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Jesus Christ: An Early Feminist
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Note: All bible passages are referenced from the Contemporary English Version

The bible still and has been a major influence in our society. In the United States, Christianity is the largest organized religion with over 200 million members that strongly believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior (Religious Adherents). However, many Christian activists continue to subordinate women through bible passages that only reinforces patriarchy. The strange thing is: Jesus Christ had never once promoted inequality between genders. If Jesus Christ is the focal point of Christianity, why are his teachings and humanly actions ignored by believers? Christians need to concentrate on Jesus Christ and realize that he has never once promoted patriarchy.

Today, the typical bible would have sixty-six books that includes the Old Testament—teachings before the birth of Jesus Christ—and New Testament—teachings during and after the birth of Jesus Christ. Through these books were Christian activists able to search for bible passages that have been promoting women’s subordination. Passages that could run as early as the creation story in Genesis:

“Then the Lord said to the women [Eve], ‘You will suffer terribly when you give birth. But you will still desire your husband [Adam], and he will rule over you.’”

-Genesis 3:16

Passages can also run as late as found in Paul’s letters:

“Women who claim to love God should do helpful things for others, and they should learn by being quiet and paying attention. They should be silent and not be allowed to teach or to tell men what to do. After all, Adam was created before Eve, and the man Adam wasn't the one who was fooled. It was the woman Eve who was completely fooled and sinned.”

-1 Timothy 2:10-14

Bible passages can go on and on filling page after page. However, out of all the bible passages that reinforces patriarchy, none were found in four very important books known as the

Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Gospels were considered important because it foretells the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Oddly enough, Christian activists ignore the following facts about Jesus Christ: he showed great respect to women, he included women in his ministry, and he expressed equality between genders.

Starting off, the days of Jesus Christ was very difficult for women to receive any respect in society. This difficulty would've been far greater if women had no husband, implying the lack of power and money. Widows, for example, were especially the ones having a great difficulty. According to Luke 21:1-4, Jesus was teaching when he noticed how the rich people tossed their gifts into an offering box while a poor widow had only put in two pennies. Since money has always been an influence in society, religious leaders—whom the offering box would go to—would be much more influenced by the rich than the poor widow. However, Jesus said:

“I tell you that this poor woman has put in more than all the others. Everyone else gave what they didn't need. But she is very poor and gave everything she had.”

-Luke 21:3-4

Not only could have Jesus mention poor as in money but could have also meant poor in spirit in the life that she's been a widow. Another example of Jesus interaction and respect for a widow was found in Luke 7:11-15. Jesus went with his disciples and a large crowd to the town of Nain. While there, Jesus saw a body of a widow's only son being carried on a stretcher. At instant, Jesus felt very sorry for the widow, told her to not cry, and healed her son. In this scene, Jesus not only had the compassion for the mother's love and sorrow but realized that if her son have died, she would've been worse off if she was all by herself.

Even though widows have lost their husband with financial resources running at minimum, women who are foreign to Galilee, the place where Jesus lived, were exponentially despised. The root of the hate by the Galileans wasn't because of race but whether or not the

person was a Jew. Jesus, on the other hand, did not allow this prejudice get in the way of how he believes women should be treated. In Matthew 15:22-28, Jesus was begged by a Canaanite woman to have her daughter freed of demons. At first, Jesus didn't say anything and his disciples were asking him to send her away. Nonetheless, Jesus chose to speak to the woman and stated because of her faith, her daughter was healed. This was a powerful action because it was a transgression if a man was to ever talk to a woman other than his wife (The Status of Women). This action was followed again in John 4:3-41 when Jesus had to go through Samaria to get back to Galilee. Since Jesus was tired from traveling, he sat next to a well while his disciples went out to get some food. A Samaritan woman came to the well and Jesus began to talk to her and ask for a drink of water. Being shocked that a Jew was talking to her, she only responded, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink of water when Jews and Samaritans won't have anything to do with each other? (John 4:9)" Although the scene later had the Samaritan woman leaving her old sinful ways and was convinced that Jesus was the prophet, nothing could match to his willingness to interact with her. These two passages were exceptionally important in that Jesus, a man, who went against the norm of the society by talking to two foreign women with dignity and respect.

