

The Daughters' Inheritance

- ✘ God gives His girls equality—and has commissioned them to take territory for His kingdom.

Most

Israelites who traveled through the Sinai desert with Moses probably

knew about the daughters of Zelophehad. While other women hid inside

tents and covered themselves head to foot with heavy veils, these

girls—Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah—defied the patriarchal

system of their day and earned a special place in biblical history.

We

rarely hear sermons about Zelophehad's daughters today, even though

they are mentioned in the Bible five times (see Num. 26:33; 27:1-7;

36:1-12; 1 Chr.

7:15; Josh. 17:1-6). Maybe this is because many church leaders simply

don't want to empower women or are afraid to. But it is time we unlocked

these women's secret for a new generation.

God's

daughters must understand who they are, how their heavenly Father views

them, and what He has commissioned them to do in His kingdom.

The

daughters' portion must be claimed.

You

may have been told that women have only second-class status in the church, or that your role is limited because of your gender. You may have even been told that women are less valuable to God, or less useful. But the Bible contradicts this view.

In fact, the Old Testament contains several accounts of daughters who were empowered and given their full inheritance—in an age when boys were preferred over girls, and women had no civil rights. The stories of these daughters are recorded in Scripture so that you, too, will muster the courage to claim your inheritance.

FIVE PIONEER WOMEN

At a time when most women in Israel lived like prisoners in polygamous households, the daughters of Zelophehad must have spent lots of time outside their tent. They were curious. They had a zest for life. And they refused to be confined by the limitations of their culture.

Why did they think differently from other women of that era? My theory is that their parents offered these girls overwhelming validation and encouragement. Zelophehad, who had no sons, must have decided after his first daughter was born that he was content to raise a houseful of women. He recognized their value. He was generous with his

affection and
instilled in his daughters a powerful sense of personal
destiny.

Zelophehad
probably showered his daughters with gifts, held them in his
lap after
dinner and told them stories about the exodus from Egypt while
he tucked
them into bed. They knew their daddy loved them, and his
affirmation
nurtured a sense of empowerment.

I
can imagine these playful girls dancing and singing next to
their
father's goat pens as they did their chores. Their ankle
bracelets
jingling as they skipped past the tents in Manasseh's
encampment.

Neighbors
might have even complained about all the giggling that came
from
Zelophehad's household. They may have shouted to Zelophehad's
wife,
"Tell those girls to be quiet!"

But these girls were not easily silenced. They were God-
ordained troublemakers. They would soon make history.

As
the girls blossomed into women, their confidence grew. They
must have
started talking among themselves about the problems with
patriarchy,
finally asking the most forbidden questions: "Why don't the
women have

any privileges around here? Why can't women own land? Why can't we get an inheritance when we cross the Jordan?"

The Bible tells us that after Zelophehad's death, his daughters went to Moses and made a daring proposal: "'Why should the name of our father be withdrawn from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers'" (Num. 27:4, NASB).

We can't even begin to imagine how bold and audacious this request was.

Women in Israel did not ask for rights. Yet the daughters of Zelophehad risked their reputations by approaching the leader of their nation and asking for something revolutionary.

What is most remarkable is that Moses took their request seriously and sought God about it. Most church leaders who restrict women's involvement in ministry don't pray about this issue at all. They simply consult their denominational policies and traditions and decree, "No women in the pulpit. Women can't teach men. Women can't lead anything." Then they reinstate man-made rules that quench the Holy Spirit.

But Moses asked God, and God had a surprising reply: "'The daughters of Zelophehad are right in their statements. You shall surely give them a hereditary possession among their father's brothers, and you shall

transfer the inheritance of their father to them'" (Num. 27:7).

In that moment, God contradicted centuries of prejudice and wrong-headed tradition. He made it clear that in His kingdom, women are not afterthoughts or appendages. They have equal value with men and full rights to His benefits.

A DAUGHTER'S DOUBLE PORTION

Hidden in another Old Testament book is the story of Achsah, the daughter of Caleb (see Josh. 15:16-19). Like Zelophehad's daughters, this daring young woman also claimed territory in the land of Canaan.

Can you imagine what it would have been like to grow up in the household of Caleb, one of Israel's champions of faith? The giants who ruled Canaan did not intimidate this man—and I suspect he imparted that same fearlessness to this young girl.

The Bible tells us that when Caleb inherited his territory in the land of Judah, his daughter approached him with a bold proposal: She asked him for land in a day when women were not considered worthy of owning anything.

But the story does not stop there. Achsah

said to her father: “‘Give me a blessing; since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water’” (v. 19). Caleb, not one to deny his little girl anything, gave her “the upper and the lower springs.”

