

Justice for Women

Only Jesus can truly liberate women. He is the ultimate Champion.

Last summer my oldest daughter, Joni Michele, graduated from college. It was wonderful. She walked across the stage and mysteriously became an adult right before my eyes. Her next act of womanhood was to decide on her first job. She chose a highly sought-after position in Cairo, Egypt.

But my joy for her success was tainted by visions of religious radicalism, anti-American sentiments and abject poverty. At my wife's urging, I traveled as a "bodyguard" to Joni's land of promise. I was her champion.

The trip opened my eyes to an entirely new world. Not only did I see the pyramids and the Nile, I also saw a society wrestling with tradition and its future. Most of the people were very warm, and I found my concern shifting from Joni's safety as an American in the Middle East to her plight as a woman. Let me explain.

In Egypt, women seem to be treated more like valued possessions, used for the convenience of men, rather than people with unique personal identities and callings. What I learned actually brought me to tears by the end of the trip.

Female genital mutilation, often referred to as female circumcision, is still performed on girls ages 7 through 12, though the practice is becoming less common among those with more education. The procedure can range from partial removal of the clitoris, to full removal of the clitoris as well as both the labia major and labia minor. Egyptians typically

practice the least severe form of circumcision.

Traditionalists say circumcision is done to “beautify the woman.” The truth is that circumcision is meant to ensure that a woman will be faithful to her future husband by limiting her capacity to enjoy sex.

We in the West may wince at such a practice, but oppression and inequity that are directed toward women come in many forms. I’m convinced that all women need a champion to survive in today’s societies. Let’s look at the facts.

The World Health Organization reports that more than 100 million women or girls have undergone female genital mutilation, and 2 million are at risk each year. Two million women worldwide are raped each year, with four women raped every hour in the United States. Further, 23 percent of all married women in the United States are battered.

If the violence statistics are bad, the economic statistics are worse. Women make up 70 percent of the world’s poor and 75 percent of the world’s sick. Women work 62 percent of all work hours, but receive only 10 percent of the world’s income. Other reports show that they own only 1 percent of the world’s property.

The arm of the flesh cannot protect women from the prevailing cultural plot to rob them of their femininity, self-worth and personal dignity. The women’s liberation movement tried to turn the tide of injustice, but it produced anger without resolution. This anger in many cases has festered, becoming a gender-based root of bitterness (see Heb. 12:15) leading to an increasing number of divorces and rampant immorality.

Only Jesus can truly liberate women. He is the ultimate Champion and protector, and He wants to use us to help set women free. He needs pastors to teach and model the difference between submission and oppression.

He needs churches to support mission outreaches to the Muslim world, America's inner cities and every place in between. Jesus especially needs parents to invest time with their children.

Ironically, the most influential parent in the battle against abuse is the mother. Women are the primary transmitters of every major culture. Even female circumcision is carried out by women under the direction of social norms. Women with renewed minds can teach their sons to respect women and train their daughters to become women of God.

Women don't have to wait for all the men to get straightened before they can see things change. They can begin a spiritually based women's liberation movement that helps women fulfill their God-given purpose.

It's the midnight hour; God is breaking the chains of injustice. Women, it's time for you to live with the awareness that your Champion has come!

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