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Focus: Bible and Missions

Topic: Biblical theology of women in God's mission.

Thesis: To discover God's mission as seen in the Bible through the example of several Biblical women.

Introduction

How do women of the 21st century enter God's grand mission? What does it look like to be a woman living a missional lifestyle? How do we make sense of all the promises, plans, and covenants of the Bible and do what God wants us to do? The current discussion of Women in Ministry and formalizing the label that is placed upon them, raise these questions. By connecting an understanding of God's mission as seen throughout the scriptures and examples of biblical women who display a missional lifestyle, modern women can find parallels and encouragement to take a leadership role in God's continuing mission of redeeming the lost.

Biblical Theology of Mission

A biblical theology of how women are involved in God's mission to reach all nations, including our own, and how it could direct their ministry can be viewed through a biblical understanding of God's interaction with humanity from the very beginning of human history. In order to give understanding to God's mission, methods and humanity's involvement in it, the differences between *missio Dei*, *missio Hominum*, and *missiones Ecclesiarum* will be briefly defined. The various covenants and prophecies of the Old Testament show that God's method of mission has been steadily increasing in scope throughout history to redeem all nations, all people

groups, all men, and all women. The necessity of learning how to live aligned with God's mission is an important step in connecting women to being active participants and leaders in God's plan. Women throughout the scriptures have lived a missional lifestyle. God used Ruth and those closest to her in the Old Testament to show how he used the ordinary things in life to accomplish his plan when one actively seeks God. The lives of Anna the Prophetess, the Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalene, Priscilla, and other briefly recorded women in the New Testament will show how God used women to take part in his *missio Dei* in the biblical period. Women of the 21st century can be encouraged to follow the examples of biblical women to lead full missional lifestyles in their personal "Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8, New International Version).

God's Mission

A biblical theology of God's mission governs all our ministry concepts and priorities. George Peters has said that mission "refers to the total biblical assignment of the church of Jesus Christ" (Peters, 11). Georg F. Vicedom has said "The Bible in its totality ascribes only one intention to God: to save mankind" (Ibid, 9). The intention of this research is to determine the connection between the themes of God's mission, how that relates to the mission of the church, the individual mission of believers, how it relates to biblical women, and ultimately how it affects modern women.

God's Mission: *Missio Dei*

The term *missio Dei* was first used in 1952 by Karl Hartenstein. He was summarizing the discussion of the Willingen meeting of the International Missionary Council concerning what

mission theology should be. The idea is that because of God's great love for us, he sent his Son to restore all things back to God that had been destroyed by the entry of sin. We who enter this restoration become committed to being part of his redeeming mission. We become active participants in God's mission (Richebacher 589).

God's Mission: *Missiones Ecclesiarum and Missio Hominum*

Missiones ecclesiarum and *missio hominum* are both part of the *missio Dei*. They are the human response to entering God's mission with him. According to the Global Dictionary of Theology, *missiones ecclesiarum* is plural and refers to God's many missions through groups of the people of God. *Missio hominum* refers to God's missional use of individual human instruments (Engen, 557). This will show how women in ministry will fit in with God's plan.

Our mission, "the *missio ecclesiae*, comes from the *missio Dei* alone" (Richebacher, 590). We have a task to do and it comes directly from God's mission. "God is on a mission - *missio Dei*; out of his love he pursues his wandering children. Once rescued, we go on mission with him in the Restoration Project, pursuing other wanderers" (Davis, 88).

God's plan has always been to be in relationship with humanity. Sin entered our lives and created a divide between God and humanity. God then set into motion a plan, his mission, to restore that which was destroyed: To save and redeem, his children who were lost and separated from him because of sin. "He wants to use our lives to help fellow humans be reconnected to their creator and to live on purpose by joining him in his purpose" (Ibid, 2).

Biblical Theology of Mission: Old Testament

God's mission and how humankind has entered God's mission with him is a major component of this biblical theology of mission. As Andreas Kostenberger states, "God embarks upon a mission of rescuing sinful, but repentant, people from the power of Satan, sin and death. The mission of restoration forms the very core of the biblical metanarrative" (Kostenberger, 2020:14). A beautiful example of this can be seen in the Samaritan woman who will be explored later. According to Deborah Inyamah, Jesus "seemingly engages her as a person capable of insight and reasoning" (Inyamah, 89). To fully understand God's mission of rescuing and restoring humankind one must understand the major covenants of God with man, the prophecies of the Old Testament that lead to their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, and Christ's subsequent renewed mission to which he calls his followers.

