

GOD'S YES TO WOMEN

Discussion Guide

Why the Bible's Vision of Partnership Is Good News for Us All

*In the Lord, woman is not independent of man,
nor is man independent of woman.*

1 Corinthians 11:11



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

These questions are designed for reading alongside God's Yes to Women chapter by chapter. They aim to do four things:

- Help you notice and name your emotional reactions, not as noise to be suppressed, but as insight about where you have come from and what you care about.
- Invite reflection on the backpack of assumptions you carry to Scripture, formed by family, church, culture, the groups you're part of, and experience.
- Help you see things in the Bible you may have previously glossed over.
- Lead you to deeper love of Jesus and deeper desire to see others grow in his service.

Groups will include people with different starting points with different views and experiences. The goal is not to win an argument but to listen, and to notice, and to be changed by what you find, in Scripture and from each other. Ultimately, we want everyone to grow in maturity in Christ. That's what these conversations should aim towards.

Before you begin each chapter, open with prayer asking God to give you eyes to see and ears to hear. At the end of each discussion, you might close by naming one thing that surprised you, one thing that moved you, and one thing you want to carry into the week.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Even Better News

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** When did you first become aware that Christians disagree about women's roles in the church? What emotions do you remember? Confusion, relief, frustration, something else?
- 2.** Laura describes a younger self who felt like some teachings on men and women in ministry seemed to clash with everything else she knew about God and the gospel. Have you ever experienced that kind of jarring or noticed it in others?
- 3.** Read [1 Corinthians 11:11](#): 'In the Lord, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.' Before reading this book, had you noticed that verse? What does it change, if anything, about how you picture the relationship between men and women in Christ?
- 4.** Who are the women who have shaped your faith: mothers, teachers, mentors, preachers? Take a moment to name them.

CHAPTER 2

Reading the Bible as God's Over-Arching Story

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Amy compares reading the Bible as a 'dataset' versus a 'building to inhabit.' Which of those metaphors better describes how you've typically approached Scripture? Or would you prefer another metaphor?
- 2.** Amy argues that male dominance over women is presented in Genesis 3 as a consequence of sin, not something God designed before sin entered the world. Had you thought of it that way before? What is your immediate reaction to that reading?
- 3.** Look at the resurrection scene in [John 20](#). Mary Magdalene is the first person to whom Jesus speaks after rising from the dead, and she is sent to announce the resurrection to the male disciples. What difference do you think it makes that this proclamation rested first in the hands of a woman?
- 4.** Amy names what she calls the 'profound costs' of male-only interpretations: they deny the work of the Spirit, deprive the body of gifts, and burden women with constant uncertainty about what they are 'allowed' to offer. Have you witnessed any of those costs either in your own life, or in someone you know?
- 5.** If the Bible's overarching story includes reconciliation between men and women in Christ, what could it look like for your local church to embody that story?

CHAPTER 3

Partnership from Page One

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Paul points out that in Genesis 1, men and women are given the same commission: to be fruitful, multiply, and rule together. Before reading this chapter, had you thought of that shared commission as the foundation for everything that follows? What difference does it make to start there?
- 2.** Paul describes the woman as 'matching' or 'corresponding' to the man. That is, there is order in the relationship between men and women, and it is to do with complementarity, rather than hierarchy. What difference does it make to think of creation order in this way?
- 3.** Paul argues that [Genesis 3:16](#) ('your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you') describes a broken relationship, not God's design. How does it change things to read it alongside the other relational consequences in that passage: the serpent's enmity, the pain of childbirth, the cursed ground?
- 4.** If partnership and mutual image-bearing are 'page one' of God's story, what would it mean to let them be the first page of your church's story too?

CHAPTER 4

Disney Princesses, Superheroes, Influencers, and Women of the Old Testament

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Which woman from the Old Testament has most shaped your imagination of what a woman of faith looks like? Why her?
- 2.** Read [Judges 4:1-10](#). Notice that Deborah is prophet, military commander and described as judging Israel. How do the people around her relate to her in this role?
- 3.** Firth introduces the 'texts of terror', that is, stories of women who are raped, killed, or marginalised. She points out that God's decision to include these stories, without flinching, is a form of honouring and remembering the women in them. What does that say about the God who inspired these stories to be kept?
- 4.** Huldah the prophet is consulted by the high priest and the king's officials at a moment of national crisis, instead of the male prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah, who were also active at the time. What might it mean that God chose to speak through her at that particular moment?
- 5.** Jill says we sometimes domesticate Old Testament women, turning them into Disney princesses, superheroes, or influencers rather than letting them be complex, flawed, faithful human beings. Which framing have you noticed in your own experience of church teaching about women? Which women in these texts most surprise or challenge you?

