

Christian Life

for

Christian Women

by Rose Adle





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A Lady Knows Her Place in Life ...

A Christian woman who would like to know the position and purpose of her place in life should start at the beginning ... the very beginning!

A lady's place in God's creation was set for her. We didn't get to choose our own space, but this is no injustice. It's simply what it means to be *created*. The fact that we have life is a gift. The fact that this life was designed with significance, purpose, and love for the good of all creation is another gift! Creatures don't get to pick how they're made. They're not around to make those decisions. They only exist **AFTER** they're made. So, all of the details that go into the "who" and the "why" of each person on the planet will always be up to the Creator. Let's think about what it means, then, to know our place. And once we know our place, we can think about how we might enjoy it with thankfulness to the One who made it for us.

Throughout this short booklet, let's not lose sight of this: The place for the first lady was designed thoughtfully and with great significance and deep love. It was not an accident. It was not a mistake. There was specific, meaningful purpose infused in every fiber of womankind's created self. The first lady to occupy the woman's place in creation was named Eve. This first lady received her place, rejected it, and was restored to it by grace. We can relate! We're related, after all.

Eve Receives Her Place ...

Throughout the entire narrative of God's creative work in Genesis 1 and 2, we hear that "it was good" and "it was good" and "it was good." It seems there's no end to all of the It-Was-Goods of creation. Until, suddenly, there is an end to it. Something was not good! The thing that was *not* good was the fact that Adam, the man created by God to live and work on the freshly-created planet earth, was alone. Even when someone has the sun, moon, and stars, there is something missing if one lacks human relationship.

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." (Genesis 2:18)

After Adam is created, Eve is made *from* him and *for* him (Genesis 2:21). It often happens that people discuss the order of creation with unhappiness. To use the word "order" makes people worry that we are talking about an unjust hierarchy in which some people are good, and others are better or best. When we talk about men and women and the order of creation, we understand that order refers to something deeper than chronology. Creation's "order" could also be understood as "orderliness" or "organization." God crafted creatures to occupy different spaces for the sake of good order! The woman is made differently from the man. Men and women would be like each other (and, God willing, they would also *like* each other!), but they would not be exactly alike. In marriage, we see how one joins the other in a blessed union that is capable of participating in God's creation of a new child.

This goes beyond the surface of the body, too. Men and women are different. By design, their capabilities and calls to serve will complement each other and bring special strengths to the family. And this is a good thing—excuse me,

it is a VERY good thing (Genesis 1:31). Created man and created woman each have unique gifts and distinct spaces in creation.

The woman was not designed to be *another* Adam. She was made to help the Adam that already existed, not as a clone, but as a complement fit for him (Genesis 2:18). The woman was the beautiful, thoughtful, God-designed solution to the problem of what was not good about creation.

Women with a low view of created differences are missing the terribly important point that a woman's *differences* make her beautifully necessary in creation. If a woman would prefer to live and act and speak and assert herself as a man, she's silently scorning her singular value as the one who brings to the table of creation what the man never would and never could: that which is feminine.

Eve Rejects Her Place ...

A problem comes into the picture-perfect setting when the first lady decides that being a helper is rather ho-hum. She would rather be the one who calls the shots, makes the big decisions, and basically leads humanity. Sadly, she leads humanity, all right ... she leads humanity right onto the wrong path. When the devil tempts Eve, he appeals to her desire for a place that was not given to her. Adam was made to be the head, and Eve the helper. By approaching the first lady, the devil is already aiming to overturn the order.

First lady Eve could have deferred to her husband. She could have said to the devil, "You'll have to excuse me. I'm not in charge here. Kindly peddle your forbidden fruit to the man of the house. I'll be helpfully keeping to myself." But she takes up the conversation and soon considers disobeying God's Word. This leads to taking the fruit and then sharing it with her husband who was with her (Genesis 3:6). Instead

of *helping* as God had designed, listening to the devil led to *hurting*.