Protoevangelium

The origins of God's overarching mission are found in Genesis 3:14-15. In this setting, Adam and Eve have just been caught in the sin of disobedience under the influence of the serpent. God curses the serpent and vows "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel"(Gen. 3:15, NIV). This statement has traditionally been referred to "as the 'protoevangelium' or first announcement of the gospel" (Kostenberger, 2020:14).

The idea that there will be future destruction of the serpent by a descendant of the woman (Alexander, 58) is introduced by God at the beginning of humankind's history. It is seen in these verses that "God graciously announces that the woman's offspring will redeem humanity from the serpent's tyranny"(Ibid, 41). It is also noted that these verses are showing that God

“has taken the initiative in redeeming this created order. The offspring...is understood as referring to Christ who would crush the head of Satan” (Boonyakiat, 861). George Peters emphasizes that this “first promise of a coming Redeemer is of tremendous significance. This promise was given to the entire human race” (Peters, 85). As God’s overall intent was to be in relationship with humanity, and humanity was now distanced from God by Adam and Eve acting in their sinful nature, God entered this specific task of rescuing and restoring his creation. This mission of God’s was set into action at the very beginning of humanity’s history.

Summary - Protoevangelium

In reviewing this promise, the “I will” statements God has made to mankind, otherwise known as his covenants or promises, a trend can be seen developing. This first “I will” statement is found in Genesis 3:15; “**I will** put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel”(NIV). This is a promise that the woman would one day have an offspring that would bring about the destruction of the serpent. It is a promise that will last through the ages until it is finally fulfilled. It shows God making a way for the relationship between God, men, and women to be restored. His mission has begun.

God’s Covenant with Abraham

Later God set up a more particular covenant between Himself and Abraham. The Lord tells Abram that he will make him into a great nation, he will bless those who bless Abram, curse those who curse him, and that all humanity will be blessed through him. (Genesis 12:1-3, English Standard Version). The Lord then reaffirms with Abram later that he will be the father of a

multitude of nations and kings will come from his family line through his son Isaac (Gen. 17:19, ESV).

Upon closer inspection of the scripture between Adam and Eve and then Abram in Genesis 3-11, it is evident that sin had run rampant among early humanity. They were bent on their rebellion toward God. There is recorded self-righteousness which leads to murder in Cain. Lamech is attributed the first acknowledgement of polygamy and he also speaks overconfidently of his vengeance (Gen. 4:19-24, ESV). Humanity had grown progressively evil to the point that “every intention and thought of their heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5, ESV).

At this point God determines to destroy all of humanity except Noah and his family. Yet even then, sin persists in everyone’s heart. Noah gives in to drunkenness. Ham is recorded as being immodest because while he sees his father’s nakedness, he does not cover him but tells his brothers about it. (Genesis 9:20-23, ESV) Finally in Genesis 11, the story of the Tower of Babel showed us how far people had gone to separate themselves from God. Due to their sin of arrogance and glory-seeking, God confused their language and dispersed them throughout the land (Peters, 96).

God called Abram out of this world of sin and dispersed people, to leave behind all that he had known and to follow God to a new land that he would give to him and his descendants. It is God’s plan still to bless all of humanity through Abram (Kostenberger, 2020:17). It is the beginning of a new nation; it is the beginning of a new national religion (Peters, 91). God is using the method of a certain people group, the Israelites, to demonstrate his purpose and plan of redeeming all of humanity back to himself (Kostenberger, 2020:18).

As Abram’s story progresses God eventually changes his name to Abraham which means “Father of many”; thus, the intention of God to provide a future redeemer and king is

revealed. The mission of God is still the same: redeeming those lost to sin, restoring relationships, and rebuilding the Kingdom of God. “The divine promise of blessing for all the families... is to be fulfilled not through all of Abraham’s descendants (i.e., through the nation of Israel) but through one future descendant, who will rule over the nation”(Ibid, 19). God changes the methods of his mission to reconcile humanity back to himself. He will use Abraham’s family as an example to humanity that he intends to restore the relationship, bless all of humanity, and one day supply a king.

Summary - Abraham

The second set of “I will” statements are seen in Genesis 12:1-3. Abram gets five “I will” statements in those three verses: God is taking him to a land that “**I will** show you”, “**I will** make of you a great nation”, “**I will** bless you and make your name great”, “**I will** bless those who bless you”, and finally “those who dishonor you **I will** curse” (ESV). These verses show God’s vows were fulfilled: to create through Abraham a new land to live in, a new nation, a great name and influence, kings will come from him and finally blessings and curses based on how others respond to Abram. It shows us how God used this people group, the nation of Israel, to demonstrate what a restored relationship with God would look like.

