

## Women in the Church

Good morning, throughout this term we have been looking how we are all part of Gods family and how we relate to each other.

Over the past few weeks Olly shared about how men fit into this and Martin shared last week about single and married people in the Church and how we have all got something to bring to the family.

Today, I am excited because I get the chance to share how the women fit into the Crown family, and I will be looking at some of the challenges we face.

One of the characteristics that I love about God is his creativity. You only have to look outside at night when there are hardly any clouds to see the moon, amazing stars, planets and constellations. You only have to go to a zoo or watch a nature programme to see all the different animals, how their bodies work, what they eat and how they relate to each other. You only have to go to Bullring on a busy Saturday morning to see all the different ages, shapes, sizes, skin colour, hair styles and clothes worn. God's creative ability is vast. He made us all different, even to the simplest detail as each of us having different fingerprints. So, when he was making man and women he used a lot of creative energy. We are simply very different- physically, emotionally, how we think things through and simply how we think about ourselves to name a few. Yet together we reflect and reveal some of God's character which is amazing!

So for the next 30 minutes listen up women and for the men here don't fall asleep; a lot of what I have to say you can relate to and be challenged too and also as our brothers you can love us; encourage us and believe in us.

Ladies, we have such an important part to play in building the Church – both the Crown and also the wider Church as we wait for Jesus' return.

God has handmade you and designed you,

<sup>13</sup> For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

<sup>14</sup> I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,

I know that full well.

<sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

<sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my unformed body;  
all the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be. Psalm 139

God knew us when we were in our mother's womb before even your mother knew she was pregnant. He knew you when you started your first day at school, when you weep in your bedroom when no one else knew you were feeling so sad and alone, he knew you when you achieved something amazing like your first steps or passing your driving test, he knows you when you sin and struggle with life, he knew you when you said you wanted to follow him and be his forever, he knows your life today, what last week was like and how you were treated and how you treated people. Finally he knew you when Jesus died on the cross and paid for your sin, when Jesus was separated from God because of your sin and mine and rose from death 2 days later settling the payment of your sin because you are his!

As women we get lots of conflicting images and role models thrown at us every day on TV adverts, on the internet– Adele, The Gilmore girls, Rhianna, Aishwarya Rai, Katie Price, Pixie Lott, Mother Teresa, Lady Gaga and Princess Catherine. Our own roles in Society have changed drastically over the past 50 years. Who are we meant to be?

Superwomen – Angelina Jolie, Oprah

Not so superwomen – Marge Simpson

We are precious, we are his daughter and heirs and our value is not dependant on what we do, how we act but because we are his. He has given us each unique skills, gifts, emotions, characteristics and passions. Why? For our enjoyment yes, because we are his children yes but also that others will come to know our God.

I am going to look at a story in the Bible about 3 different people who were each entrusted with bags of gold by their master.

## MATTHEW 25

### The Parable of the Bags of Gold

<sup>14</sup> “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, <sup>[a]</sup> each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. <sup>17</sup> So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. <sup>18</sup> But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

<sup>19</sup> “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

<sup>21</sup> “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

<sup>22</sup> “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

<sup>23</sup> “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

<sup>24</sup> “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

<sup>26</sup> “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? <sup>27</sup> Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

<sup>28</sup> ““So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. <sup>29</sup> For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. <sup>30</sup> And

throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This passage comes just after the story of the 10 brides waiting for their bridegrooms and only 5 of them being ready with oil in the lamps. Whilst the other 5 went to get oil the grooms came and the 5 unprepared brides missed their chance to go to the marriage! This isn't actually a warning to brides on what not to do on their wedding day; it is instead about being ready for Jesus' return.

So in this next story that Jesus tells us it is not just about being ready and prepared for Jesus' return, it is also about being active and using the gifts that God has given us; making the most out of them. Holding account for what God has given you!

Some of you may be thinking – me? talents? Gifts? I don't think so.

Here is a list of some of the talents that the Crown needs and you may have...

1 Corinthians 12 v 4 - 11

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.<sup>5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.<sup>6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

<sup>7</sup> Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.<sup>8</sup> To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,<sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,<sup>10</sup> to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,<sup>[a]</sup> and to still another the interpretation of tongues.<sup>[b]</sup><sup>11</sup> All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Fruits of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23

New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

<sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control.

The Church needs these in action to function at its best, for us to becoming more mature and becoming more like Jesus, for people who are lost to find Jesus and be rescued by him and to us all to be ready for Christ's guaranteed return.

