

James Goll: The Church Must Stop Silencing the Prophetesses

Recently, there has been a stirring controversy over the issues of women in ministry and leadership roles.

I am rather shocked at some of these views resurfacing and even grabbing our attention as they have. Putting down women and calling out premier leaders such as Beth Moore, Paula White Cain and others is just plain not right.

We are each accountable for the light we have. And to be honest, I was once in that narrow camp myself.

We are each on a pilgrimage and I have been on mine. Since the recent negative articles and statements have been released, the Holy Spirit has arrested my attention and reminded me of my journey in the faith as being the co-founder of Women on the Frontlines with my late wife, Michal Ann Goll.

So, I feel I should step to the plate and help undo some of the harm that has occurred as of late.

Releasing Value and Worth

Did you know that 60% of the membership of the body of Christ is women?

The percentage of women is even larger—about 80%—when you talk about the part of the church that is devoted to intercessory prayer.

Some of the greatest “generals” in the army of God are anointed, prophetic women. They know how to pray and fast, and they embrace sacrificial living.

Over the centuries, I feel that their contributions to the well-being of God's people are absolutely heroic. I wonder why any man should take it upon himself to wire shut the mouths of these nurturing, consecrated servants of God.

The topic of women's roles in the church is near and dear to my heart ever since I went through a big paradigm shift.

I used to be one of "those" males who believed that a woman's place was not anywhere near the pulpit. When my wife started to minister with me, she wore a head covering. Later, and with more light, I found that I had to repent publicly to women for the way doors had been shut on them.

In recent years, I have confessed my own shortcomings along with the generational sins of the men who came before me; I have knelt in public meetings to ask women to forgive men for controlling them. I have asked women to forgive spiritual leaders for oppression and for abuse. I have never wanted it to become an emotional display, but it has always been powerful and healing.

By building a culture within the church of honor and relational authority we can esteem one another across traditional dividing lines because, in Christ, there is no male or female (see Gal. 3:28).

The simple fact of the matter is that, in giving His gifts, God does not discriminate because of gender.

Women Called Prophetesses in Scripture

Throughout Scripture, there are numerous women who have been called prophetesses.

Of necessity, this will have to be a quick overview, though whole books could be written about these individual women. Let's start back at the Exodus with *Miriam*, sister of Moses and Aaron. She was known as a spokesperson for God

particularly as a leader in music and dance (see Ex. 15:20-21).

Moving on through the years, we find Deborah, who is mentioned in an unapologetic way as one of the judges of Israel. As a prophetess and judge, she stood before God on behalf of Israel and she was an adviser to the military leader Barak. "Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. he used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment" (Judges 4:4-5). Eventually, because of Deborah's leadership acumen, she was called a "mother in Israel" (see Judges 5:7).

Huldah was another early prophetess in Israel. This prophetess and keeper of the wardrobe sought the prophetic word of the Lord on behalf of the young King Josiah (see 2 Kings 22:14). There were other prophets (male) in Israel at the time, but King Josiah sought her out because of her seasoned and influential ministry as a prophetess.

Then we have the unnamed woman who was *Isaiah's wife*. Almost nothing was recorded about her, as Isaiah mentioned her only once: "And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son" (Isa. 8:3, NKJV). Some scholars have said that she was called "the prophetess" only because she was Mrs. Isaiah, but others argue that nowhere else in the entire Old Testament is the wife of a prophet called a prophetess. I have come to believe that Isaiah and his wife operated as a prophetic team!

We must not neglect *Elizabeth*, mother of John the Baptist and cousin of *Mary*, the mother of our Lord Jesus. Both of these devout women were active in prayer, worship and faithful waiting on the Lord for the fulfillment of His prophetic promises. The interchange between these God-fearing women resulted in exuberant praises and prophesying concerning the destiny of Mary's child, the Messiah Jesus.

I am so grateful that Luke made a point of recording the whole thing for the benefit of generations to come. Luke seems to pay attention to details about prophetic women. In addition to these prophetic songs of Elizabeth and Mary in the first chapter of Luke, we also see mention of “a prophetess Anna” (see Luke 2:36-37).

Jesus grew up and embarked on His public ministry (consistently honoring women, by the way), and ended up dying on the cross and rising from the dead. Within just a few decades, He had fulfilled more of the ancient prophetic words than seemed possible and He had left behind a growing church.

This is when more capable women such as Priscilla and *Phillip's four daughters* come along. Phillip, known to us as “the Evangelist,” had “*four virgin daughters who were prophetesses*” (Acts 21:9). Apparently all four of Phillip's unmarried daughters had been acknowledged by the local body of believers as having prophetic gifts. We do not know any words or actions specifically attributed to them, but surely the term “prophetesses” must have been well-deserved.

My point in cataloging these women in the Bible as being prophetic was to highlight the idea that women have always been gifted to serve God's people in the same ways as men. As far as diligence, discernment and prayer, women often exceed men in both character and gifting.

Secure in Your Identity

Whether male or female, we can be totally secure in our identity as chosen sons and daughters of the King.

As the apostle Paul put it, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, and there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). We belong to Him, body, soul and spirit, and we want Him to use us however He desires.

One of *His* desires is that we would desire prophetic gifts that will enable us to teach and preach and interpret God's will and purpose for ourselves and others (see 1 Cor. 14:39).

The Spirit invites us to be all that we can be in Christ Jesus. As men and women of faith, we are equals before Him, co-heirs of His grace and gifts. What a high calling! {eo}

James W. Goll is the president of God Encounters Ministries and has traveled around the world sharing the love of Jesus, imparting the power of intercession, prophetic ministry and life in the Spirit. He has recorded numerous classes with corresponding study guides and is the author of more than 40 books, including *The Seer*, *The Lost Art of Intercession*, *The Coming Israel Awakening* and *The Lifestyle of a Prophet*. James is the father of four wonderful children with a growing number of grandchildren, and makes his home in Franklin, Tennessee.

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