All of this (not just eating the wrong fruit, but the entire scenario) is a rejection of the place that was made for Head Adam and Helper Eve. Even though it was the first lady who sat in the wrong seat and made the wrong call, it was the first man who was held responsible (Romans 5:12) because he was placed in the actual role of headship and leadership. That role was his whether he carried it out well or not. And though he tries to blame the woman whom God gave him (Genesis 3:12), his finger-pointing is absolutely off base and clearly exposed as such. The man is going to receive his share of the curse.

But, returning to the topic of woman, the first lady is in for it, too:

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16)

These wretched words spoken to Eve in Eden still blight the steps of every woman on earth. We are all subject to the same sinful outlook and rebellion against God’s Word and will. Reflecting on the role He’s given us, we naturally (*sinful* naturally) want something better for ourselves, or at least different, because we can’t help thinking that our lot is lousy for one reason or another. To accept our role as women, and to live in our place faithfully and well, is going to be a lifelong struggle here below.

Eve Is Restored to Her Place ...

Before getting riled up over how miserable a life this will be for Eve (for us!), consider the fact that even though life is cursed, life *will* go on! No lightning bolt. No “Go directly to hell, do not pass Go and do not collect \$200” sentence is pronounced. No, life will go on. And, if we are patient and careful in our reading of the text, we will see that it is actually a version of the *original* life that was designed for Eve. Sure, it will come with aches and pains and sorrows now (that’s the curse for ya!), but the world’s first wife was still going to bring forth life by way of her one-flesh union with the world’s first husband.

Yep, the trick to a sound, Christian understanding of the curse spoken upon Eve is to recognize that it is **not all law**. There’s some great gospel, too. The good news for Eve is that she is still God’s creature. He still loves her. He still wants what is good for her. Moreover, she is still her husband’s wife. She is still named the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20). She is still going to have the joy and blessing of marriage and motherhood, which is great for her because it is what she was built for.

From His very first words of reproof, God is getting His creatures *back* to the places He designed for them. God puts things back in order. He responds with distinctions because He, as their Maker, knows and loves their unique design better than anyone else in the world ... or in the heavens. He calls them back to His grace as He sets them each, firmly and lovingly, back in the right place and gives them the promise of eternal life through His Son, Jesus (Genesis 3:15).

The man is still man, the woman is still woman. It was true in Genesis 3, and it was made to be true for all of creation for all of time. This is a gift we have from our loving Lord. It was as much a gift to Adam and Eve as it is for each of us today.

From a General Place to Specific Spaces ...

Thus far, we have spoken in general terms about God's design for His distinct creatures and the fact that both the similarities between men and women as well as the differences are resoundingly good, not just for old timey days but for *all* timey days. It is a mistake to think that the differences we see in Scripture were only good for people in fig leaves, or sandals and robes. They are just as good for skinny jeans and ballet flats and any other fashion past, present, and future.

Looking around at creation, we see that women are called to different particulars when it comes to their specific spaces or stations in life. This is fine and good. Many, many distinctions of vocation and station can be situated faithfully and calmly and (hopefully!) happily under the umbrella of God's ordered creation.

All Women Are Daughters ...

Before getting into anything too divisive, let's start where we can all find common ground. All females are called to be daughters.

All of us are daughters to our earthly parents, and there are duties and responsibilities that come with this, for sure. We are called to love and honor our parents whether we are four or forty plus. A young woman might ask, "Is it a sin to get a tattoo?" A wise, older woman might ask, "Why do you want to know?" If the young woman says that she's asking because her mother doesn't want her to get a tattoo, but she does not see any place in Scripture that forbids tattoos, the wise, older woman could say to the younger one, "The Fourth Commandment is as far as you need to look in Scripture to find an answer to the context of your question." Never forget the weight of responsibility that comes with being a daughter

to your earthly mother and father. Honor your parents. Love them. Be a good daughter to them (Deuteronomy 5:16; Matthew 15:4).

And for those without earthly parents (either by circumstance or age), we can consider our daughter status from an even more universal angle: First and foremost, every female who is brought into the faith is, by grace, a daughter of her Heavenly Father. Until we understand and appreciate this, none of the other offshoots of womanly callings can make sense or be enjoyed fully.