## Romans 12

<sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your<sup>[a]</sup> faith; <sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,<sup>[b]</sup> do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

About 20 years ago I was at a Church meeting in Bedford. There were a group of people who were from a Church in America who were particularly good at hearing from God and who brought words/encouragements/Bible passages to people. After a great time of worship and teaching it was time to see if God had given them any specific words for people at the meeting. One by one different people were asked to stand and lots of exciting words were given. People called to worship, Church leadership, missions, the World. Then one man asked me to stand up, you need to remember I was 22, What was this amazing word God wanted to speak to me? And it was something like this...God's called you to be a Dorcas! As soon as I heard this I thought 'A what?' Then they explained that she was a women from the New Testament Acts 9:36-42 who did good, helped the poor, died, raised from the dead and then people became Christians as a result of her coming back from the dead. I wanted something really exciting but compared to the rest of the words it felt a bit too nice. But do you know what however much I've tried to not be this person = it's me and I need to be that person, whatever the personal cost, to be the person God's made me to be.

Women, who has God made you to be? These gifts are from God; don't limit what God can do through you. If you feel God wants to use you to pray for

people who are ill – PRAY, if you feel that God wants you to give away the majority of your income and live simply – GIVE, if you feel God want you to start something for him – START PRAYING, if you feel God wants you to Prophecy/ interpret songs – DO IT! For His glory.

Don't fall into the trap of looking at the gifts God has given others as being envious of them! We've got 2 chickens, Babs and Betty. Every day we feed them their proper chicken food and some of our leftovers. Whenever we give them bread, we throw it onto the grass and it doesn't matter how many pieces there are, without fail they go for the same piece. Crazy eh! We can be the same too, envious and jealous of what others have without focusing on what God has in store for you.

You and I, like the 3 servants in the story will be held accountable for the skills, gifts and opportunities God has given to each of us. Now there's a good motivation!

#### 1 Peter 4 v 1

Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. <sup>8</sup> Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

What stops us?

- Laziness
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Business
- Low expectations of ourselves
- Low self image image of ourselves
- Condemnation
- Lack of confidence
- Wrong ambition
- Discounting yourself

- Sin
- Bad experience – stopped dreaming!
- Worried what others may think

We are briefly going to be looking at 3 of them that can particularly stop us as women

### 1)FEAR

There is good fear – danger (that helps us make safe decisions) – a right fear of God. Good!

There is also a bad fear, a crippling, out of control emotion that stops us doing what God has for us. For some reason this wrong type of fear is a weapon that the Devil loves to use against us women.

I remember Zac and Sarah Dixon coming to our house whilst she was pregnant with the boys. They had just recently heard the very bad news that one of the babies had a piece of their brain missing. The piece that we each need for movement. The Dr's said that it would not grow. We had dinner and then spent some time praying for them all. It was a very significant time when God came and brought hope where there was fear and gave both the Dixons specific gifts of faith for their babies lives. They started fighting in prayer for their babies. Months later both babies were born, healthy and with no missing brain part. What a miracle! Less than a year later Zac is cycling home and a car hits him and he is left with very serious life threatening injuries. The experienced Police think he will die from his injuries. When we went to visit him in hospital I talked to his brother Zeke and he said that when he and Sarah arrived at hospital very shortly after the accident, they were being prepared for the worst. However Sarah said that wasn't going to happen. Right at that moment God gave Sarah again a gift of faith. And after one miracle and another, a few months later he is here, well, back at work and with very little lasting damage. They had fought with fear both times. God did amazing and miraculous works.

Fear is very deceptive and it multiplies in our minds, it often slips into our lives and lives in our minds as an unwelcome guest, casting a looming shadow. Fear - A dangerous parasite.

In 1 John 4 : 18 it says

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Fear, like I've said, is an unwelcome guest that we have often let into our unguarded minds. It often takes a lot of hard work renewing your mind by firstly realising the fears you have, repenting of being in fear, believing what the Bible says, catching thoughts very quickly and changing long standing behaviour. With God's power you can become free and when you are free through Jesus – you are free indeed.

## 2) SELF IMAGE

What do you see when you look in the mirror? What do you think about the person that you are? Your character. The way you act and relate to people?