CHAPTER 5

What Have the Romans Ever Done for Us?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Michael describes the Roman world as one where a father had legal power of life and death over his household, girls married as young as twelve, and women's testimony was dismissed in court. How does hearing that background influence the way you read the New Testament?
2. Michael argues that the early church's inclusion of women in leadership was 'countercultural', not an accommodation to culture, but a challenge to it. Have you previously heard the argument that the church needs to restrict women's ministry in order to be countercultural? How does Michael's historical account speak to that argument?
3. Read [Romans 16:1-16](#). Ten of the 29 people listed here by Paul are women, and seven of the women are listed with a mention of their ministry: Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Junia, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis. What else do you notice about the women in this passage and their relationships with men?
4. Michael notes that early Christian teaching on male fidelity and monogamy was also radical because it placed obligations on husbands that Roman culture didn't recognise. What does it say about Jesus that his movement challenged both male dominance and male sexual entitlement?

CHAPTER 6

"Blessed Are Those Who Hear the Word of God and Obey It!"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Hannah observes that 'the way that Jesus treats, teaches, talks about, and instructs women shows us the way that God relates to and thinks about women.' How does seeing Jesus's behaviour toward women as a revelation of God's own attitude influence how you think about this issue?
- 2.** Read [Luke 10:38-42](#) (Mary at Jesus's feet). In first-century Jewish culture, 'sitting at the feet' of a rabbi was a technical term for being his disciple, a role closed off to women. Jesus not only allows it but defends Mary when she is challenged. Had you understood this scene as a teaching about women's discipleship, or mainly as a story about busyness? What shifts when you see it as a statement about who belongs in the school of Jesus?
- 3.** Mary's Magnificat ([Luke 1:46-55](#)) is, Hannah argues, the first authoritative theological interpretation of what the Incarnation means. It becomes foundational to Luke's Gospel. When you hear these verses, do you tend to think of them as teaching, or as a beautiful song? What changes if we think of it as both?
- 4.** The resurrection accounts name women as the first witnesses to the empty tomb and the risen Christ, a detail that would have been embarrassing in a culture where women's testimony was legally inadmissible. Why do you think Jesus chose to appear first to Mary Magdalene? What does that choice say about him?

CHAPTER 7

Interdependence in the Spirit

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Read [1 Corinthians 12:4-7](#): 'There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them... to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.' There is no reference to gender in this passage. Had you noticed that absence before?
- 2.** Amy and Laura argue that in 1 Corinthians 11, the concern is about honouring relationships, not restricting ministry. How does that framing sit with you?
- 3.** Think about the women you know whose Spirit-given gifts are underused. What does that cost, for them personally, and for the church they serve? What would Paul's vision of a 'body' where no part says to another 'I don't need you' look like in practice?
- 4.** Amy and Laura's central claim is that men and women are called to interdependence, genuinely needing each other's gifts, not operating in parallel tracks. Where have you experienced that kind of interdependence between men and women in your church? What made it possible, and what are the obstacles to it?

CHAPTER 8

How the New Testament Turns Marriage on Its Head

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Read [1 Corinthians 7:4](#): 'The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.' Goode calls this 'the most radical statement about authority in marriage in the ancient world.' Had you noticed this verse before?
- 2.** Scott argues that when Paul tells husbands to love their wives 'as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her' ([Ephesians 5:25](#)), he is calling the more powerful person to serve the less powerful which, in Roman society, was genuinely shocking. How does reading this in its historical context change how you hear it today?
- 3.** Scott suggests that the vision of Christian marriage in the New Testament is one of shared authority, a couple living as a team. How does that resonate with or compare with the models of marriage you saw growing up, or the teaching you received?
- 4.** Whatever your own household looks like, how do you see the call to 'submit to one another out of reverence for Christ' ([Ephesians 5:21](#)) playing out in your closest relationships, whether in marriage, friendship, or community?

