
Women in God's Agenda God Created Everything with a Purpose

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Abstract

In a patriarchal and traditional African society and even in most modern societies, the lot of women as the weaker vessel, as people who are considered inferior to men, as chattels who are given up, sold into marriage (and a man can purchase as many as he pleases), in a society in which the myths, the folklore, the proverbs, the taboos, all conspire to dehumanize and oppress womanhood, it becomes compelling for women today, especially Christians, to look into the resources of their faith, the Holy Bible, to discover the essential reasons for which God created them to be women. No human being chose his/her gender. It was the sole responsibility of God to decide who He wants to be male or female. It is this critical concern that has informed the theme of this conference – **Women in God's Agenda**. This paper posits that drawing from the Bible, it is written that women are God's idea; they are created to be women, mentors, priests, leaders and kingdom helpers. This paper will examine their roles along these terms.

WOMEN IN GOD'S AGENDA

Webster Dictionary defines the word **agenda** as a list, plan or outline of things to be done, matters to be acted upon. Therefore in examining God's agenda for women, we shall be considering what plan, what outline of ideas God had in mind in creating women. God created everything with a purpose. His purposes were always planned ahead of time; everything was already "made" in the mind of the Maker before He created it.

God is our designer and Manufacturer. He knew exactly what He wanted when He thought of the female. He had her in mind before He made her. He first concluded what He wanted, then He created her and caused Her to function in exactly the way He had planned. He did the same thing with the male. He created him after He had finished deciding what the male was supposed to be.

God did not create the woman as an afterthought, but as an integral part of

His plan in creation. As such, He designed and built her in love and with particular care. Her uniqueness is a reflection of God's purpose and design for her.

WOMEN AS GOD'S IDEA

A world without a woman is unthinkable. A woman is unique because she is God's idea. Adam hadn't even imagined the woman, but God had her particularly in mind. In Genesis 2:18, God said, ***"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*** Adam was fumbling around in the bush thinking up animals' names. God said, "This is not good". This man needs help". So it was God who said that the man needed the woman. In Gen. 1:26 -28 it is written:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Gen. 1:26 -28 KJV).

God knew that man alone could not multiply and replenish the earth with human beings, so He created the woman to enhance the man, facilitate, bring about God's purpose for man in multiplying and replenishing the earth.

A woman is a product of God; this makes her God's property. Therefore, women, no matter what men might say about you, no matter what you might think about yourself, you are a good idea. God's mind thought of you, and God's Spirit brought you into being. You are the result of God's Idea, and that makes you very valuable to Him.

Though God called the woman "help or helper" Adam called her "woman". God called her helper because of the numerous helping functions He wants her to carry out for Adam and humanity. Adam in calling her "woman" limited the plan and vision of God for her to being only "the bone of his bone and the flesh of his flesh". Why did he not include "the spirit of my spirit and the soul of my soul"?, since the totality of the woman came out of the man. This shows that the woman's role is not limited only to meeting the emotional needs of the man. What about the spiritual and kingdom

assignments divinely apportioned to her by God in that word “helper”?

So apart from being the channel through which “men and women” come into the world, and become fruitful and multiply, that is apart from being mothers and mentors, they also act as priests, leaders and kingdom helpers.

WOMEN AS MOTHERS

Women conceive in their wombs, and at the appointed time, they give birth to their babies and become their mothers. So as mothers, women are the channels through which human beings, carrying God’s agenda for the world, are born. In other words, God borrows the wombs of women to give birth to His agenda and counsels on earth. So mothers carry not only physical pregnancies, but also the burdens in the heart of God for humanity.

For example, Hannah desperately needed a son, God needed a prophet, because His word had become scarce in the land. Because she yielded her womb to God, she got the son she desperately needed. With her son, God gave Israel a Judge, and one of the greatest leaders Israel ever had, and that was Samuel.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, yielded her womb to God and God used it to give birth to a Saviour through the power of the Holy Spirit, not through human coitus.

It was Sarah who gave birth to Isaac, and Rebecca, wife of Isaac who gave birth to Easua and Jacob. Jacob, through his wives, Leah and Rachael, and their concubines had 12 sons, who eventually became the twelve tribes of Israel.

WOMEN AS MENTORS

The duty of a mother is more or less that of a mentor. In Provb. 22:6, it is written: ***“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*** This is basically the role of a mentor. Mentor, teach and equip men and women. (Acts 18:24-28, 2 Timothy 1:5-6). A mentor could be a mother or an adviser that helps you to fulfill your calling in life. He/she is a trainer that facilitates the fulfillment of destinies. Mentors help you get to where you would never have gotten to on your own. When you don’t have a mentor, you are slowed down, could be frustrated and limited in the accomplishment of your destinies in life.

