reply, I wondered whether God would anoint only men, and not women, seeing the predominance of male leaders at Christian conferences. However, after my M.Div. at SABC and my Apologetics training at RCCA, it became clear to me that God is not against women who can use their gifts to serve Him, but against false prophets and false teachers and those who use His Name for their glory and selfish motives.

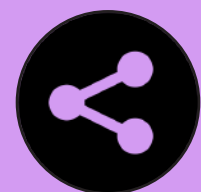
The nature and the breathtaking activities of the Triune God is the basis for understanding this sensitive issue. The unity in diversity that exists among the three Persons of God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is the starting point of any relationship. The perfect love that exists within Trinity from everlasting was passed on to humankind, the epitome of creation, in the Garden of Eden as God made them in His very own image. Matthew Henry remarks: "Women were created from the rib of man to be beside him, not from his head to rule over him, nor from his feet to be trampled





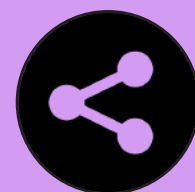
by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected by him and near to his heart to be loved by him.” The beginning of human history holds a greater level of significance to our lives than we can ever imagine. That’s why Jesus gave importance to this part of history by referring to it in Matthew 19:4-6: “From the beginning, God made them male and female ... so they are no longer two but one...” Jesus pointed to the fact that God established a monogamous heterogeneous marriage relationship at the beginning. When Adam looked at Eve for the first time, he knew that she was in his image (bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh)—the image of God, but she was differently made (sexually and emotionally) to complement him. God intended sacrificial love and mutual submission to be integral to this relationship. However, because of the fall, sin entered, and both men and women drifted away from this beautiful relationship they were made for. That’s why Jesus Christ came down to restore the sin-laden humanity and the image of God in both male and female.

Though some of the biblical accounts have strong Patriarchal component, it is because that the Bible is written over a long period of time to various cultures and societies and that some of these were discriminatory against women. But throughout the Bible, one can meet many women pioneers who took big