When the second portion of the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17 is examined the “I will” statements rise to include five more promises of God. “**I will** make you exceedingly fruitful”, “**I will** make you into nations”, “**I will** establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant”, “**I will** give to you... all the land of Canaan”, and finally “**I will** be their God” (ESV). God shows a reaffirmation to the previous promises of increasing Abraham’s family line, a people group, and

a land to live in. He also establishes the generational nature of this covenant and the relational nature of the covenant as well: I will be their God. God's mission to restore relationships and draw humanity to himself is seen within this covenant with Abraham.

Ruth is an example of the Abrahamic covenant by choosing to enter a relationship with God and declaring him her God. Ruth, a Gentile, demonstrates her devotion and loyalty to God when she expresses to her mother-in-law Naomi that God is her God too. Ruth chooses to be part of the covenant people; she chooses to leave her homeland and go with Naomi to Bethlehem. Ruth chooses faith in God which ultimately leads her to a place in the lineage of Jesus Christ. This shows the "providential divine overruling which appointed her from the very beginning an ancestress of the Messiah" (Kittel, 3).

God's Covenant with David

God also made a promise-filled covenant David. In the time leading up to David's ascension to the throne, the people of Israel are demanding that God should give them a king like the other nations around them. God allowed it and Saul was anointed king over Israel. Saul began his reign humbly before the Lord, but it did not last. Saul took it upon himself to make decisions without seeking God. Saul committed a final act of defiance that removed God's anointing from him. He was impatient with the prophet/priest/judge Samuel and Saul offered a sacrifice to the Lord which was forbidden for him to do (1 Sam. 13:8-14, ESV).

It was at this time that the Lord declared to Samuel that he was after one who was after God's heart (1 Sam.13:14, ESV) and that the Lord looks on the heart of a person not his physical stature (1 Sam 16:7, ESV). David, the shepherd boy, the youngest son of Jesse, was anointed king of Israel as he stood before his brothers and father, the most unlikely candidate from a

human viewpoint. The Lord reminds David of this when he makes his covenant with him in 2 Samuel 7. The Lord tells David, “I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.... Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house” (2 Sam. 7:9&11, ESV). God is covenanting with David that “God will build...a house for David, in the form of a sure and perpetual dynasty” (Kelly, 822). This reaffirms God's covenant with Abraham (Kostenberger, 2020:23). God is continuing to reveal and build upon his methodology of mission to restore his relationship with humanity and provide a future king and kingdom.

Summary - David

The final “I will” statements examined are seen in God’s covenant with David. Between both 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17 there are ten “I will” statements that God makes to David: “**I will** make for you a name”, “**I will** appoint a place for my people”, “**I will** subdue all your enemies”, “the **Lord will** build you a house”, “**I will** raise up your offspring after you”, “**I will** establish his kingdom”, “**I will** establish his throne forever”, “**I will** be to him a father”, “**I will** not take my steadfast love from him”, “**I will** confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever”(ESV).

it is clear upon examining these statements that God is continuing to build on the foundation of the previous promises. There is a reaffirmation to build his name and establish a place for God’s people to dwell in safety. There is also the continuation of the promise to raise up his offspring as a king. God takes his promises further with David. He promises that David’s offspring will have a kingdom that will last forever, he promises to be in an intimate paternal relationship with him, He promises to never remove his love from him, and he affirms David’s settled relationship in God’s house and kingdom forever. What started as a promise to Eve that

one day her descendant would “crush the head of the serpent” will ultimately be fulfilled through this line of David who will subdue all his enemies and reign forever.

Summary: Old Testament Covenants

God has shown through these covenants that his mission is to restore his relationship with humanity. He has shown that he will provide for a redeemer to conquer sin, that this redeemer will come from the line of David, through the line of Abraham, through the line of Adam and Eve. The promise has been from the beginning of time, across the ages, following the descendants of Adam, Abraham, and David looking to the future. “God intends the nations to be blessed through a Davidic king, who will exercise universal authority, bringing justice and righteousness to the whole world” (Kostenberger, 2020:29). Through these covenants God will bless all of humanity: all nations, all people groups, all men, and all women. The Old Testament covenants teach us that ultimately it is God who will accomplish His mission, and the men and women he employs in that are privileged to know the joy and meaning of being aligned with Him.

Isaiah’s Prophecies

It is essential for a brief survey to be taken on the prophecies recorded by Isaiah that show the continuation of the Davidic covenant promising a king to be found in the form of a Messiah and Redeemer, that is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 7:14 says “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name ‘Immanuel’ (ESV) which means “God with us”. As with all prophets, their message means something for the people that they are speaking

to in their time, as well as to a future audience at times. There has been great debate among scholars on this verse. One opinion is that this applies only to King Ahaz while Isaiah was speaking directly to him. An alternate view is that this prophecy was fulfilled partially then and fully in Jesus. A final understanding is that it is strictly messianic, fulfilled only by Jesus Christ (Jones, J. 182). This passage is preparing the way for God to change his method once again: God is going to dwell with humanity.

