

## Jesus' Concept of Gender Equity and its Role in Nation-Building

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### Abstract

What is the place of women in the Church? Should women matter, matter in the Church? What does the Bible say about the role of women in the economic, religious and political spheres? These and other similar questions are the basis for this paper. This paper therefore examines gender equity in Jesus' concept. Using an exegetical approach, this study looks into the original text of the Bible to understand what Jesus taught to be the role of women in society. Findings reveal that before and during the earthly ministry of Jesus, Jewish culture, women were regarded as second-class citizens, and have been relegated to the background in various areas of life. However, Jesus changed this narrative and closed gender gaps through his life and teachings. This study therefore recommends that Nigerians (leaders, parents, all and sundry) should treat women rightly, which will create an enabling environment for growth. Also, there should be public enlightenment to facilitate women's empowerment as well as dismantle traditional and religious inhibitions on women; The government should intensify programs for women's education at all levels and ensure that there is an unbiased representation of both genders in government; Government and individuals should take account of the needs of men and women, give fair and just treatment of both sexes without discrimination; Church leaders should teach the undiluted word of God and ensure women are treated as humans and not properties.

**Keywords:** Gender Equity, Women, Jesus, Nation building.

## Introduction

Women make up about half of Nigeria's population, but their presence in positions of leadership and authority in various spheres of the nation has been an issue of concern. The roles that women play are numerous, yet, they are not given deserved credit in society. This is due to cultural, religious, traditional and patriarchal structures in the society. Unfortunately, even in the Church, there is a sharp division in the place of women. In essence, both men and women in Nigeria, contribute, significantly to the resistance to female representation in leadership positions.

In society, women are perceived mainly in terms of their sex, age or marital status. They are seen as part of society by their relationship with men, either as daughters, wives or mothers and are taught to be submissive (Ola-Aluko and Edewor 22). They face violence, exploitation, manipulation, and unequal treatment at home, work and in the community at large. They are seen as weak, subordinate and inferior and are denied opportunities to learn, earn and lead while men are seen as superior.

The problem, this research paper addresses is that, generally, there is a lack of understanding of gender equity. This has led to divorce, homosexuality, sexual abuse, promiscuity, social awkwardness, more emotional distress, and suicide. Today, some feminists in their quest for gender equality and female empowerment give little consideration to the real meaning of masculinity or femininity and there is confusion over gender roles. In the same vein, some Christians do not know what masculinity and femininity are, yet they admit that one's gender conditions every facet of one's life. This has made it difficult for parents to raise daughters to be women and sons to be men. (John & Wagne 24). All these happen because individuals and the government allow it to linger unnoticed. In a bid to stress the equality of men and women, we minimize the unique significance of our masculinity or femininity. This tends to be a great loss as many do not know what exactly it means to be a man or a woman. Hence, the need for this study.

The Bible has not left us in obliviousness of the meaning of masculinity and femininity nor has God concealed the meaning of our individuality from us. Rather, he has shown us the uniqueness of the man and the woman in complementing each other. Hence, a need to study the scripture to discover more.

This study intends to use an exegetical approach, by looking into the original text of the Old and New Testament by examining and analyzing some selected passages analyzed textually, theologically, and exegetically for a proper understanding of Jesus' concept of women in his life and teachings.



## The Old Testament Concept of Women

To fully understand the Biblical stand on gender equity, there is a need to study the scripture in its original version and also go back to the very beginning when God created man. This is because it forms a basis for the whole Biblical debate.

Genesis 1:26 says:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרַדּוּ בְדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל־  
הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

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 (KJV) In Genesis 1:26, male and female were created as royalty in God's world, bearing the divine glory equally and together have dominion over the earth which is not only spiritual standing before God but also dominion over the earth. This indicates man as the crown of creation. Verse twenty-seven affirms the dual sexuality of man - male and female and in verse twenty-eight, God pronounces his blessing to them (male and female without distinction).