CHAPTER 9

Leadership, Teaching, and Women in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Mike opens by telling us he used to hold the male-only view of church leadership, and changed his mind, not from cultural pressure but from deeper engagement with the Bible and its world. What is your reaction to hearing that a biblical scholar changed his position? Does it make you more curious, more sceptical, or something else?
- 2.** Read [1 Timothy 2:15](#): 'But women will be saved through childbearing.' This is one of the most puzzling sentences in the New Testament. Mike argues it addresses women in Ephesus who feared abandoning Artemis, the protector of women in childbirth. How does that context impact how we read this verse?
- 3.** If 1 Timothy 2 is addressing a specific local crisis, how might it be applied for us? Mike suggests it teaches us something about the importance of sound doctrine, the danger of false teaching, and the need for ordered community life. How could this be applied for our churches in our contexts?
- 4.** Was there a particular passage that stood out to you from this chapter? What are your next steps to consider this further?

CHAPTER 10

Rank or Reciprocity? Hierarchy or Gift?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Jacqui begins with Arius, a fourth-century priest whose ideas were condemned as heresy. She then shows that some present day arguments for male hierarchy in the church rest on similar logic: the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father. Did you know that this argument existed? What is your reaction to learning that the church made a decision on a related question in AD 325?
- 2.** Read [John 17:20-23](#), Jesus's prayer for his followers: 'that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.' Then read [John 5:19-23](#) and [John 16:14-15](#), where the Father and Son are shown giving authority and glory to each other. How do these passages describe the relationships within the Trinity?
- 3.** Jacqui says that attempts to map human hierarchies onto God risk 'distorting our understanding of God's character, ways of working, and redemptive purposes.' Have you ever heard God described in ways that seemed to reflect cultural assumptions about authority?

CHAPTER 11

Unpacking the Backpack

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Laura's 'backpack' metaphor suggests that none of us reads the Bible from scratch. What is in your backpack? Spend a moment naming the people, churches, traditions, groups, and experiences that shape how you read Scripture on this topic.
- 2.** What should we do when our 'plain reading' of Scripture is different from another sincere believer's 'plain reading'?
- 3.** The history she recounts involves real hurt, women whose service was frustrated, communities divided, relationships broken. How do you feel reading it? Is there anyone in your own church community who might be carrying that kind of hurt?
- 4.** Laura ends by saying that understanding history doesn't mean being enslaved to it, it means being freed to see it clearly, and to ask what faithfulness looks like now. What would it look like for your community to 'unpack its backpack' on this question, not to abandon convictions, but to hold them with greater awareness and generosity?

CHAPTER 12

A Bigger Picture

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Andrew describes noticing patterns over twelve years of teaching: that women in his theological circles were habitually self-doubting, self-censoring, and uncertain whether their insights were 'allowed.' He found this distressing. Have you observed similar patterns? Have you experienced it yourself?
- 2.** He says he came to consider that treating 1 Timothy 2:11-12 as a 'divine command deontology' (an absolute rule that overrides all other evidence) was inconsistent with the approach to Scripture his own tradition had taught him. Is that observation familiar to you? What happens when one text becomes a 'control text' that overrides the weight of everything else?
- 3.** Read [Proverbs 8:1-4](#) and [9:1-6](#). Wisdom, described as a woman, speaks publicly in the streets, at the city gates, to rulers and judges, calling everyone to learn from her. Read [Proverbs 31:26](#): 'She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.' What does it tell us that the Bible's most sustained portrait of wisdom is female, and that her instruction is explicitly for men as well as women?
- 4.** Andrew says he now tries to actively listen to, encourage, and support women whose contributions are hampered by self-doubt. Who are the women in your community who need that kind of encouragement? What concrete step could you take to offer it?

CHAPTER 13

Chinese Bible Woman Meets Australian Christianity

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** The Chinese church has a tradition of 'Bible Women'. These were educated, courageous women who built the church in China, preaching to men and women alike. That tradition co-exists in Chinese-Australian churches with Confucian norms that expect women to serve quietly. Have you experienced similar tensions in your life or ministry? What did you do?
- 2.** Grace introduces the concept of 'liminality'. That is, the creative, uncomfortable, sometimes lonely space of being 'in-between.' She argues that God often works through people in the margins. Have you ever experienced being 'in-between' in a faith community and what did you learn from this experience?
- 3.** Grace ends with a vision of solidarity across generations and cultures: older and younger women finding each other, as Mary found Elizabeth. Who in your church could you seek out, across a generational or cultural difference, to listen to, learn from, and encourage?