Isaiah 11:1 and 10 refers to “a shoot from the stump of Jesse” and “the root of Jesse”. Jesse is the father of King David (1 Samuel 16:1-13, ESV). Isaiah is drawing attention to the covenant God established with David. Isaiah is reminding the people that there is a king coming from the line of David, “whose reign will anchor God’s will in Jerusalem and extend outward to the rest of creation” (Leighton et al, 284).

Isaiah 42:6 and 49:8 both continue the idea of a future covenant. “...I will give you as a covenant for the people.” (ESV) Both chapters also instill the idea that they are to be “a light to the nations”. Isaiah 42:6 says, “I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations” (ESV) and Isaiah 49:6 says, “...I will make you as a light for nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth”(ESV). Isaiah is drawing attention to the fact that God intends for the nations to be part of his redeemed family! What God promised to Abraham, and what God promised to David is now seen to be about not just Israel, but indeed to carry out God’s desire to redeem a people for himself from all nations. “The nations no longer represent the archetypal enemies but are the object of Yhwh’s salvation and Israel’s mission in Isaiah 42:7” (Smith, 242). God’s covenant and mission is expanding from the Israelites to include the nations.

Summary: Old Testament Covenants and Prophecies

God is continuously building in scope and focus on the methodology he uses to accomplish his *missio Dei*. He begins with a couple, Adam and Eve, in the protoevangelium. He promises that one day, one of her descendants will destroy the serpent, restoring their relationship with him. God's next covenant is with a family. God promises Abraham that he will make a great family out of Abraham and that he will be his God. God follows this covenant with a nation. His covenant with David builds on the other promises and adds that there will be one king who comes from his family line who will reign forever. God speaks through the prophet Isaiah reaffirming his previous covenants and reminding Israel that a king is coming, that God will be with them, and that there will be a new covenant that will include all nations, all people groups, all men, and all women.

Biblical Theology of Mission: New Testament

Jesus Christ as Fulfillment of Old Testament Covenants and Prophecies

Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the covenants made between God and man, the fulfillment of prophecies spoken long ago, and the fulfillment of God's mission to redeem humanity from its sin and separation from God. In reading Matthew's gospel, he informs us that Jesus's names are predictive of the roles he will play. "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21, ESV). And in verse 23 his name Immanuel means "God with us" (ESV). "Jesus' origin is located in the purposes of God" (Carter, 508). Jesus has a specific special role to play, determined by God, foretold by Isaiah. He is "anointed to 'save his people from their sins' and to manifest 'God with us'" (Ibid). Matthew includes this prophetic verse in his gospel as proof that Jesus is "God with us" as

foretold by Isaiah. He says, “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God is with us)” (Matthew 1:22-23, ESV).

Jesus also fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy as coming from the line of David. Matthew presents a detailed account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ as a son of David, who was a son of Abraham. Matthew 1:6 records Jesse as the father of David within the genealogy of Jesus. (ESV) “He is demonstrating Jesus’ legal claim to the throne of David, emphasizing Jesus’ legal descent from David and Abraham”(Wilkins, 1959).

In John 8:12 Jesus says to Pharisees, “I am the light of the world.”(ESV). Here, Jesus is referring to the prophecies mentioned in both Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6. He is telling the pharisees that he “is the one who will fulfill Israel’s destiny to be a light to the nations. He represents the hope of the centrifugal movement of salvation out from Jerusalem to the Gentiles” (Bauckham,98).

In this section Jesus Christ was seen as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies. He is seen as: the baby born of the Virgin who is to redeem the world and be God with us, the continuation of David’s royal throne, and he is to be a new covenant and light to the whole world. God is continuing his mission through Jesus; his plan to redeem and restore all of humanity.

Jesus Christ’s Commission to His Followers

While Jesus Christ may have been the fulfillment of God’s mission to restore the relationship and redeem humanity from its sinful state, Jesus Christ is Immanuel which means

“God with us”. God’s mission does not end with Christ’s work here on earth. After Christ’s death and resurrection, he orders his followers, both men and women, to continue in the mission of this restoration of relationship.

Scripture points out that women were included as his disciples. Luke 8:1-3 reports that as Jesus traveled through cities and villages, not only did the Twelve travel with him, but also some women. This account mentions by name; Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna as fellow travelers and financial supporters, as well as many others who remained nameless. Colin Brown noted that “women were to be found among the followers of Jesus; they were more prominent than the men in their love, care and courage after the crucifixion” (Brown, 1059). The New Testament lists over thirty women by name who were part of Jesus’ followers and co-workers in fulfilling the *missio Dei* in their time.