Genesis 2:18 says

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֹא־טוֹב הֵיוֹת הָאָדָם לְבָדּוּ אַעֲשֶׂה־לּוֹ עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ:

And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. (KJV)

This passage Genesis 2 verses 18 to 25 is a “straightforward” Hebrew narrative from the J-source. However, it has become one of the most contentious biblical passages in feminist deconstruction of traditional male-biased interpretations (Rad 83). As a creation account, it is a fitting theological and psychological beginning for the Old Testament (Edinger 9)

Verse 18 of Genesis 2 describes woman being created to be the man's **עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ**, 'ēzer kēnegēdō, which literarily means, “a strength corresponding to him.” In the Hebrew Bible, the word **עֶזֶר** (ezer) is never used as a subordinate neither does it suggest “helper” as in “servant” but rather as “help, assistance, might, and strength.” The second word, **כְּנֶגְדּוֹ** kēnegēdō, literarily means “as in front of him.” *Nāgīd*, a noun related to *negēd* means, “the one declared (by Yahweh) to lead.” Therefore, *kēnegēdō* highlights her strength to be an equal partner with man, rescuing him from being alone. She is his counterpart: his companion and friend who complements him

in exercising dominion over the earth. She fulfils him so that together they can be fruitful and care for the earth (Mark 67)

The Bible has a long list of women in leadership. Some of them are: Prophetess Miriam who led Israel (Exodus 15:20–21), Deborah who was a prophetess and the highest leader in all Israel (4:4–5) also a wife and mother. Queen Esther along with Mordecai, Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:1–13; 2 Chr 9:1–12), the Queen of Chaldea (Dan 5:10–12), and many others.

This implies that women are not exempted from political or religious authority over men. Rather the Old Testament presents women in religious and political leadership as normal.

If men and women are equally in the image of God, then we are equally important to God and equally valuable to Him. We have equal worth before Him for all eternity, for this is how we were created. This truth should exclude all our feelings of pride or inferiority and should exclude any idea that one sex is “better” or “worse” than the other. In contrast to many non-Christian cultures and religions, no one should feel proud or superior because he is a man, and no one should feel disappointed or inferior because she is a woman.

It is important to note at this point that male-female equality does not mean sameness. They are spiritually equal but different. Therefore, there should be no unqualified equation of the two sexes. He deliberately ordains differences in many aspects of our lives. The distinction is not a biological accident, we should therefore appreciate our gender.

### **Paul’s Concept of Women**

Paul’s writings form the basis for some chauvinists to launch attacks on women (Adeola 16), however, a wholesome look at the writings of Paul, rather than condemning or pushing down the female gender, upholds the decency, equity, and equality of both sexes. This section, therefore, seeks to reiterate Paul’s stand on women. The original Greek of Galatians 3:28 reads: οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληγ, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ · πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἶστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

This means that “there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ” (KJV). This shows that Christianity does not support the subjugation of women. We should not think of ourselves as superior or inferior but rather as united because we are all “one” in Christ Jesus. This provides a Christian foundation for the promotion of human rights and equity, in contrast to “patriarchy, racism, and exploitation” (Vorster 8).



1 Corinthians 11:7 has this to say:

**ανηρ μεν γαρ ουκ οφειλει κατακαλυπτεσθαι την κεφαλην εικων και δοξα θεου  
υπαρχων γυνη δε δοξα ανδρος εστιν**

For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

In 1 Corinthians 11:7 Paul says, “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.” This does not mean that woman was created in the image of God, if not, it will be against Genesis 1:27. Rather, it means that in the relationship between man and woman, man, in particular, reflects something of the excellence of the God who created him, and woman in that relationship replicates something of the excellence of the man from whom she was created.

1 Corinthians 11:11-12

**πλην ουτε ανηρ χωρις γυναικος ουτε γυνη χωρις ανδρος εν κυριω**

Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

**ωσπερ γαρ η γυνη εκ του ανδρος ουτως και ο ανηρ δια της γυναικος τα δε παντα  
εκ του θεου**

For as the woman is of the man, even so, is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 portrays men and women as interdependent and that we could not exist without each other. Paul states this in the context of affirming that women, like men, may lead the key activities in public meetings of the church as long as they do so in ways that do not repudiate marriage and Christian morality (Payne 17).