A good mentor is a trainer. He is a people developer and a team builder. He recognizes the talents hidden in the most unlikely people and transforms

them into responsible individuals. He harnesses and organizes human strength to maximize their productivity. He mobilizes, inspires, develops and empowers them for a common goal. He does not waste his time complaining about how bad the people under him are, but, spends his time considering and developing strategies on how to make great people out of ordinary people.

Human beings cannot train themselves to become their best in life. You do not have all that it takes to make yourself the best that you can be. Your destiny is tied to the loins of some other people, on whose shoulders you can climb and see farther. You must under study someone or be coached by someone else before you fulfill your destiny. No human being becomes their best in life without a mentor. Tutelage and apprenticeship are very important in every field of endeavour.

As a woman, train yourself to qualify to mentor, teach, train and equip men and women, young and old. **Priscilla and her husband** were used by God to mentor Apollos and update him on the current moves of God. They heard Apollos preaching God's word and discovered that he was very eloquent, persuasive and mighty but very limited in his knowledge of the current moves of God, because he knew only the baptism of John. At this time, John had already finished his ministry and handed over to Jesus. Jesus finished His work and handed over to the Holy Spirit. But Apollos was two dispensations behind, still preaching John the Baptist in the era of the Holy Spirit. They helped to bring him to a level where he became relevant in God's hands in his time and became one of the pillars of the earthly church.

Eunice and Lois were also used of God to disciple young Timothy as an apostolic son to Paul. They consciously transferred their faith and relationship with God to him. Paul testified of Timothy as his best son in the faith because of the input of these two women on his life and ministry.

Philip's wife was a great mentor, she took time to raise her four daughters as apostolic daughters, prophetesses and virgins. Acts 21:8-9. Make out time to mentor people that God brings to you. Make inputs into their lives. Every woman has the power to influence lives around her, consciously or unconsciously. It is important that our influences are positive, so that those tied to our loins could be ushered into their destinies through our influence. As it is said: "...when you raise a man you raise an individual, but when you raise a woman you raise a nation. This is because the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

WOMEN AS PRIESTS AND KEEN WORSHIPPERS

Women as redeemed in Christ function as Priests, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people (1Pet.2:9). You are the friends of God – for Christ says: “I call you no more servants ...but friends (Jn. 15:15).

You are in Christ – a new creature (II Cor, 5:17).

You are in Christ- chosen (Jn.15:16-17)

You are in Christ- the light of the world and salt of the earth (Matt. 5: 13)

You are now a temple of God (I Cor.3:10)

You are now co-worker with God (II Cor.6, 1Cor.3:9).

You are now an ambassador for Christ (II Cor. 5:20).

You are blessed with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3)

You are totally delivered from this evil world

You are made an heir of God (Gal.3:29)

You are delivered from condemnation (Rom.8:1, Jon. 5:24)

Nay, nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

By token of your position in Christ, you have been redeemed from all the negative patriarchal, cultural prejudices against women. For example, an Igbo proverb depicting the notion of female unreliability says: ***“Onye jiri nwanyi gbaa aju bu isi nda,”*** that is, ***“One who uses a woman to prepare a pad to cover his scalp in order to carry a heavy load is going to discover that he is carrying the load on bare scalp”***. This is a sarcastic way of writing off womanhood as a symbol of unreliability and infidelity.

Apart from taboos and proverbs, folklores are also employed to portray women as timid, docile, and weak. They also stress negative traits such as foolishness and treachery. In all these ways, messages hitherto conveyed in folklores served and still serve to portray women as people who cannot possibly handle an important public office.

The level of sexist prejudice and bias against women in traditional African society is very high. This is seen through their myths, proverbs, taboos and folklore. The upshot of all these is the emergence of formalized, standardized phrases, ideas and beliefs, about women. They are used and repeated without thought or reflection as when we say good morning. In this way, through stereotypes, women have been associated with many evils, which render them helpless, abused, misused, marginalized, deprived, stigmatized, suppressed, oppressed, cheated, exploited and even dehumanized.

Worship: A Bulwark that Supports Womanhood

One of the bulwarks that have sustained womanhood in African traditional society is their positive attitude towards their religion and their passion for worship which they have carried over to their Christian faith. 'Worship' is the active side of religion. In worship, women give full expression to their spirituality, that is, to their beliefs and practices which animate their lives and help them to reach out towards supernatural realities.

A variety of activities characterize worship. They include: prayer, praise (singing, dances), thanksgiving, confession, consecration, devotion, fasting, sacrifices, ritual feasting and cleansing, initiations, oaths, purification, procession, anointing, asceticism and the like. By any of these means, women cultivate and implement their spiritual outlook on life. Through worship, they create a sense of friendship and fellowship with the supreme God through Christ.