Although the passages show that women were respected by Jesus, patriarchs argue that throughout Jesus' ministry, he has never once had a female disciple. There's no use of arguing because it is true that all twelve of Jesus' disciples were men. However, patriarchs tend to ignore that alongside Jesus' disciples, there were many close followers throughout his ministry. In the following passage, women were clearly included as his closest followers:

"...His twelve apostles were with him, and so were some women who had been healed of evil spirits and all sorts of diseases. One of the women was Mary Magdalene, who once had seven demons in her. Joanna, Susanna, and many others had also used what they owned to help Jesus and his disciples. ..."

All the more, women were even at his side even when all his disciples but one fled for their lives during Jesus' death and crucifixion. All four of the Gospels supported this fact in Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41, Luke 23:49, and John 19:25-27. Taking a verse from the Gospel of Mark, women were at his crucifixion that had "come with Jesus to Jerusalem. But even before this they have been his followers and had helped him while he was in Galilee. (Mark 15:40)"

However, the most astonishing thing Jesus did for the women were instructing them to do work for his ministry after his death and crucifixion. Out of all the people that Jesus could've chosen, women—Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of James—were informed by an angel that Jesus has resurrected and was instructed to tell his disciples to meet at Galilee (Matthew 28:1-7, Mark 16:1-6, Luke 24:1-11). Nonetheless, Jesus chose to first appear to a woman, Mary Magdalene, by telling that he has risen and instructed her to tell his disciples of what she saw (Matthew 28:9-10, Mark 16:9-10, John 20:14-18). These passages gave definite proof that Jesus desired women to have a role in his ministry.

Jesus knew that the inequality between genders was absolutely massive. Besides breaking the norms of society by talking to woman, Jesus promoted equality between genders even when it could have went against many of the religious laws. One of the religious laws was concerning about divorce. Divorce has always been male-favored and religious law states that in such a situation, men were only allowed to write out divorce papers and send his wife away (Mark 10:4). Jesus prominently said:

"A man who divorces his wife and marries someone else is unfaithful to his wife. A woman who divorces her husband and marries again is also unfaithful."

-Mark 10:11-12

Jesus did not care who divorce who, all that really mattered to him was that divorce was absolutely wrong and unfaithful between both genders.

Jesus was also challenged by another religious law that stated that if a woman was to be caught in adultery, she must be stoned to death. One of the most famous passages told in the bible was when an adulterous woman was brought in front of Jesus by religious leaders. They challenged Jesus:

“Teacher, this woman was caught sleeping with a man who isn’t her husband. The Law of Moses teaches that a woman like this should be stoned to death! What do you say?”

-John 8:5

In this situation, Jesus was trapped in a double-edge sword. If Jesus agreed with the stoning, he would be going along with the religious law but be turned over to the Romans for going against the Roman laws. If Jesus disagreed with the stoning, he would have the women saved but the religious leaders could claim that he is not a prophet and a complete blasphemer. Jesus began to write on the ground and challenged them, *“If any of you have never sinned, then go ahead and throw the first stone at her! (John 8:7)”* One by one, the religious leaders left the scene leaving Jesus alone with the woman. Jesus wanted the religious leaders to realize that it did not matter who the person was because they are no different from the religious leaders or any other who have sinned all their lives.

Pastors, priests, and other religious leaders continue to bombard us with the message that we should become more like Jesus Christ. We must be more loving, compassionate, forgiving, embracing justice, and so on. If this is true, the way society currently treats women have not paralleled to the way Jesus have treated women—dignity, love, and respect. Christians must

come to grips and realize that if Jesus is their Lord and Savior, they must unconditionally follow only his footsteps and ignore what other people have said about the subordination of women.

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