In Rom 16:1–16, Paul identifies women as labouring alongside men in ministry. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul affirms that husband and wife mutually possess each other (v. 2). They have mutual conjugal rights (v. 3), mutual authority over the other’s body (v. 4), and mutual sexual obligations (v. 5). Both are told not to separate or divorce (vv. 10–13). Both consecrate the other and sanctify their children (v. 14). Both have freedom if deserted (v. 15). Both have a potentially saving influence on the other (v. 16). Both are free to marry (v. 28). Both may focus on Christ as single (vv. 32 and

34b) or on pleasing the other in marriage (vv. 33–34a and 34c). Paul even writes, “The husband does not have authority over his own body, but his wife does” (7:4).

1 Timothy 2:11-12, the controversial verse, says: Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. As explained in the third chapter of this dissertation, Paul is not prohibiting women from having authority over men. Rather, he prohibits women from an unauthorized assumption of authority over a man. This is because some women were deceived by false teachers to follow after Satan (2:14. 5:13–15) and due to the crisis of false teaching noticed in Ephesus Church at that time.

Paul’s doctrinal philosophies involve the equivalence of man and woman. He affirms men and women are equally “in God’s image,” “in Christ,” given dominion over the earth, and given the creation mandate and blessing. He encourages servant leadership, mutual submission in church and marriage, the oneness of the body of Christ, the priesthood of all believers, the gifts of the Spirit for all, liberty in Christ, inaugurated eschatology, the new creation, and “there is no male/female division” in Christ (Payne 70).

In Acts 2:17-18, both male and female received the Holy Spirit in fullness, In Acts 2:41 both men and women are baptized into the body of Christ and receive spiritual gifts for use in the life of the Church.

### 1 Timothy 2:11-12

Original Greek	Transliteration	Meaning	Usage
<b>Verse 11</b>			
Γυνή	Gyne	A woman	a woman, wife, my lady
ἐν	<u>en</u>	In	in, on, among
ἡσυχία	hesychia	<b>Stillness</b>	quietness, stillness, silence
Μαθανέτω	manthaneto	Let learn	I learn; with adj. or nouns
ἐν	en	In	in, on, among
πάση	Pase	All	all, the whole, every kind of.
ὑποταγή	<u>hypotage</u>	submissiveness	Subjection, obedience, submission
<b>Verse 12</b>			



διδάσκειν	<u>didaskein</u>	To teach	I teach, direct, admonish
δὲ	De	However, but, and, now,	a connective or adversative particle generally placed second in its clause; but, on the other hand, and
γυναικὶ	gynaiki	a woman	a woman, wife, my lady.
οὐκ	ouk	Not	no, not.
ἐπιτρέπω	epitrepo	I do permit	I turn to, commit, entrust; I allow, yield, permit
οὐδὲ	oude	Nor	neither, nor, not even, and not.
αὐθεντεῖν	authentein	to use authority over	I domineer, govern, have mastery over.
ἄνδρός	andros	a man	a male human being; a man, a husband
ἀλλ	all'	But	but, except, however.
εἶναι	einai	to be	I am, exist.
ἐν	En	In	in, on, among.
ἡσυχία	Hesychia	Quietness	quietness, stillness, silence

In the King James Version, it is translated, 11. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence

In the Revised Standard Version, it is translated 11. Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. 12. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent.

**Verse 11 Let the woman learn in ἡσυχία (silence).** The word ἡσυχία (*hēsychia*) is from *hēsychos* meaning “quiet, stillness”, implying calm; for the believer. This is God-produced calmness which includes an inner tranquility that supports appropriate action. (Strong’s Greek 2271)

This is similar to ἡσύχιος which means tranquil as seen in 1 Timothy 2:2 ἡρεμον καὶ ἡσύχιον βίον διάγωμεν meaning a tranquil and quiet life (NAS), a quiet and peaceable life in (KJV), a tranquil and quiet life we might lead (INT). It is also similar to 1 Peter 3:4 πραέως καὶ ἡσυχίου πνεύματος ὃ meaning of a gentle and quiet spirit (NAS), and quiet spirit (KJV), the gentle and quiet spirit which (INT)

This term does not mean “speechlessness”, which is more directly indicated by σιγή (*sigē*) which means silence or to command silence as seen in Acts 21:40 πολλῆς

δὲ **σιγῆς** γενομένης προσεφώνησεν which is translated “and when there was a great ‘hush’, he spoke” (NAS) a great “silence”, he spake (KJV) great moreover “silence” having taken place he spoke to (them) (INT). This is similar to Revelation 8:1 ἐβδόμην ἐγένετο **σιγή** ἐν τῷ ἔθρῳ which is translated seal, *there was silence* in heaven (NAS), seal, there was *silence* in heaven (KJV), seventh there was *silence* in (INT) (Thayer 10).