Women: Their Motivation to Worship

Extensive cultural influences are exerted on women through their cultural beliefs in their ancestors, their local deities, divinities and the uncontrollable forces of nature. As a result of this, all forms of misfortune, illness, barrenness, untimely deaths, accidents, epidemic, flood, etc., all these hazards, problems and uncertainties are believed to be signs and symbols of God's displeasure over the people's (women's) conduct or way of life. The upshot of these calamities is that the women pour out their soul, their anguish, fear, helplessness, insecurity, pain, aspirations and visions on God through Christ.

So what inspires or motivates women to worship in this connection is their sense of helplessness and insecurity in the face of danger, uncertainty and fear in terms of what the future holds in store – say for a married couple – will they have children, and male children. Will they marry good husbands? Will they give birth in safety and not die in the process? So, the fear of the unknown drives the women to worship and to enlist the help of God. Women therefore, appeal to God with fear and trembling requesting for help. In the process, some weep, cry, plead for pardon, some make promises on oath, some offer whatever sacrifices are required to gain the favour of God.

Women Natural Inclination to Worship

In a patriarchal and hierarchical traditional African society, the lot of women as the weaker vessel, as people who are considered inferior to men, as chattels who are given up, 'sold', into marriage (and a man can purchase as many as he pleases); in a society in which the myths, the folklore, the

proverbs, the taboos all conspire to dehumanize and oppress womanhood, naturally, the women would seek refuge in God or his priests. This is due to their knowledge of God as Creator, Protector, Preserver, Guardian, Caretaker, Upholder and Saviour.

WOMEN AS LEADERS - MICAH 6:4

I Sent You Three Leaders

Women should take this verse to heart and remember it for the rest of their lives. God said, ***“I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam”*** (NKJV).

God sent a woman to lead. This fact contradicts many of the attitudes that men have had for years about women in leadership. When God purposefully appointed Miriam to be a leader to her people, He endorsed the idea that it is valid for a woman to be in leadership. It is noteworthy that God did not send Miriam to lead because no men were available at the time. He sent her to lead alongside the men. He put her in a team of leaders. Since God acknowledged Miriam in the same list or category with Moses, we don't have to question whether God intended women to be leaders. ***“I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam.”***

The Influence-power of the Women

Both the man and the woman were created to lead, but their leadership functions are determined by their specific dominion assignments. God designed the woman not only for relationship with Him, but also to help fulfill His purposes in His great plan for humanity. Therefore, women are designed by God to execute an assignment that can only be fulfilled by women.

Position-Power and Influence-Power

God designed the male to be a leader by position and the female to be a leader by influence. The man has position-power, and the woman has influence-power. There is a difference between these two forms of leadership. Influence-power is a tremendous gift from God that was intended to be used by women for good – for the good of themselves, their families, their communities, their nations, the world, and the kingdom of God. Yet women have to realize its potential for evil as well as for good. Even redeemed women have to be careful to discipline their influence-power. Consider these examples of corrupted influence:

- Adam sacrificed his relationship with God when he chose Eve's

influence over what God had told him. Although he was fully responsible for his action, this influence contributed to his temptation to rebel against God, which affected the future of humanity.

- Abraham, who was called God's friend and was given the promise of a blessed son and heir by God, was influenced by his wife, Sarah, to take matters into his own hands and try to force the fulfillment of the promise through human means. When Sarah spoke, her voice became more influential to Abraham than God's, even though he had had a personal visitation from the Lord. Today, we are still seeing the consequences of this influence in the never-ending conflicts between the Arabs and Jews. The sons of Ishmael and sons of Jacob.
- Samson, whose unusual anointing enabled him to kill a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey and do other feats of strength, was influenced by Delilah to reveal the source of his strength. Then he was betrayed by her, resulting in his capture and his eventual death.

The leadership of a woman is so powerful that God says it needs to be regulated under the control of the Holy Spirit.

God Wants to Restore Women to their Full Leadership Role

We need to remember that, even though the woman's **influence-power** has the potential to harm, it was God who originally gave her this leadership gift when He created her. The influence is not the result of the Fall; the corruption of the influence is. It is God's desire that the woman be restored to her full leadership role and use this influence for His good purposes. God indicated that this was His plan even at the time of the Fall. All of the declarations that God gave Eve and Adam in Genesis 3 are God's response to the Fall. He said that, in the end, He was going to restore what He had established in the beginning. How? Through the redemption of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit comes back into a woman's life, God's plan for her reverts to what it was originally. This is why Peter said, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as ... *heirs with you of the gracious gift of life*" (1Pet.3:7).

