

## **Women Who Broke The Mold**

Air Dates: May 9-13, 2022

### **Day One**

With female roles changing rapidly in our society, we've seen a lot of molds broken by women. Have you been puzzled about whether Christian women should or should not be mold-breakers? I'm going to talk about some women in Scripture who broke the molds of their day.

We women are doing things never dreamed of by our grandmothers, and our lifestyles are changing in many respects. We can applaud some of these opportunities we have been given—and indeed have insisted on having—in the last five or six decades. But we can also see how we've thrown the baby out with the water all too often as we've pushed forward to plow new ground.

But mold-breaking, in and of itself, is not wrong. In fact, if we as Christians are not willing to break out of the "this is the way we've always done it" syndrome, we'll lose our effectiveness as witnesses to a dying world. We need some mold-breaking Christians—yes, women—who are willing to be different in order to be what God wants them to be.

I want to briefly look at some women in the Bible who broke the molds in their days. In Luke 8 we see a group of them, who traveled with Jesus and the disciples from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news. There was Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna, and many others. These women were helping to support Jesus and the disciples out of their own means.

Here are some most unusual women. When travel was very difficult and dangerous and when women were expected to stay home, these women were traveling, following behind and supporting a group of men. Can you picture this group walking down the dirt road, Jesus and 12 men, followed by a large number of women? Not exactly traditional roles for women of their day.

Why did they do this? Were they trying to prove something, trying to enlarge their boundaries? What caused them to take these kinds of risks and play a different role than was expected of women in their day? I want to look at these women and see if we, as Christian women today, can learn something from them.

### **Day Two**

We see in Luke 8 that there was a group of women who followed and supported Jesus and his disciples as they travelled. Unusual women—breaking out of traditional roles to follow Jesus. What can we learn from their example?

I have to believe that the disciples had some difficulty getting used to having women following them. But notice that Jesus allowed them to come along. We see no indication that he urged them to return or refused to accept their support.

No, in fact he had cured many of these women of evil spirits and diseases. And I believe he was delighted to have them come along and testify to what he had done for them. I can just see Mary

Magdalene, as they enter a town, standing in the midst of a group of strangers who are listening with intensity as she tells them how Jesus delivered her from seven evil spirits. What a testimony she must have had, and I can imagine that many others were delivered by Jesus because of her witness.

We see another woman, Joanna, who had been healed by Jesus. She was the wife of a prominent man in Herod's government. It had to be most unusual for a woman in her position to decide to follow this itinerant preacher around, to support him and his team. I wonder if that was even a consideration with Joanna. Don't you imagine she was so grateful to Jesus for what he had done in her life, that she simply was compelled to follow him? She was married, and she must have had her husband's consent to leave her home in order to follow Jesus. But she didn't let anything stop her, not even traditions of her day.

Evidently these were women of means, because they supported Jesus and the disciples out of their own pockets. Imagine that; these women picked up the tab. That had to be more unusual then than it is even now.

It might have been a little hard at first for the disciples to take money from the women. But they learned the wonderful lesson that we are one in Christ and we share the ministry of the gospel equally.

I'm reminded of Paul's words which tell us that in Christ "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). These women and men did not allow tradition to keep them from working together as one body, with one mission, to tell the world about Jesus Christ. We need to rethink our roles and traditions and see if they are inhibiting us and keeping us from being everything God wants us to be.

### Day Three

We see in Luke 8 that Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and many other women broke the molds of their day in order to follow Jesus Christ, support him and testify to his power in their lives.

Yes, these women pushed the limits, they exceeded the boundaries, they ignored tradition. Undoubtedly they must have gotten lots of funny looks and perhaps some strong lectures from other people who thought they had overstepped their boundaries as they traveled all over following Jesus and supporting his ministry. But I don't think they cared what people thought.

You see, they were breaking the mold but not for the sake of saying they had broken the mold. They weren't trying to blaze new paths for women, nor were they rebelling against unfair treatment.

They were women who were driven but not by a desire to show people what women could do. They were driven by a fierce love and commitment to the Man who had changed their lives—the Messiah who had come to deliver them from their bondage. And they just couldn't let traditional molds keep them from sharing that truth.

I believe this example left to us by these most unusual women gives us a guideline to follow as women in today's world. Can we—should we—be mold-breakers? The guiding principle is that when a tradition or a mold inhibits our ability to share Jesus Christ, to follow him in new and effective ways, then breaking the mold is the right thing to do.