**In all ὑποταγῆ:** this means, subjection, submission, obedience. (Strong’s Greek 5292). This is similar to “...δοξάζοντες τὸν Θεὸν ἐπὶ τῇ ὑποταγῇ τῆς ὁμολογίας ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ” in 2 Corinthians 9:13 which is translated they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, (KJV) they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ (American Standard Bible)

### Verse 12

**διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω** (But I do not permit a woman to teach). Paul’s prohibition, **οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω** (I do not permit) applies to the ongoing circumstance when he spoke. (Strong’s Greek 2010) It has no specification of universality. He used a verb that suggests a presently ongoing ban over a universal ban, especially in this first-person present indicative grammatical form.

**οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν** (nor to use authority over). The key verb means, “to use authority over.” (Strong’s Greek 831) The NIV translates it as “to assume authority.” Everywhere this verb is used to mean “assume authority,” it refers to the unauthorized assumption of authority. This is different from the New Testament standard word for “exercise authority.” (Henry 50) Thus, Paul is not barring women from having authority over men but rather bans them from unauthorized assumption of authority.

For women to assume authority to teach men without recognized approval by the church was disrespectful to men. Also, some women were deceived by false teachers to follow Satan (2:14. 5:13–15). Paul had already prohibited false teachers from unauthorized teaching (1:3). Here, he similarly restricts women, the only group Paul identifies as deceived by them. (Payne 25). Paul in this verse (1 Timothy 2:12) is not barring women from assuming properly delegated or recognized authority. Priscilla explained the way of God Apollos accurately in Acts 18:26. So, Paul’s prohibition of women is major because some women were deceived by false teachers to follow after Satan (2:14. 5:13–15) and due to the ongoing crisis of false teaching in Ephesus.

Paul’s doctrinal philosophies involve the equality of man and woman. He asserts both males and females are in the image of God and given dominion over the earth to be fruitful and multiply. He encourages servant leadership, reciprocated submission in





church and marriage, inaugurated eschatology, the new creation, and “there is no male/female division” in Christ. (Payne 70).

### Women in the Life and Teachings of Jesus

Jesus’ teaching regarding women was much different from that of His contemporaries. His approach to women was “revolutionary” for His era. (Evans 45). This was demonstrated in several ways.

Exegesis of Mark 15:41

Original Greek	Transliteration	Translation
αἱ	hai	who
ὅτε	hote	when
ἦν	en	he was
ἐν	en	in
τῇ	te	-
Γαλιλαία	Galilaia	Galilee,
ἠκολούθουν	ekolouthoun	had been following
αὐτῷ	auto	him
καὶ	kai	and
Διηκόνουν	diekonoun	had been ministering
αὐτῷ	auto	to him,
καὶ	kai	and
ἄλλαι	allai	other
πολλαὶ	pollai	many
αἱ	hai	those
συναναβᾶσαι	synanabasai	having come up with
αὐτῷ	auto	him
εἰς	eis	to
Ἱεροσόλυμα	Hierosolyma	Jerusalem

Mark 15:41 αἱ ὅτε ἦν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ καὶ διηκόνουν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ αἱ συναναβᾶσαι αὐτῷ εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα

When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. (New American Standard Bible)

Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women who came up with him unto Jerusalem (King James Version)  
When He was in Galilee, they would follow Him and help Him. Many other women had come up with Him to Jerusalem (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