I have met women who, after marrying or after having children, will say that they have lost a sense of who they are. Often this comes from viewing “self” more in terms of function than in terms of identity. A functional understanding of life is bound to change. One day you’re called to learn how to tie your shoes, and the next you’re figuring out how to apply for post-high school education or a job. Maybe a female will be called upon to change a diaper (or a ton of them) and maybe not.

A female who lives a long life will, in all likelihood, experience different stages that will require different things of her. This does not mean she’s lost her sense of self—unless she sees herself strictly as “the person who goes to grad school” or “the person who changes diapers” or “the person who is a lawyer.” If seen that way, any time that situation changes, a personality crisis commences. But if a woman views her identity foremost as a child of God, then life’s changes only change *what she’s up to*, not *who she is*. She can say with peace in her heart, “Whatever I’m called to do today, I will do it as a daughter of my Heavenly Father. I will approach each changing stage of life as God’s workmanship. I’m created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10) until this here self—this *same* self—is raised to eternal life on the last day (John 6:40).”

So, before we go into the more minute details of the lives of women, remember you're a daughter before you're anything else.

Some Women Are Single ...

A good thing about being a single woman is that any other woman can relate to you in some fashion. Actually, Eve would be the only woman who might not get it. That lady was basically born married. But these days, any woman you'll run into here on Earth knows a bit about what it's like to be a single woman because she experienced singleness before she experienced marriage. You need not feel isolated then, or left out, when you are in the company of married women. They were single before they were married, and if there is a shred of grace in them (Lord, grant it), they will be especially thoughtful in the way they treasure your company and friendship.

Some women are single for a while, and some women are single for a lifetime. There's nothing "unchristian" about this. St. Paul refers to celibacy (a single, chaste lifestyle) as "even better" in some ways than the married life (1 Corinthians 7:38). A single woman can look for ways to nurture those in her church, community, and job. Those without "dependents" can be generous stewards of their relative independence, having extra measures of love for others in their path.

A single woman may desire the gift of marriage or she may not. Whatever her status and whatever her prayer, she is the Lord's (Romans 14:8)! She is a part of the Bride of Christ, and she can be beautiful and faithful to Him. Single women can be devoted to living as **"blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation,"** and they can **"shine as lights in the world"** (Philippians 2:15).

If singleness is your standing in young life, be wholly committed to the Bridegroom, Christ, who loves you perfectly, forgives you daily, and calls you to godly living. **“Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men”** (Colossians 3:23). If it is your status in middle life and later life, be continually confident that as a single person, you are never truly alone. You are always in the care of Christ, your Lord, who will never leave you (Hebrews 13:5). He is preparing a place for you (John 14:2-3) that will beat any earthly threshold a lady has been carried across by a gallant fellow here on earth. The Bridegroom will not forget you! He will come to you (John 14:18)!

A Note about Chastity ...

Single women are called to chaste living, but they are not the only women called to chaste living. All humans are called to chastity! The Sixth Commandment is for everyone. So when we say that we aim to lead chaste and decent lives, we should understand this is true for men and women—married, single, divorced, widowed, re-married, and if I’m missing anything, add it to the list. Living chastely means that we support and defend the biblical definition of marriage between one man and one woman ‘til death do them part (Genesis 2:24), whether or not we are joined to another person in such a way.

It also means that we recognize that we are not our own. Our body is not our own. This is an important point to make in a world where we hear things like, “my body, my choice.” When that line is used in a pro-choice context, it’s false from the start because the abortion conversation involves another body (that of the unborn baby) and another body yet (that of the father of the baby). But even apart from the topic of abortion, to say “my body, my choice” is

just wrong all the way around. It makes gods of our own selves. It misses the truth that we are created by the Father, bought by the Son, and sanctified by the Spirit.

We are bought with a price to honor God with our body, regarding it as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). It's a gift to us from the one true God, and it will be raised to new life for all eternity. This should affect the way we dress, carry ourselves, and interact with others as we live life in the body.

A Note about Good Looks ...

This business about our body not being our own also means that we will be modest, not only in our self-presentation but also in our self-regard. We will see that what is good in us is good because of God's goodness in crafting us. There's no need to flaunt our face or physique as though we're hot stuff for making ourselves so good looking. We didn't! God did! We can give thanks to Him for making us, and we can serve Him in our bodies, with humility and grace.