Now, understand that I'm not talking about breaking scriptural principles, but I am talking about the boxes that people sometimes would put us into because we're women, the limitations we place on ourselves because of traditional female roles.

We sometimes use our female roles as an excuse for not going into our worlds with the Gospel. They become the skirts we hide behind, our rationalizations for not sticking our necks out to serve the Lord in new and meaningful ways.

How about you? Ready to break some molds. Look at these women in Luke 8 and ask God to give you the wisdom and courage to know when to break away from what is "acceptable behavior" into new territory to follow him more perfectly.

## Day Four

There is a woman in the Old Testament whose leadership and accomplishments would be outstanding today. In her day they had to be incredible.

Deborah was one of the judges of Israel, the top authority in the country at that time. She had men working for her; she even led the army into a battle and won it. That certainly was not a customary role for women in her time.

She must have felt like a fifth wheel at times. She was different from all the other women in her day! It must have been a lonely spot. Undoubtedly there were times when she grew weary of the responsibilities and pressures on her. But she was a woman of great faith in God, and her dedication to her calling was unwavering, whatever personal desires she may have had to forego.

We know that she was married; we don't know if she had any children. But this was a woman in a traditional role yet called by God to a job that was very untraditional. She had a position of higher authority than her husband—than any other man in the country.

Why do you think Deborah accepted the job of judge? I don't think she was trying to prove anything. There was no election campaign, where she stumped the trail proclaiming that women had a right to be a judge. Her career ambition was not to be the first woman judge in Israel. That was never an issue with Deborah. Deborah was a judge because God called her to be one.

Why do you think God asked Deborah to be a judge for those many years? Because he had gifted her for the job and that was his plan for her. Why would he ask her to do something so different from a traditional woman's role? Because God is sovereign, and he uses many different kinds of people in different situations as he sees fit.

God still calls some women to break old molds and do things not often done by women. He has a right to do so now, just as he did with Deborah. But the women God calls are not marching for women's rights. They are marching in the Lord's army, followers of Jesus Christ, committed to his service, regardless of the role they are asked to fill.

If God has called you to be a mold-breaker, count it a privilege. Keep in mind, I'm not talking about departing from biblical principles or standards, but rather about man-made traditions and roles. Sometimes God uses mold-breakers in very effective ways.

## Day Five

There are some unusual examples of women in Scripture who broke the molds of their day, were mightily blessed, and used by God, and fulfilled God's purpose in their lives by breaking out of traditional roles.

This is a topic we struggle with in many Christian circles today, and you'll find a different viewpoint for almost every person you talk with. As a woman who has personally struggled with the boxes others

have built for me, I've really tried to get a biblical perspective. Admittedly, that's not easy to do, because all of us face these questions with our personal biases and mindsets.

But I've concluded that God, in his infinite creativity, has cast some women into positions and roles that are different, just as he has done with some men. For years as a young woman I felt that God must have made a mistake to give me the kind of personality and qualities that I possess. From my experience in Christian circles, it seemed that I would have been better off with a different personality, one less assertive, without leadership tendencies; that quiet and meek spirit which Peter talks about and I interpreted as meaning you kept your mouth shut at all times.

Without expressing it, I simply felt like a square peg in a round hole very often. I felt I had to suppress the natural tendencies I had and constantly try to be like other women who seemed to fit better into the expectations of what a Christian woman should be. That was a mistaken understanding on my part.

I now realize that God knew exactly what he was doing when he made me the way I am, and if it doesn't fit some man-made boxes, that simply is not my concern. My mind is to be set on following Jesus, without any thought about whether that takes me in traditional or non-traditional paths. He has called me to be a disciple, I am responsible for fulfilling the great commission in my own life, and I must faithfully focus on what God wants me to do. The Bible gives me guidelines, but I am not bound to the traditions and biases of others.

Neither am I called to be a troublemaker; to prove that women are qualified; to change the mind of those who disagree. That is God's business, not mine.

If you find yourself struggling with your non-traditional role, I want to encourage you to make sure your motivation and your commitment are single-focused on Jesus, and then follow him, wherever that takes you. God will continue to call some women to be mold-breakers, as he has throughout the history of the Church.

As long as we keep our eyes fixed on following Jesus, wherever it leads, we're free from the boxes and expectations of others; free to be a slave of Jesus Christ.