Jesus tells them to “make disciples of all nations” in the imperative (Wilkins, 2038); it is a command. Then, they are to go and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, to go and teach them to observe all that he has commanded of them (Matt.28:19&20, ESV). He sends them on a co-mission: to enter God’s grand mission of redeeming those lost in sin and restoring the relationship between God and all of humanity - “of all nations”. Mark has recorded this Great Commission as “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15, ESV). Luke also records Jesus’ words to his followers, ... “that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem”(Luke 24:47, ESV). Luke continues this thought in the book of Acts where he records Jesus telling them, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8, ESV).

Summary: Biblical Theology of Missions: New Testament

To summarize this exploration of God's covenants with humanity, prophecy, and Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of both, several things can be noted in each setting. God had been in a close relationship with humanity. Mankind then distanced themselves from God due to their sin. God then re-establishes his relationship with them with a fuller covenant. This cycle repeats many times throughout the Old Testament biblical period until God reveals himself in the ultimate new covenant with Jesus Christ. "Christ is the one who fulfills the Old Testament covenant promises...the Old Testament looks forward to the fulfillment of the redemptive promises in and through Christ" (Torrance, 45). Jesus, Immanuel- "God with us", then imparts to his followers the need to enter into mission with him, a co-mission: one where his followers, both men and women, are to go and "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that"(Matt.28:19&20, ESV) he has commanded of them.

Living Missionally

There is a need for followers of Christ to enter a lifestyle that blends the ability to be a part of God's mission to reach the lost and restore relationship with God, and to live in the reality that God is present now in followers of Christ (Moreau). There is the need to incorporate the *missio Dei* into the everyday lives of believers, to reach their neighbors with the message of redemption - the *missio hominum*. "...Missiology cannot be relegated to the fringe or be seen as having relevance only to cross-cultural Christian workers. Rather it is a critical discipline for all Christians in all cultures at all times"(Ibid). The examples of Biblical women whose lives reflect

the missional lifestyle of God's mission; those who have listened, obeyed, told, taught, and gone, will be explored. Their working out of Jesus' Great Commission, of having the Holy Spirit's presence in their lives, and of stepping out boldly to lead and serve, will serve as role models for today's woman.

Biblical Theology of Women in God's Mission

God set a framework in place to fulfill his mission of reaching out to humanity and drawing them back into relationship with him. From the first promise in the protoevangelium, where God promised a future redeemer from the woman's descendant, through the New Testament women who were disciples of Jesus, women have been actively used by God to fulfill his mission. They have stepped out in faith. They have gone and spoken when men have not. They have been disciples, apostles, missionaries, prophets, and teachers. Jesus Christ's life, death, resurrection, and commissioning of his followers, both men and women, has formally called all to join God in his *missio Dei*: reaching those around them and drawing them back to God.

A Survey of Biblical Women

A survey of several women in the Bible will display this *missio hominum* in action; all of which are recipients of the *missio dei*. They each represent different levels of an Acts 1:8 believer. They are all witnesses to those around them; some witnessed locally, and others went to different towns, cities, and even countries.

Ruth

Ruth is an excellent example of someone coming to faith in God because those around her were actively, obediently, involved in the *missio dei*. Ruth was a Gentile, who chose to believe in the God of Abraham. Through her loyalty and obedience God used her in the royal genealogy of King David.

When God's mission is to reach those who have not yet entered a relationship with him, his actions to reach this desired result can be seen in one of two ways: God moves his followers to the lost person or God moves the lost person closer to his followers, all for the purpose of advancing his kingdom plan (Magezi, 2). It was part of God's plan to bring Ruth, a Moabitess, into the lineage of King David. Not only does Ruth show how God moves to accomplish his plan but Ruth's actions show how the *missio Dei* is for all the nations. "God migrates both sinners and his people to fulfil his redemptive purposes and plan" (Ibid).

In Ruth's situation, her in-laws left their homeland and moved to Ruth's. She, a Moabitess, marries into a Jewish family. After the death of her husband, father-in-law, and brother-in-law, she remains loyal to Naomi, her mother-in-law. Even more than this loyalty, Ruth declares her intentions to follow and accept the faith of the Israelites, "...Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go, I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16, ESV). This verse can be seen looking back to the covenant between God and Abraham, when God states that he will be their God (Genesis 17:6-7, ESV; Bergey, 538).