Achsah had spunk. She wasn't satisfied with the status quo. Not only did she ask for land, she asked for more! She pressed forward until she got the water necessary to turn the dry desert into a garden.

Why is this obscure passage included in the Scriptures? I believe the Holy Spirit has woven a subtle theme throughout the Bible, pointing to the fact that redeemed women who have been set free from the curse of sin will inherit the kingdom. They will not live on the sidelines while men partake of heaven's blessings. They will not be penalized from full participation in the church simply because of gender.

Today, God is calling women of faith to arise and claim land for Him. He is looking for women who have a giant-killing mentality. Dare I say it? He is looking for women with an apostolic spirit—women whose burden for souls weighs so heavy that they cannot rest until the whole earth has been filled with His glory.

God

wants women who are not content to simply work in the nursery and lead

women's luncheons. (Nothing against the nursery, but the church has lost

so much of its power by limiting women's gifts to domestic functions.)

It is time for women to shake loose from the trappings of religious

culture and step into their full potential.

Women

can still work in the nursery or the kitchen (as can men, since all of

us are called to be servants). But they can also plant churches,

disciple new believers, counsel the addicted, heal the sick, perform

miracles, cast out devils, own and run successful businesses, feed the

poor, hold political office and transform nations for Christ. There is

so much territory to be claimed.

Perhaps

you did not know you could ask for nations. Perhaps you did not realize

that God has a role for you to play in the evangelization of the world. As you get to know the Father more intimately, you will

come to understand that He is eager to give you more when you are

willing to ask for it.

A

Beautiful Company of Women There is yet a third Old Testament reference

to daughters who claimed their inheritance. They are the

daughters of

Job—Jemimah, Keziah and Keren-happuch—who are described as the most beautiful women in the land (see Job 42:12-15).

Job

must have had special affection for these girls. After all, he had lost

all 10 of his original children years earlier when a storm destroyed

his house. When God restored Job's fortunes, and gave him double for all

that had been taken from him, Job had 10 more children. It is interesting to note that the Bible says Job had seven sons and three

daughters—and then it provides the names of the girls only.

Then

Job 42:15 says: "In all the land no women were found so fair as Job's

daughters; and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers."

Why are only the daughters'

names mentioned? Why is there a reference to the girls' beauty? And why

are we told that they were given an inheritance?

Again,

the Holy Spirit is showing us God's heart for women. Although men have

abused, marginalized and oppressed women—even in the church—God will

have the last word on this subject. This passage in Job, one of the

oldest books of the Bible, offers a glimpse into the last days. It

signifies a day when women who are empowered by the Holy Spirit will be

fully restored to their place of spiritual authority.

Like

Job, human beings were stripped of their dignity and spiritual power

because of sin. But when Jesus Christ purchased redemption at Calvary,

His blood not only paid the full price for our transgressions, it also

broke the power of shame, guilt and oppression off of women.

It made

them beautiful again, and restored to them the right to their spiritual

inheritance.

Do you know

that the Lord sees you as beautiful? Perhaps your self-image has been

marred by life's disappointments and tragedies.

Many

women struggle to find their identity in Christ because of sexual

molestation, domestic abuse or the shame of abortion or fornication.

Don't let the mistakes of the past or the wounds inflicted by people

stop you from gaining your inheritance. God calls you beautiful. He can

take your filthy rags and give you a new wardrobe—one of righteousness

and purity. Regardless of the pain of your past, He has a glorious

future planned for you.

CLAIM YOUR PORTION

God has placed a passion in my heart to see women take

their full place in the church and society. Perhaps that's

because I
have four daughters of my own.

As
soon as my first daughter, Margaret, was born 25 years ago, I
realized
that girls are special. So my wife and I kept having more.
Meredith was
born in 1987. Gloria arrived two years later. Charlotte came
along in
1992. Four girls in seven years!

I
tell people that I have been drowning in a sea of estrogen
since the
day we brought that first baby girl into our home. But I have
no
regrets. I know that the Father does not look at girls as
inferior.

He
did not make them to serve as appendages to men. He created
women with
unique callings that must be released in full potential.

Most
of my income today is being spent on my daughters' college
education,
and more probably will be spent on their weddings. I could
never deny my
daughters any good gift. How much more is the Father willing
to lavish
His blessings, spiritual gifts and empowering grace on His
girls?

Although
you may have experienced gender prejudice, this tragic
attitude does

not reflect the Father's heart for you. He longs to give you the kingdom.

Read a companion devotional.

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