

Calling Forth Modern-Day Deborahs!

The destiny of women has been contested since the fall in the garden (Gen. 3:15–16). A prolonged struggle rages between the seed of woman giving birth to the family of God, and spiritual descendants of Satan, which will end one day in victory when Jesus returns.

In a time of heightened attack on the sanctity of being created male or female, I am passionate about understanding God's viewpoint of women and how He feels about us. In a mother's womb, God literally created us as individuals, male or female (Ps. 139:13–14). There's a grand story line developing in history which has a starring role for women.

God highlights the role of women in several defining points in the life of Jesus:

- Mary, the mother of Jesus: As a virgin, Mary gave birth to our Savior Jesus Christ. Ancient belief held that the male was the only source of life and that woman's purpose was to carry the child and to give birth. Loren Cunningham and David Joel Hamilton point out in their book, *Why Not Women?*, that Mary was the only human source for Jesus' DNA (Luke 1:34–35).
- Women on the team: Several females were included in Jesus' ministry team (Luke 8:1–3).
- The woman at the well: Jesus was interested enough in the destiny of a woman caught in sin that He told her about her past. When she responded saying, "I know a Messiah is coming," He gave her the news that would change not only her life, but the whole village. Jesus said, "I who speak to you am He" (John 4:26). He meant "You don't have to look any further."
- Mary of Bethany: Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed

Jesus' feet with costly perfume and wiped His feet with her hair before His death (John 11:2; 12:3).

- Mary Magdalene: After His resurrection, Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene (John 20:14).

What are some things men and women can do today to value the destiny of women as Jesus did?

Godly womanhood is an honor, a pure and holy pursuit that drops a plumb line for how to step up as a woman without resorting to clenched fists, raging at society with hands on hips demanding our rights—nor succumbing to the silent tragedy of folding your hands in your lap and doing nothing all the while screaming in quiet desperation. Women are struggling to find their place.

An Apology

As a believing woman in leadership, I want to apologize to women who didn't see a compelling picture from mothers in the faith of the ecstasy and extreme fulfillment of being a confident woman in God. For those who felt "less-than" and gave in to self-pity, even betraying their own identity and settling for a mediocre version of the woman they are called to be, I wish we had shown you something greater.

I'm sorry I didn't pave the way as a modern-day Deborah, a woman secure enough in God's leading to call a male military leader to do what God had called him to do, a powerful woman who mounted a horse to ride into battle when it was necessary, a woman who was a key leader bringing peace in her community. Have Christian women failed to live with passion and zeal because we didn't think we could or should? It's time to trade lackluster versions of leadership for a passionate pursuit of godly womanhood. It is time to be mobilized, becoming who God has invited us to be, doing what God has given us to do, for the harvest is here.

I want to apologize to those in my circles looking for an

example of womanhood who didn't see me living and leading in such a way they could find a highway with neon signs (or at the very least a trail of breadcrumbs) leading to Jesus—the one who positioned women in high places at strategic times in history; it was a woman overshadowed by the Holy Spirit who brought Jesus into the world, and it was a woman who met the resurrected Lord at the tomb. Women ministered with Jesus, Martha cooked for Jesus and Mary lavished her affection on Him by pouring costly ointment over Jesus' feet and wiping them with her hair. The love of Jesus truly sets a woman free to live and love with abandon. Oh, that this would be our testimony.

It is my desire that we change the understanding and expression of Christianity in the church, as well as in the marketplace, by passionately supporting Spirit-led women who buy and sell, have a voice at the leadership table, make tough decisions, rock the cradle, raise the evangelist, rise to global leadership levels. What glass ceiling?

Women, I urge you to embrace the opportunity to become a woman of beauty and substance, for God has created you in His image.

For the men, you have the privilege to honor and understand women made in God's image.

My husband is an outdoorsman, a man's man, and he loves and appreciates me as a woman. I have great respect and love for this man I married at 21. We grew up together in some ways, learning as we went, perhaps in a simpler time.

Rick embraces his manhood and honors me in my femininity. We allow each other the freedom to use our individual gifts. Rick is a strong person and has been used of God to run a business, teach children and later teach prison inmates, impacting the lives of many. Yet he has no problem with a wife who is a visible leader, and he securely cheers me on. Although he may appear to lead from the back of the room, he in fact leads by

just walking in the door. Some men have been puzzled by our relationship, and many have been challenged by his example to honor their wives as leaders. We don't always get it exactly right, but we always come back to the table to talk things through, and I find safety in his love and esteem for me as his wife who leads.

I am a successful businesswoman, an ordained minister, wife to Rick and mother of two incredible women of God. But primarily I am a child of God who is a woman.

How Can Men Honor Women?

I've missed some opportunities because I am a woman. I've been talked over, passed over and overlooked by the good ole' boys at times. But I'm interestingly not bitter or halted by this because of a few key male influences in my life. My Dad was a man full of humility and grace who believed I could do anything God put it in my heart to do. I entered college and the business world braced for the affronts sure to come from men because of the acceptance by my father and mentor, Herbert Low.

My husband has esteemed me since the day we met at a dance in the Student Union Building in college. His constant proclamations of love, undying devotion and expressions of service, puzzling and provoking other men to reconsider the role of a man more often than not, show anyone within view that I am loved (and nobody better mess with Linda). He's a gentle giant some say; others call him a lion. I call him the Rick-man.

Pastoral leaders in my life like Scott McKay and Mike Bickle have honored me with invitations to lead in ministry settings. Scott McKay was the first man to ask me to speak from the platform and expressed confidence that I had something to say as a woman. Mike Bickle welcomed me to the leadership of The Joseph Company at the International House of Prayer of Kansas

City.

Men, when communicating with women, consider these suggestions:

- Hear us out without reframing our message in your own terms.
- Ask clarifying questions.
- Don't patronize us or condescend; we are tougher than you think and can take the heat of a good debate rendered with honor.

How can a woman embrace her destiny when interacting with men?

As women, we do the world a favor when we step up to the plate with brains and hearts engaged. Rather than looking for special favors as women, let's own who God has called us to be, bringing our creativity forth without sacrificing good process and emotional intelligence.

Basic communication tips for women that everyone will appreciate:

- Learn to talk in bullet points and avoid rabbit trails.
- State the action then the reason. Men like a clear target.
- Communicate objectively.

For most of my career, I have been the only woman at a boardroom table of men and happily have not been keenly aware of the fact. *That's because I've embraced my calling* and believe I just might have something to contribute. If I don't speak up, we'll never know.

At this stage, it's about getting the job done more than being a woman.

Let's work together to be at our best and get the job done.
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Linda Fields *blends her humble upbringing as a preacher's kid*

and her wealth of experience in business, training and ministry to serve believers who are called to fulfill their mission in the marketplace. With True Tribe, a simple mentoring system designed to unlock and launch one's next level, Linda helps train men and women to live out their spiritual destinies within their professions. As a woman, a wife, a mom, a glass-ceiling smasher, business owner and coffee aficionado, Linda is at home in the boardroom, the classroom and the prayer room doing life with Jesus, her mentor and friend, as they help others pursue their dreams.

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