Ruth returns with Naomi to Bethlehem. She follows her advice, gleans at Boaz' fields, marries Boaz, and is ultimately part of the genealogy of King David and Jesus Christ born in Bethlehem. The point is God moves through the obedience of ordinary people to accomplish his divine plan which is the redemption of humanity (Magezi, 8-9). Ruth is important; she shows

the universality of the *missio Dei*. Ruth, a Moabitess, chooses to have faith in God, to be part of God's chosen family, and becomes an integral part of the lineage of Jesus Christ. Ruth serves as an inspiration for the modern woman to take an active step in declaring one's choice to follow God and to be bold in obedience even when it requires moving and doing something new. Ruth encourages boldness and courage.

Anna the Prophetess

Anna is introduced to the reader in Luke's gospel. While she is only represented by two verses in Luke 2:36-38, much can be learned about her by looking closely at what we are told. She is recorded as a prophetess. She would have been known for her moral and spiritual insight. Luke looks deeper into her by describing her family line and its prophetic roots. She is the daughter of Phanuel. "The name Phanuel recalls those prophets who could speak about their vision of God" because they had seen him face to face (Garcia, 468). She is also from the tribe of Asher. This piece of information places her from the northern tribes that had returned from the exile. The northern tribe of Asher is where "Elijah's prophetic preaching took place" (Ibid, 468) This family history "links Anna with a revelation by God to God's people, a revelation that Anna herself is going to see, face to face, and proclaim"(Ibid, 469). It also shows that all of Israel is still looking forward with hope to the coming Messiah (Bauckham, 98).

She is also very old. She had devoted herself to worshipping in the temple for the better part of 84 years after she had become a widow. She spent this time in prayer and fasting, day and night. It can be inferred that due to her prayerful and prophetic nature she was able to recognize Jesus as the Messiah from his infancy. She recognizes that "he will fulfill Jerusalem's destiny to be the center to which all the tribes of Israel are regathered. She represents the hope of

the centripetal movement of salvation as the diaspora returns to Zion” (Ibid, 99). Anna then uses this knowledge to give thanks to God and tell everyone who was “waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38, ESV) about Jesus. Anna enters the *missio Dei* by proclaiming to everyone that this baby would fulfill God’s mission of redemption. She continues to act within the office of prophet.

New Testament prophecy has been defined by Richard Blaylock as intelligent communication, spontaneous and divine, empowered by the Holy Spirit, words that can be attributed to the Godhead, and is received as binding and true (Blaylock, 60). There are several references to prophets and those who prophesy in the New Testament, but it is especially interesting that “Anna and the four unmarried daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9) are the only true prophetesses in the New Testament”(Garcia, 468) that are specifically named. Paul also seems to acknowledge that prophesying was something that the New Testament women participated in routinely. His acknowledgement of it shows in 1 Corinthians 11:5 when he references “...every woman who prays or prophesies...” (NIV). It can be inferred that because prophecy was part of the early church, it is to be part of the modern church. It can also be inferred that because women prophesied in the early church, modern women can prophesy as well.

The Samaritan Woman

We encounter a Samaritan Woman in chapter 4 of John’s Gospel. In western tradition this woman is nameless, but “Orthodox sources say that she is Photine, who was eventually martyred as a missionary in Rome”(O’Brien, 507). It was noon and Jesus meets her by a well at the hottest time of the day. Jesus sets the missiological tone for their encounter. He has crossed

physical and cultural boundaries to reach her. He went through Samaria, even though he did not have to travel through this route. He could have gone another way. In verse 4 the words, “‘And he had to pass this way’ may also indicate that Jesus’ itinerary was subject to the sovereign and providential plan of God” (Kostenberger, 2016:2198).

Jesus proceeds to talk with her, crossing several cultural boundaries. She is more surprised that he, a Jewish man, is speaking to her, a Samaritan. (Luke 4:9, ESV) After accurately revealing her life, he explains to her that he is the Messiah. She goes back to her village, tells them of this incredible conversation she had, and many believed her testimony and went back with her to hear him for themselves. Verse 39 records that “Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony...” (ESV). They later say to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world” (John 4:42, ESV). “Through the word of Jesus, God accomplished His purpose” (Scaer,11). The Samaritan Woman becomes “a missionary witness...to bear witness is the task of a disciple. The woman joins John the Baptist as witness, and in fact precedes the disciples”(Kok,3). Photine enters God’s mission through her redemption by Christ. She then goes and tells others in her community what Jesus has said to her. She brings others who are lost to a redeeming knowledge of Jesus. This is an example to modern women that it does not matter where you came from, the message of redemption is for all, and you can go and tell your community the truth of Jesus.

Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene’s story has been recorded more than all the other New Testament women. Who was this woman who has traditionally been called “an apostle to the apostles”

(Spencer,F. 1013)? Luke tells us in 8:2-3 that Jesus had healed her from seven demons and that she was part of a group of women who financially provided for Jesus' ministry out of their own resources. It is also assumed that she is from the town of Magdala, a fishing village on the Sea of Galilee (Lloyd, 5). At what point she becomes a follower of Jesus is not told, but whenever it was it was a strong enough motivating point that she supports him financially and travels with him and his followers during his Galilean ministry (Thimmes, 4).

Most importantly, Mary is portrayed as one of the women who followed Jesus to the cross and then to the tomb. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all record her presence at the tomb. Between the four gospels Mary is seen as faithful to Jesus and his disciples. She arrived there as soon as the Sabbath was over to prepare the body with spices. She arrives at an empty tomb, is greeted by one or two angels (depending on the gospel), and is then sent on a mission to tell the others that Jesus is not there but has risen.

In Matthew 28:10 and John 20:17, Jesus himself, meets with Mary and commissions her to go and tell the disciples that he is not dead, and they are to meet him in Galilee (Erickson, 500). Mary is called an apostle to the apostles because she was sent to those who were the "sent ones" with the good news (Bauckham, 285). "It is also inconceivable that the women would have stopped telling all who were subsequently willing to hear them" (Ibid, 275).

Mary's example of devoted loyalty shows how she lived out the *missio Dei*. She entered this mission by loyally, faithfully, following Jesus; financially supporting his ministry as he traveled around Galilee so others could hear, and finally by going and telling the apostles about the good news that Jesus rose from the dead. As Mary was one sent on a mission to deliver this message of utmost importance and joy, she was an apostle. Today's woman can be encouraged

to follow the example of Mary and be an apostle - a sent one with the good news of Jesus' resurrection and boldly proclaim the truth to doubtful people that we know.

Lydia

Lydia's brief story is told in Acts 16:14-15, & 40. Lydia was from Thyatira. She was a Gentile who worshipped God. She had a business selling purple goods. Verse 14 says "...The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul"(ESV). Lydia was baptized and she had her entire household baptized as well. She then insists that Paul and his companions stay with her at her house. "As Lydia receives the Spirit and is baptized along with her household, the spirit of generosity leads to extending hospitality to a group of missionary men"(Fleming,55). Lydia used what she had to serve the Lord and those around her. "Generosity and hospitality are part of the incarnational practice of living out the faith in participation with God in the *missio Dei* "(Ibid, 53).

Later in the chapter it is shown that Lydia hosts a church plant in her home there in Philippi. Acts 16:40 states, "After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them" (NIV). "From the movement of the Spirit, hospitality is offered, and a new body of believers is formed" (Fleming, 58).

Lydia enters the *missio Dei* by using her gifts of hospitality to bless Paul, his companions, and the newly formed group of believers that meet in her home. Her life encourages today's women to be bold with what you know and share in the redemptive work of Jesus to those in your business, household, and community.

Priscilla

Priscilla and Aquila were a powerhouse, married couple that faithfully served the Lord, went where they were needed, did what was necessary to help those in the household of faith, and taught the truth about the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were committed to the *missio Dei*. Acts 18:1-3 sets the stage for when Paul meets Priscilla and Aquila for the first time in Corinth. They had recently just arrived from Rome per an evacuation order from Claudius. Paul stayed with them in Corinth as they were all in the same tent making business (Nguyen, 201).

In verses 11-20 Paul stayed there in Corinth for 18 months before he left for Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila. They are now in their third location: Rome, Corinth, and now Ephesus. In each location they are found faithfully working and building the church.

Luke describes their great teaching ability. In 18:24-26, Luke says “Apollos was not just any convert to the faith; he was an eloquent speaker, who was well versed in the scriptures”(Ibid, 202). His knowledge about the finishing work of Jesus seems to be lacking because scripture tells us that he only knew of John’s baptism (v25, ESV). When Priscilla and Aquila heard him speaking in the synagogue one day, they took him aside and proceeded to privately teach him more. “It has been suggested that the naming of Prisca first in Acts 18:26 points to her being a principal teacher of Apollos, this would indicate her excellent didactic qualities and missionary skills as well as outstanding education”(Kurek-Chomycz, 126). This is another example of the Spirit’s moving and growing the church using individuals to fulfill God’s mission (Polhill, 2314).

Paul also draws attention to the church groups that meet in their home. He mentions their house church in Romans 16:5. In 1 Corinthians 16:19, Paul mentions that the church that meets

in their house sends their greetings. It is apparent that this couple is determined to serve the Lord wherever they live.