When He was in Galilee, ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ. The word ἠκολούθουν is the past participle (plural) of ἀκολουθέω which means to follow. ἠκολούθουν could therefore be translated as they had followed. ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ could also mean they had accompanied or attended him. (Strong's Greek 190) and **διηκόνουν αὐτῷ is from the word διακονέω which means to serve, minister.** The same word was used in Matthew 4:11 when the angels ministered to Jesus after temptation. **Διηκόνουν is the past tense of διακονέω. Διηκόνουν therefore means had been ministering.** This suggests that it is not a one-off thing. They had been consistent, not just in following him but also ministering to him (Strong's Greek 1247)

**καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ** and there were many other (women). The word used for women **γυναῖκῃ** is not used in the original Greek. However, it is translated as women because of the previous verse. The previous verse, Mark 15:40 says that Ἦσαν δὲ καὶ γυναῖκες ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι, ἐν αἷς καὶ Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου τοῦ μικροῦ καὶ Ἰωσήτου μητὴρ καὶ Σαλώμη, which is translated: There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;

It is therefore logical to say that **ἄλλαι πολλαὶ** means many other (women) **who συναναβᾶσαι αὐτῷ** to Jerusalem. **συναναβᾶσαι** is from the word **συναναβαίνω** which means “to go up with” (Strong Greek 4872). Many other women came up with him to Jerusalem. This means that Jesus stood for gender equity.

For Jesus, despite the prevailing concept of women as second-class citizens in his days, he refused to treat them as such. Although women were being discriminated against, Jesus was not a part of it. His approach to women is revolutionary, much different from that of his contemporaries. He made them disciples and treated them as humans and not as property. He interacted with women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, were with Jesus. In Luke 23:49 women followed him from Galilee. In Mark 15:41, women followed Him and ministered to Him.

Jesus' concept of women is based on their relationship with God. He mentioned in Matthew 19:4 that they are created in the image of God just as men are. Like men, they have self-awareness, personal freedom, a measure of self-determination, and



personal responsibility for their actions. He treated women not primarily as females but as human beings.” Jesus recognized women as fellow human beings. He did not perceive them primarily in terms of their sex, age or marital status; he seems to have considered them in terms of their relation (or lack of one) to God. This is evident in his answer to the question of the woman who had seven husbands while alive and who will be her husband in heaven.

In addition, Jesus allowed women to proclaim the gospel to men. He did not exclude them from church leadership. The first Christian missionary was a Samaritan woman (John 4:39; 28–42). The first person the resurrected Christ sought out and commissioned to announce the gospel of his resurrection and his coming ascension to God the Father was Mary Magdalene (John 20:14–18). Since “apostle” means “sent one,” it is appropriate to say Christ appointed her an apostle to the apostles.

Despite Jesus' tender dealings, he was not involved in an illicit affair with a woman, and neither did he sexually abuse any. In fact, his choice of only men for the original twelve apostles is to avoid scandal and for symbolic parallel. If Jesus had included women in gatherings in the shadow of darkness, especially in the wilderness or in places like the garden of Gethsemane, this would have raised moral suspicions not only about Jesus but also about these twelve, on whose integrity the church would depend.

Jesus spoke to the women He addressed in a thoughtful, caring manner. He addressed the woman with the bleeding disorder as “daughter” (Luke 8:48; Matthew 9:22; Mark 5:34) and referred to the bent woman as a “daughter of Abraham” (Luke 13:16). “Jesus called the Jewish women ‘daughters of Abraham’ (Luke 13:16), thereby according them a spiritual status equal to that of men.” (Bloesch 25)

He had women as close friends, discussed theology with them, and even trusted women with the news of his resurrection, he discussed theology with them and even trusted women with the news of his resurrection. He challenged women’s traditional service role when he told Martha that Mary had the right idea when she preferred to sit and talk with him and learn from him rather than do housework.

Jesus encouraged women to be leaders. In a culture that frowned upon the religious education of women, Jesus encouraged women to be his disciples. In Luke 10:38-42, Mary “sat at the Lord’s feet listening,” a posture and position of a disciple. Jesus affirmed her: “Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken away from her”. It is generally agreed that disciples in Jesus’ day were trained to carry on a rabbi’s teachings, typically becoming teachers themselves, and the rabbis’ disciples were always male. Jesus’ teaching of both men and women disciples implies that he wanted women as well as men to be religious teachers.