Women are joint and equal heirs of salvation with men. This means that, when a woman receives salvation in Jesus Christ, she becomes equal in rulership again. At the time of the Fall, God cursed the devil and promised that He would deal with him decisively at a later time. The seed of the woman would come and crush his head and take away his power. God

accomplished His plan of restoration for the woman (and the man) through Christ.

Women leaders around the world

On January 1st 2011, a woman, Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, was sworn in as the new president of Brazil, the largest nation in South America. The same day in Switzerland, a very conservative nation swore in their first female President, Micheline Calmy-Ray. On March 19th and April 7th respectively, the female Prime Minister of Peru, Rosario Fernandez, and the President of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, were inaugurated. On the 28th of June, for the first time since the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was established in 1944, a woman was elected as the President, Christine Lagarde. The most powerful political leaders in the world is the Governor General of the Commonwealth Nations with about 15 nations under her. She is the Queen of England. In March 2011, the commonwealth nations had a conference with their theme as “the year of the woman”

Women rule very powerful nations today in the world such as Germany, Australia, and Switzerland. On July 4th, 2011, a 44-year-old female leader, Mrs. Yingluck Shinawatra was sworn in as the Prime Minister for the nation of Thailand. On the 10th of April, 2010, the first female Malawian president, Joyce Banda was sworn into the office. So far, we have about 22 women Heads of States all over the world.

WOMEN AS KINGDOM HELPERS - *They Mobilize Material, Financial and Human Resources to Facilitate Kingdom Work. Luke 8:1-3*

Right from the earthly ministry time of Jesus, women have facilitated Kingdom work in strategic ways. In Luke 8:3, we are told that, they were invaluable resource providers for Jesus' ministry. They provided intellectual and physical workforce; welfare and finances. In Luke 10:38 and John 12:1-3, Mary and Martha provided accommodation and feeding for Jesus and His team members. In Matthew 26:6-13, Mary brought and broke at the feet of Jesus, that expensive perfume, that prepared Him for the grave. In Mark 16:1, women of the apostolic era visited the tomb of Jesus to spice His body. In Acts 9:36, 39, Dorcas the apostolic woman provided for the needs of widows and the entire women team very comfortably. In Acts 16:14-15, Lydia, an apostolic business woman, counted it a great privilege to take care of men of God and to support the gospel.

There is need to facilitate the spiritual and economic empowerment of women to encourage them to mobilize and provide resources to execute kingdom projects.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Granted the fact that women are God's idea and that they are created for a purpose, to fulfill God's agenda as mothers, mentors, priests, leaders, kingdom helpers, etc. it follows that they, no longer have any basis for complain. They should celebrate their womanhood instead of wasting their time in complaining, murmuring, being angry and groaning that God made them women. Some are so unhappy, dissatisfied, miserable, discontented, insecure, lonely, frustrated, bitter, discouraged, confused, fearful and overwhelmed. Instead of understanding their personal challenges and dealing with them, they blame their fate on the fact that they are women. Some are living in their negative past experiences and allowing them to affect their present and decide their future. Many live in great pain and emotional bondages. Some are battling with very low self-esteem and inferiority complex. Some look beautiful and sophisticated on the outside but are hopelessly crushed and dead inside. They just hate being women and wished they were men.

To such I charge: "Arise and shine for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa. 60:1). You must not perish for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6).

Appendix

UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE AND POWER OF WOMEN

Principles

- Women and men were created equal and different.
- Everything was designed by God to fulfill its purpose.
- Females and males are different because of their design.
- Different does not mean inferior of superior.
- The purpose of women and men determine their individual nature and needs.
- The female and male were both given dominion over the earth, yet they each execute this purpose according to their unique purposes and designs.
- Adam and Eve rejected God's purposes by an act of their wills.
- Because of the Fall, man experienced broken fellowship with God, spiritual and physical death, and the loss of the perfectly balanced relationship between males and females.
- God did not curse the female or the male as a result of the Fall, He cursed the earth. Adam and Eve experienced the natural consequences of rejecting God and His purposes.
- As a result of the Fall, the woman has a desire to please her husband and the man has a desire to dominate her.
- Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, saved humanity from its fallen state and restored the relationship and partnership between males and females.

- A woman is God's idea.
- A woman's uniqueness is a reflection of God's purposes and design for her.
- The female was taken out of the male.
- A husband should love his wife as he loves himself.
- The head of the man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.
- Christ is our model of submission.
- A woman isn't less than her husband, but for God's purposes, it is her position to submit.
- The man is the woman's covering.
- In the Spiritual realm, there is no difference between men and women; but in the physical realm, there has to be the proper relationship of submission.
- The woman was made physically different from the man so that she can bear the offspring of the race.
- A woman cannot fulfill her purpose unless she is in relationship with God.

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