Priscilla is a missionary, teacher, co-laborer with her husband (Aquila), Paul, and she is also a businesswoman. Priscilla embodies the *missio Dei* and a missional lifestyle. She faithfully serves the Lord wherever she is living, constantly reaching out to help others grow in their knowledge of Jesus. She is not only a willing helper but an intelligent one, one who can clearly explain the finer details of the Gospel to an already well-educated man. Modern women can be encouraged to continue their own education, as well as teach any and all who need further instruction. Women can accept the challenge, as seen in Priscilla's life, of moving to wherever God may lead them even if it means crossing borders.

Phoebe

Phoebe's record is found in Romans 16:1-2. While she is only attributed two verses, several thoughts can be drawn out of them concerning her. Two key Greek words and the various ways they can be translated affect the understanding of her role and why Paul included her at the beginning of his personal greetings section. Verse 1 includes the word *diakonos* which has been translated as either "servant" or "deacon" depending on the version used (Wilder,43). Verse 2 also describes her as a *prostatis* which can be translated as "benefactor" or "patron" (Schreiner, 2381). Considering she is called a patron, and Paul displays deep concern for her wellbeing in her journey to Rome, it would stand to reason that she is not merely a "servant", but she holds the office of a "deacon" (Ibid, 48-49). She is a valued Deacon at the church in Cenchrea. Since Paul commends her to the church, (asking them to help her in whatever way

she needs), this suggests his respect and trust in her. Phoebe is a woman, esteemed by Paul and the church, who gives of her own resources to aid in Paul's ministries.

Church tradition holds that Phoebe was carrying the letter Paul had written to the Romans and was delivering it for him (Wilder, 43-44). Paul sends a commendation for her expecting the church to treat her as he would. "She is a highly trusted individual who is a vital part of the apostle's missionary team; she is sent for the express purpose of delivering the letter...and may also convey Paul's apostolic presence"(Ibid, 47).

Phoebe is living missionally carrying out the *missio Dei* with the resources and talents God has given her. She is going and doing what needs to be done to advance the message of the Gospel. Modern women can likewise be encouraged to give of their finances to support those in ministry and work alongside others to accomplish God's mission.

Implications for Modern Women

"We should note, finally, the important role women have played in the work of the kingdom of God....at all times of biblical history there have been women who occupy positions of leadership and influence" (Erickson,501). Like Ruth, a Gentile, be bold in your commitment to join God's family, take the risks of going to unknown places. Like Anna, an aged widow, be faithful to prayer, speak God's message, be determined to tell everyone about the hope of redemption in Jesus. Pray, Praise, and Proclaim! One's age or marital status does not matter. Like the Samaritan Woman, be a voice to your community. Speak, tell your story to those who know you, show them the truth of Jesus's words. Like Mary, believers are entrusted with a great message to tell. And keep telling it, Mary's message did not end upon delivery to the disciples. Like Lydia, a business owner, support those in ministry, lead Bible studies or a house church.

Like Priscilla, go, study, and teach. Live the *missio Dei* wherever God may take you. Like Phoebe, serve, supply resources, and bring the message to others far away. We can see from these women that age, gender, race, socio-economic standing, or marital status cannot stop you from living missionally and stepping into roles of leadership and helping fulfill God's mission: redeem those lost to the power of sin and restore relationships with him. Be Jesus' witness in the local community (Jerusalem), regionally or nationally (Judea and Samaria), and globally (to the end of the earth).

Conclusion

In considering what a Biblical Theology of Missions is, it was necessary to understand what God's mission was first before we could see how women specifically fit into it. The *missio Dei* is God's loving plan to restore the relationship between God and humanity that was destroyed by the entry of sin. *Missio hominum* and *mission ecclesiarum* are simply the methods by which God uses human instruments individually and as groups to fulfill his *missio Dei*. In determining this Biblical Theology of Missions, it was necessary to see the continuity of God's mission through both the Old and New Testaments, and to see how Jesus fulfilled this mission. God used men and women throughout the ages to give humanity a growing picture of God's love and desire to have all the nations be redeemed from sin. God called believers to enter his mission, to reach those around them and to help restore the broken relationships. It is necessary then for believers, men and women, to take this information and live it. There is a need for living a missional lifestyle. Several examples of biblical women were provided to show how they are role models and for an encouragement for modern women to follow their lead and live lives missionally in the 21st century. Women can enter the *missio Dei* with God. Jesus said,

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8, ESV). Women need to be bold and use the power God has already given them to listen, obey, proclaim, teach, and go. It is in the Holy Spirit’s power that they are all able to serve in whatever capacity they have been gifted. They will all receive power from the Holy Spirit to lead, do the job, and fulfill the *missio Dei* regardless of their gender.

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