An unhealthy attachment to physical beauty is not only vain (Proverbs 31:30) but also foolish and shortsighted. God might graciously satisfy us with long life (Psalm 91:16) in which to see our hair turn gray (Proverbs 16:31) and our perkiness de-perk. ("De-perk" is not in the Bible or the dictionary, but it does happen!) If we obsess over our looks in youth, we might be terribly disappointed when the natural effects of age come upon us. If, on the other hand, we see our youthful looks as the current gift which will, with time, give way to other good gifts of God, we can enjoy a less petty existence, and really, that will be more pretty on all of us.

Some Women Are Wives ...

I don't know everything there is to know about being a great wife (too bad for my husband!). But I have learned a few things, and I am definitely thankful for older women who "teach what is good" as all older women should (Titus 2:3). Now I have the responsibility of passing it on. Here's a list of reflection points when it comes to godly wifeness.

When you think about your husband, focus more on his strengths and dwell less on his weaknesses. Build him up in your own mind with a thought pattern that's positive and healthy. Let this shape the way you speak about him with others (Ephesians 4:29).

Respect your husband (Ephesians 5:33). Disrespecting him is one of the worst things you can do in the marriage. It will break him down and keep him from thriving in his leadership as the head of the household. Think well of him, speak well of him, and look to him to lead.

Help your husband and your household. This is what women were and are designed for! Husbands can't do it all. Men can't do it all! This is why God made a wife for Adam in particular and why He made women for creation in general. Develop the talents and gifts and abilities that are unique to you. Use them to serve and show godliness to your household (1 Timothy 5:4, 8).

Do not deprive one another. Turn to 1 Corinthians 7:2-5. Read it like you mean it. Don't put your marriage through a self-control experiment.

Think less of your own personal victories in the marriage and more of how you can contribute to wins FOR the marriage. View it (the marriage) as its own thing and put yourself on its side when you are in the midst of a disagreement or

unhappiness. What can you do to strengthen the marriage? What can you do to get another tally on the “let not man separate” side (Mark 10:9)?

Get comfortable using the words: “Please forgive me,” and “I forgive you.” These sentences need to be practiced over and over. Say them every day if it helps. (It will!) Ask Jesus to help you be forgiving as He is. He forgives us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us (Luke 11:4).

Be content in the state of marriage (1 Timothy 6:6). Being joined to another person for the rest of your life requires sacrifice and little deaths-to-self many times over. Be grateful, though, for the gift of your marriage. Be content with what you have rather than wishful for what you don’t.

Some Women Are Mothers ...

Some women have the joy and honor of carrying God’s life-giving work forward in their very bodies. The design of motherhood is stunning. God is in the continual business of granting life to humans made in His image. Women get to bring this miracle of His labor into the light of day at each and every labor that leads to the delivery of a child. Childbearing is the distinct arm of women’s work that endures not just for the length of an offspring’s earthly days but into the life of the world to come, by God’s grace.

Being a mother isn’t always easy, though, and often it’s not a lot of fun. **Curse Alert:** From the very start of motherhood, we have to expect that IN PAIN we will bring forth children (Genesis 3:16). Sorry, but that’s what to expect when you’re expecting. The pain will probably show up in the first days of pregnancy with headaches, fatigue, or nausea. The pain keeps swelling as the pregnancy progresses and will last long past labor and delivery. There will be stitches and a profound soreness to motherhood that we didn’t know

possible. Adoptive mothers know stitches and soreness as well as any other, by the way. So do women who lovingly and selflessly arrange for their children to be adopted by others. No mother on earth gets a get-out-of-pain free card, unfortunately.

But motherhood is truly amazing. It takes the pride we have in ourselves and our own abilities and sends it down the toilet with a great big flush. Potty-training, for example, comes to mind. But even if you're "awesome at that," you'll meet your match in some other phase of mothering, and *you will be better for it*. God uses the humiliation of mothering to increase in us the godly virtue of humility. When we're too cool to put on humility ourselves (Colossians 3:12), He will put it on for us. Our children are His little helpers in this! Motherhood gets Sharpie marks all over the white couch in the imaginations of our hearts (Luke 1:51, KJV), and it's actually for our good.