Jesus defied the patriarchal view of the world. He never subordinated or restricted women in roles, rather in all his words and deeds left us an example to treat women as equals to men. (Matt 12:49–50; 15:38; 25:31–46; Mark 3:34–35; Luke 8:21; 11:27–28). He respected women’s intelligence and spiritual capacity.

He refined the Mosaic Law and stated that, both the adulterer and the adulteress were to be executed (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22), Be that as it may, the story of the adulterous woman in John 7:53-8:11 revealed the male prejudice in Jesus’ days. The account states that she was “caught in the act of adultery” (John 8:4) and was brought to Jesus for the sole purpose of trapping Him into saying something that could be used against Him. If he acquits the woman, he will be accused of setting aside the Law of Moses, and if he condemns her, he would be accused of challenging the Roman authorities who alone had the right to impose capital punishment. These would-be guardians of the law revealed their own male prejudices. The man with whom she committed adultery was allowed to escape but the woman was to be disciplined or probably stoned to death. However, Jesus displayed impartiality and respect for gender equity by giving unbiased judgement. Though He did not condone the behaviour of the adulterous woman, He did not condemn her, but admonished her, “Go, and do not sin again.” (Daube 138).

He affirmed the courage of a woman with a menstrual disorder to break a taboo and come out in public in the hope of obtaining healing. He spoke to women in public and risked public disgrace. He had women as close friends, discussed theology with them, and even trusted women with the news of his resurrection. He challenged women’s traditional service role when he told Martha that Mary had the right idea when she preferred to sit and talk with him and learn from him rather than do housework.

He made women his disciples. In Luke 8:1-3 The twelve disciples, some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, were with Jesus. In Luke 23:49 women followed him from Galilee. In Matthew 12:46-50 he addressed the group of men and women as “my brother, and sister, and mother.” This suggests that He had female disciples. In Mark 15:41, women followed Him and ministered to Him.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus in all his words and deeds left us an example to treat women as equals with men, never subordinated or restricted in role (Matthew 12:49–50; Matthew 15:38; Matthew 25:31–46; Mark 3:34–35; Luke 8:21; Luke 11:27–28). His treatment of women as equals defied the judicial, social, and religious customs of his day. He respected women’s intelligence and spiritual capacity. All these show that Jesus defied the patriarchal view of the world.



Jesus related with both, women and men without discrimination. Males and females were responsive to his teaching and showed devotion by ministering to and serving the master. Jesus restored the original relationship between humanity as established by God at creation. In the gospels, He erased all lines of male superiority and female inferiority and placed all on the same level. In His teaching and ministering, He recognized everybody and disapproved of anything that discriminated against any group, especially women. He rejected the law of adultery which penalized women and not men (Jn 8:1–12) (Ayuba 102).

The paper recommends the following:

- Government and individuals take account of the needs of men and women, give fair and just treatment of both sexes without discrimination, and that emphasis should be placed on educating more women at all levels in Nigeria because of the deficit already noticed.
- Christians should understand that gender discrimination is inimical to the teaching of Christ, his person, mission and the Church. It goes against human rights of equal rights and opportunities for all and should therefore be discouraged.
- Church leaders should learn not to embrace the sin in the lives of both men and women just as Jesus did not. They both should be held responsible for their own sin but also give room for repentance. Jesus did not condone the sins of men, he rather confronted the sins and gave room to deal with the issues of sin, repentance, and forgiveness.
- Parents, teachers, individuals, and indeed all Nigerians should enlighten all on gender equity and dismantle traditional and religious inhibitions on women's goal of self-actualization. This could be through formal, informal education, or both.
- Church leaders should give women the opportunity to rise to the peak Church administration if found qualified and not limit them or relegate them to the background because of their gender.
- Finally, the Bible teaches both men and women to exercise authority humbly as the Spirit leads and as Christ commands. God wants us to live into the scriptures wholeheartedly and without reserve, not out of fear of crossing a man-made gender-role a boundary that is alien to the Bible's teaching. Church leaders should teach the Bible correctly in this regard.

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