

ON THE BOOKSHELF

"Vindicating the Vixens: Revisiting Sexualized, Vilified, and Marginalized Women of the Bible"

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Reading this book profoundly affected my interpretation of many Bible passages, and my understanding of many Biblical women. In fact, I have begun a series of sermons with the titles, "Understanding the Righteousness of Tamar," "Rehabilitating the Reputation of Rahab," "Celebrating the So-called Scandal of Ruth," "The Sexual Harassment of Bathsheba," and "Reclaiming our Respect for the Virgin Mary". The essays here will open your eyes to the way that Christians have read the Bible through modern eyes and cultural expectations, particularly Americans.

In many of these cases, learning more about the cultural and historical context of the Bible accounts makes a huge difference in how we interpret them. If we are to be faithful to the text, we can't read them with modern cultural and social constructs.

For example, Tamar, as the daughter-in-law of Judah, lost two husbands and apparently won't get the third brother as a husband, so to continue the family line she must act. Dressing as a prostitute, she waits for Judah and is impregnated, which was prescribed under Levirate law. When she is discovered to be pregnant, they prepare to execute her until Tamar reveals the father of the child. Judah declares that she is more righteous than he is, and that she has saved his family line! "God works through Tamar's bold action to rescue her dead husband from extinction and her utterly lost father-in-law from a destructive downhill slide. Her actions bring about one of the most remarkable redemptive stories in all of Scripture", that of Judah, whose new character is revealed in the account, four chapters later, of his behavior before the Prime Minister of Egypt, who turns out to be the younger half-brother Joseph he sold into slavery two decades before.

Likewise, the Jerichoite prostitute Rahab reveals to the two Israelite spies that she believes Yahweh to be God not just of Israel but of the entire world. Because of her faith, she will allow the spies to get back to Joshua, and request that when they take the city they will save her family. She becomes one of the lineage of Jesus, as well. Her story and that of the NT Canaanite women with the possessed daughter are parallel stories that shows God loves all people equally, regardless of gender or ethnicity!

The stories of Vashti from the Book of Esther, Ruth the Moabite, the righteous Mary of Magdala, and Bathsheba (a victim of sexual harassment) are among the others whose true character is revealed through careful Bible study. The general editor of "Vindicating the Vixens", Sandra Glahn, returns to the airwaves Easter Sunday on WTBF to share more with us! Join Doc as he talks with Sandra Glahn ON THE BOOKSHELF.