CHAPTER 14

God Chooses the Least Expected

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Vanessa describes standing alone in a church at eighteen after being laughed at for wanting to do 'what the rector does', and an older minister coming quietly to stand alongside her. Have you ever had someone come alongside you at a moment of exclusion or disappointment? What did that presence mean to you?
- 2.** Read [1 Corinthians 1:27](#): 'But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.' Vanessa names this as the verse that kept her going when she nearly dropped out. How have you seen God working through people whom the world, or the church, had set aside?
- 3.** Vanessa says she is now focused on encouraging women to step up and use their God-given gifts of leadership. Who are the people in your community who cannot yet see what they might become? What would it mean for you to be someone who helps them see it?

CHAPTER 15

Backward in Heels

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Megan describes the experience of women in her Facebook call-out: an immediate outpouring of grief and lament from women who had been doubted, harassed, underpaid, and excluded. Were you surprised by the volume and intensity of that response?
- 2.** Megan says she spent years assuming that humility meant accepting unfair treatment. Have you ever made that assumption? What helped you see the difference? What still makes it hard?
- 3.** Megan describes her determination to advocate for and support other women who are seeking to serve the church. Read [Galatians 6:2](#). What might it mean for you to be part of carrying each others' burdens?

CHAPTER 16

Hope on a Tightrope

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Leisa addresses readers who feel 'caught'. They are loyal to a community they love, and grieved by what it does or doesn't allow. Does that describe you, or someone close to you? What does that particular tension feel like to carry?
- 2.** Leisa explains 'in-group' and 'out-group' thinking. That is, we categorise people as friends or enemies before we've really listened to them. What would it take to slow down and be genuinely curious about someone whose view differs from yours?
- 3.** Read [Romans 8:22-25](#). Paul uses the image of birth pains (a specifically female experience) to describe the whole creation's groaning and the posture of hope. How does this passage shape the way you hold your current frustrations about the church (if this is your current experience)? What would it mean to wait with this kind of hope rather than with bitterness or despair?
- 4.** Leisa draws on Gregory of Nyssa's vision of the new creation, where 'the contradictions and conflicts between men and women are overcome, because the whole creation is taken up into God.' How does your eschatology (our hope of what God will one day fully accomplish) shape how you hold your current frustrations or convictions?

CHAPTER 17

The Pastor's Husband as Helper

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** David admits to feeling a sense of being left behind at his wife's ordination. He reflects on this without defensiveness. When have you experienced mixed emotions about someone else's ministry; joy for them alongside something harder for you? What did you do with those feelings?
- 2.** Look up occurrences of the Hebrew word ezer (helper) in the Old Testament ([Psalm 121:2](#), [Psalm 146:5](#), [Deuteronomy 33:29](#)). What changes when we understand 'helper' as a word used primarily for God, rather than for a subordinate?
- 3.** How does the image of Christ's self-giving change how you think about service and support in any relationship, be it marriage, friendship, church team?

CHAPTER 18

Frequently Asked Questions

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Erica explains that complementarians and egalitarians are 'not coming to the same chapter and choosing different options' but have already made many different choices earlier in their theological journey, which means they read the same verses through different lenses. Does that framing help you understand why this conversation can be so difficult?
- 2.** Erica argues that both egalitarians and complementarians can be shaped by culture rather than just Scripture. How do you test whether your own position is driven by Scripture, or by cultural assumptions that feel biblical because they're familiar?
- 3.** What is next for you? Is there a conversation you need to have; a person you need to listen to; a passage you want to study again; someone you need to encourage; or a step you could take in your church community?

CHAPTER 19

Epilogue

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Anna names the 'double contending' -- the extra layer of energy women in ministry must spend justifying their presence. If you are a woman in ministry, does it resonate? If not, what do you feel your responsibility is in lightening that load for others?
- 2.** Read [2 Corinthians 5:16-17](#). Paul is saying that Christ's death and resurrection change how we see every person. What would it mean to see each person's gifts as God has made them instead of from 'a worldly point of view'? What are some ways you can join in the ministry of reconciliation to God through Christ alongside your brothers and sisters in your local church?
- 3.** Anna invites readers to reflect on their own gifts, interests, and the needs they see around them. Whether you are a woman considering ministry yourself, or you're supporting someone who is, or a church member thinking about your community's culture, what gifts do you see in yourself or others that are currently underused? What would it take to release them so that women and men can serve together in your church?
- 4.** Anna inspires us to see men and women as 'co-labourers', working together without suspicion, with eyes fixed on the same Jesus. Where in your experience have you glimpsed that kind of co-labouring? What made it possible? What would it take to make it more normal?