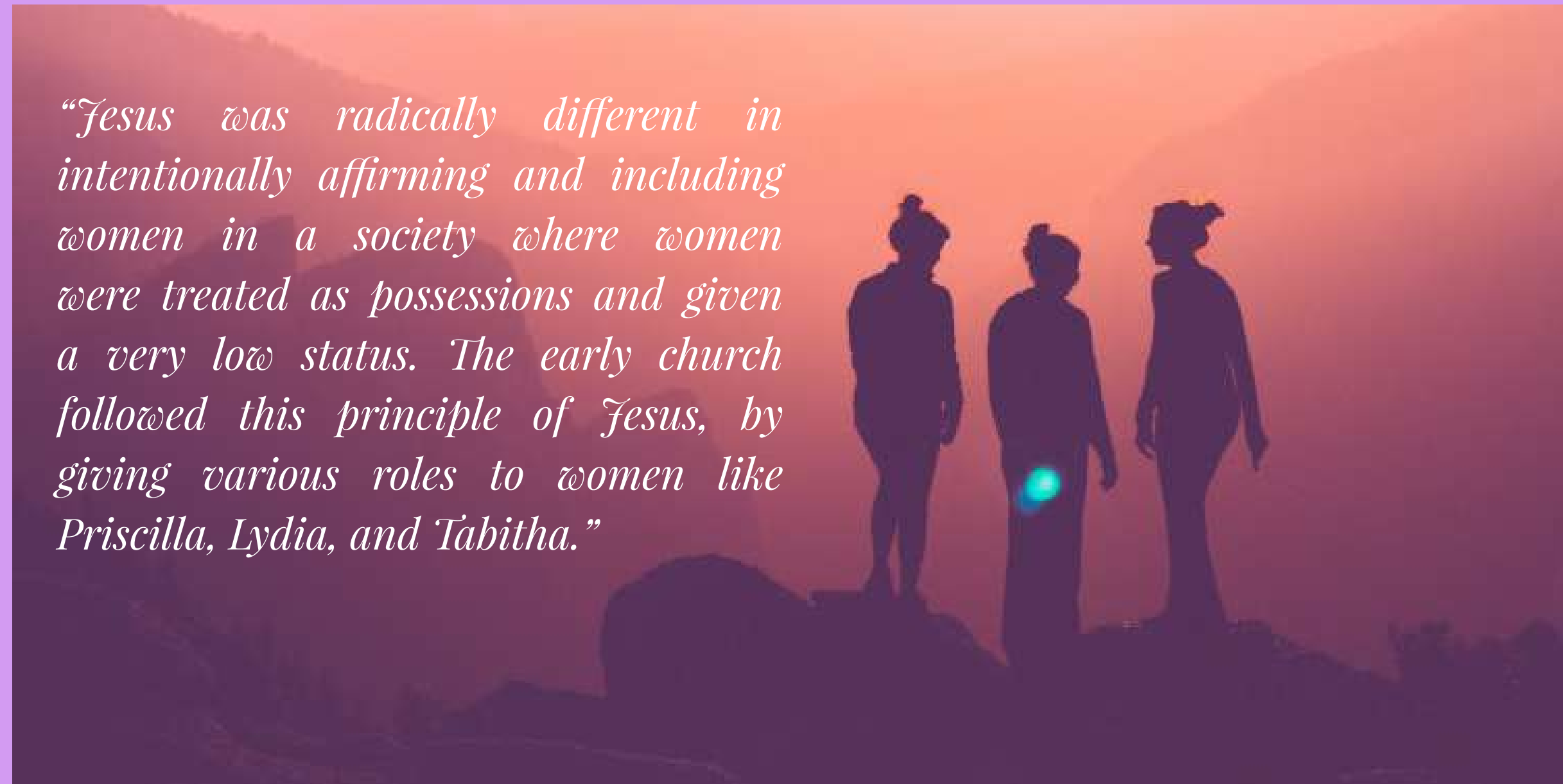


risks for God and made history like Deborah, the prophetess who helped gain military victories, and Jael who gained victory off the battlefield through a tent peg. Also, the Bible records the faithfulness of Ruth; the courage and intelligence of Rahab; the wisdom and the diplomacy of Abigail and the courage and the prayer of Esther. All these women made great strides while living in male-dominated societies. God was not endorsing the cultural and societal norms, but He was working along with the culture, gradually unfolding His plan for His world.

Jesus Christ went against the cultural and societal norms by having women join his followers who travelled with Him and by having a personal conversation with women to reveal theological insights. The first person to whom He revealed His identity was the Samaritan woman (John 4) and the first person who saw Him after His resurrection was Mary Magdalene (John 21). Jesus was radically different in intentionally affirming and including women in a society where women were treated as possessions and given a very low status. The early church followed this principle of Jesus, by giving various roles to women like Priscilla, Lydia, and Tabitha. Though some of Paul's writings appear to be against this inclusion of women, a careful study would reveal that he was just laying down guidelines for different churches that had problems due to some group of women. He recognized Phoebe as a deacon and Priscilla as a leader.

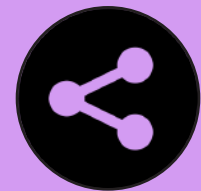


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In Matthew 13:47-50, Jesus related the Kingdom of God to that of a net that was let down to catch fish. Since many are needed for this task, He said to pray for labourers (men and women, young and old) as labourers are few (Luke 10:2). The partnership of both men and women are needed to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). In 2009, when Bill Gates visited the Middle Eastern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, he was asked how Saudi could become one of the top 10 competitive economies by 2010. Gates replied, "If you're not fully utilizing half the talent in the country, you're not going to get too close to the Top 10." Research states that women empowerment is the key to creating stronger economies. If women are needed for building the kingdoms of this world, the question lingers: why waste half of the talent we have for building the Kingdom of God?

Recently when my book—*Beyond the boundaries of Science* hit the stands, a senior editor of an American publishing company wrote to me that this is the first of its kind by an Asian woman. God needs both men and women to write, teach, preach, heal and deliver, so that His Kingdom will be built on this earth. As billions of people need to hear the good news of the gospel, there is a need for more men and women, who can reflect His image, co-labour with God and with one another. So let us think equal and build smartly His Kingdom for His Glory.



Dr. Latha Christie is a Senior Scientist with about 31 years of experience in the Defence Research & Development Organization (DRDO), Ministry of Defence, Bengaluru. More information at <http://lathachristie.com>