Throughout our days as mothers, our pride and dignity will be smashed. We will know our own pains, and we will also feel the pain of our children. In reference to the pain of her Son, Jesus, Mary was told that a sword would pierce her own soul, too (Luke 2:35). When a mother's child is hurt, a devoted mother wishes the pain would have been visited upon her instead of her child. The truth is, it's been visited upon both. She sees her child's skinned knee, and she bleeds, too. She sees her child's tears, and she splashes a few more of her own on the situation.

Jesus was pierced for His mother's transgressions and for ours! His death made it so that Eve's pain as a mother and Mary's pain as a mother and *our* pain as mothers (and any human's pain of any kind!) will not last forever (Genesis 3:15). Though we feel it in our own souls when our children (big or small) are hurting, the present trials will grieve us only for a little while (1 Peter 1:6).

The absolute best and highest honor of being a mother is bringing our children to Jesus. We have this lovely image of motherhood in Scripture (Matthew 19, Mark 10, Luke 18). Though Jesus' disciples poo-pooed the sentimental (or possibly sticky and stinky) procession, Jesus commends these intrepid parents. He takes their children and holds them and blesses them. He does this for our children, too. He does this for us. Bring your children to Jesus when they are tiny and keep bringing them to Jesus day after day after day, until you yourself are in Jesus' arms to rest forever.

Rejoice in the gift of motherhood. Every day, thank God for the heritage and reward that are your children (Psalm 127:3). Ask Him to give you aid to bear the pains that come with the blessed calling. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you (Philippians 4:13).

All Women Are Sisters and Friends ...

Let's end on another note of solidarity. Not all women are called to be single. Not all are called to be wives or mothers. But *all* are called to be daughters (as established) and also *sisters* and *friends*. Because we are friends of Christ, we are also called to be friends to one another, and we are sisters in the faith if not in any other sense of the word. The love of Christ our Lord is always at work within us. Through God's Word and with the gifts of His sacraments, the Spirit grows us and shapes us to be more and more like the godly creatures we've been appointed to live as. The fruits of the Spirit are present in the lives of women while we live as daughters of our Heavenly Father, sisters within the family of God, and friends to those around us.

Are you a married woman who skimmed over the single section? Are you a single woman who skipped the marriage stuff? Are you a childless woman who sailed past the motherhood section? Consider this, painful as it may be to

stand for a moment in another's shoes ... if you have a friend in Jesus, you are called to love one another as He has loved you (John 13:34). Ask God to help you be a sister and friend to those who occupy spaces that are the same as yours *and* those who don't.

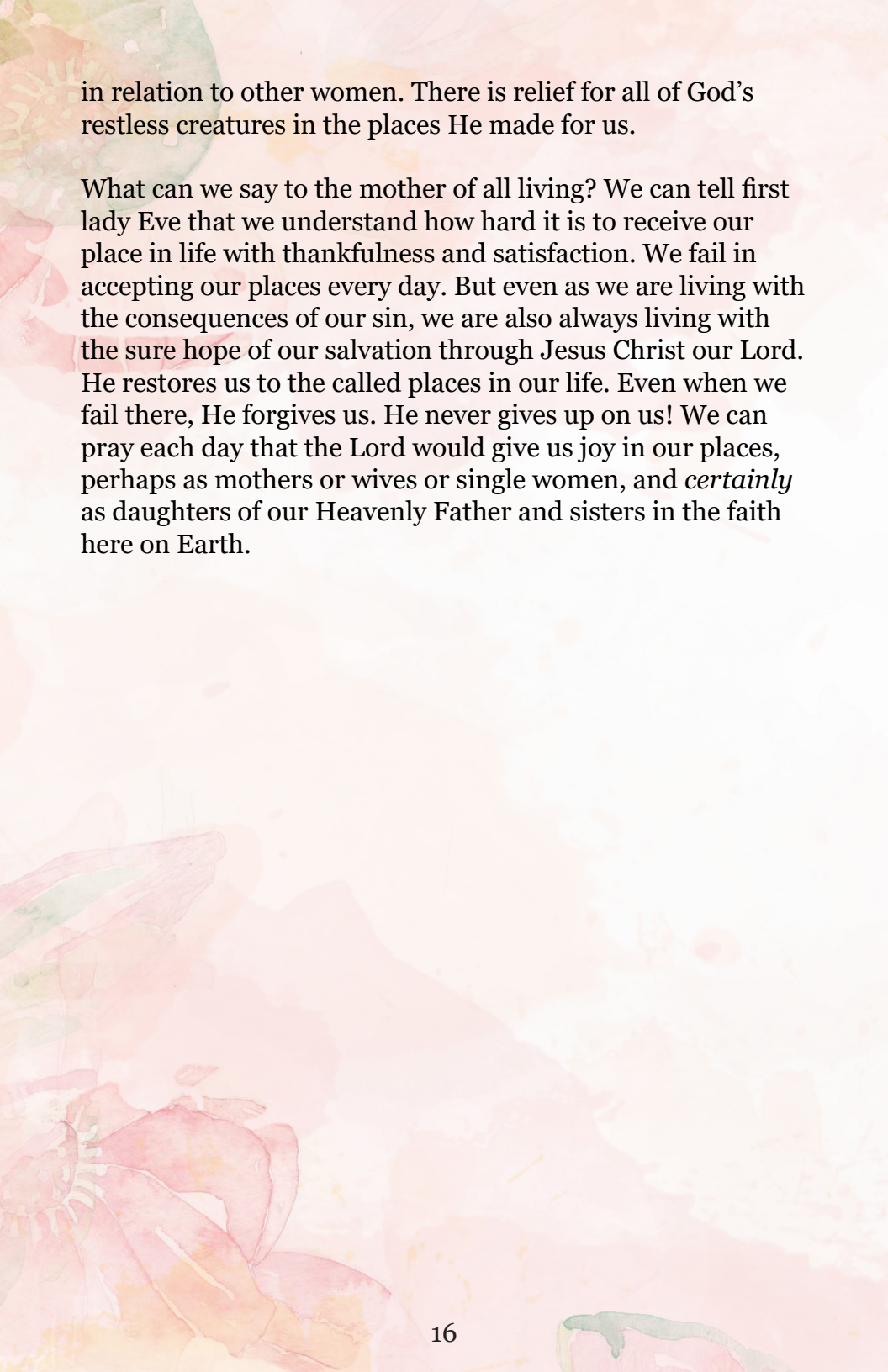
For in Christ Jesus, we are all sons (and daughters) of God, through faith (Galatians 3:26). This makes us sisters and friends, not only with the women who "get us" but also with those who don't. God, help us to love the women around us! They are not perfect, and we're not perfect, but our perfect Savior holds us all together as members of one family. Instead of joining in the kind of jealousy and rivalry that breeds competition and contempt among many women in the world, we can join in the kind of love and patience that breeds harmony and support for one another.

Women can make an amazing difference in the lives of other women! We can wake up each morning and ask Christ to help us be sisters and friends in all of the different directions and stages of life.

Girl power and self-confidence are the virtues touted by the world. As believers, we are focused on the *power of Christ* working in us to live with faithful confidence *in Him*. Christian life for Christian women centers there.

Conclusion ...

With the Lord's help, women can work to understand and embrace their identity as creatures of God, set amidst His creation. For those who advocate for opportunities for women, the good news of the Gospel is that there are many! We can thank God for our distinct creation, recognizing that the differences from men are good not only for home life but also for society and community. We can be content and secure with who we are in relation to men and also



in relation to other women. There is relief for all of God's restless creatures in the places He made for us.

What can we say to the mother of all living? We can tell first lady Eve that we understand how hard it is to receive our place in life with thankfulness and satisfaction. We fail in accepting our places every day. But even as we are living with the consequences of our sin, we are also always living with the sure hope of our salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. He restores us to the called places in our life. Even when we fail there, He forgives us. He never gives up on us! We can pray each day that the Lord would give us joy in our places, perhaps as mothers or wives or single women, and *certainly* as daughters of our Heavenly Father and sisters in the faith here on Earth.



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