You see the way we think about ourselves can really affect the amount we allow ourselves to be used by God. If we think we are so horrible, ugly, useless, valueless and unimportant the less we feel worthy of being used by God. We put up a wall between ourselves and God. 'I'm not worth it...'

This is once again a weapon that the Devil uses to stop us knowing God fully. And He especially likes to use it against us women.

Women, we are amazing, beautiful, our very existence creates awe, you and I were fearfully and wonderfully made, made in the very image of God.

Genesis 1 :27 So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them

Our value does not depend on our looks (which fade), our status (married/single), our physical abilities, our wealth, or our intelligence. Our value is based on God designing you in his image, God making you as a worshipper, God choosing you and Jesus dying on a cross for you.

No plan of the Devil, no plan of mankind or our own poor self image can reduce your value.

You are amazing!

Fear, like I've said, is an unwelcome guest that we have often let into our unguarded minds. It often takes a lot of hard work renewing your mind by firstly realising the negative thoughts about you have yourself, repenting of thinking like that, believing what the Bible says, catching thoughts very quickly and changing long standing thought patterns. With God's power you can become free and when you are free through Jesus – you are free indeed.

With fear and poor self image, often we know what we should think and do, but we struggle to do it and be free; but today can be the day say that we say 'enough is enough; I'm not going to be a slave of this anymore' and take a key step towards being free.

### 3) PAST EXPERIENCES

One of the many things you have to learn in life is how you cope with failure and disappointment and if you're smart you will learn where you went wrong, change and try again!

I see this in my sons. Sometimes they do something and it goes wrong and they try again. E.g. Callum making a Scalextric and then changing different parts of the track to make it work. Other times they try it and if they 'fail' they don't want anything to do with it anymore E.G. Callum learning to play football and being criticised. He had given up in his head and didn't want to play anymore. We had a good chat with him, got him to tell us what had happened and how it made him feel. We then helped him get some perspective and told him to have fun with it and not take it so seriously. He had a choice stop playing it or carry on. Thankfully he's decided to give it a go and since then his confidence and ability has grown. He took a risk! It worked

Thomas Edison – (February 11, 1847 – October 18, 1931) was an American inventor, scientist, and businessman. He developed many devices that greatly influenced life around the world, including the [phonograph](#) (first method of recording and playing back sound), the [motion picture camera](#), nickel-iron

batteries and a long-lasting, practical electric [light bulb](#). In addition, he created the world's first industrial [research laboratory](#)

But unlike the average person Edison continued to try and try again. The famous story goes, Edison failed to refine the light bulb (one of the few creations he merely refined but did not invent) so many times it took him 10,000 attempts to perfect. However rather than accepting failure 9,999 times he is quoted as answering questions on his failures as rather: 'I have not failed. I have just found 9,999 ways that do not work'.

Don't give up on using the abilities, skills and opportunities just because it goes wrong or because of delays. Don't let past experiences stop you. If prayers don't seem to be answered, your friends aren't becoming Christians, no one responds to a word you give, you invite people around your house and they misbehave, you feel that all you do is serve and no one else is and you're becoming discouraged. You've shown compassion and commitment to help someone get out of a difficult situation but within a short time they have chosen to go back to their old life and you may be left thinking – all that effort for what?

Do you give up using what God has given you because of past experiences – no!

Conclusion

We have a choice to make. Are we as women and men going to be idle/lazy/scared of using your gifts God has given you like the man who buried his talents or are you going to be someone who learns, perseveres and uses the talents God has given you?

John Wimber

John prayed for healing, and He taught on healing every Sunday, fifty-two weeks a year, every Sunday for two years in a row. He preached a hundred sermons on healing and never saw one healing.

He said, "We called them up, prayed for the sick every week."

I said, "Wow, no healings ever? You never went out anywhere and saw anyone healed?"

He said, "No."

I said, "This is a miracle, that you didn't quit!"

He said, "No, I had to see healing." He operated under the principle, "I'm going to be faithful in small things; I'm not going to quit."

He said, "The only thing that consistently happened when I prayed for the sick is, I got the disease of the person I prayed for. I mean it! Someone had the flu, I would go to their house and I would get the flu. Someone would have a really bad cold and migraine headaches; I would pray for them and get migraine headaches."

He said, "I was scared to death to pray for a pregnant woman." He told that joke so many times, drove me crazy

So, one Sunday, they saw their first healing. It was a great story; not that it was so dramatic, but there were some dramatic things. He went on to see many things: blind eyes opened, deaf ears opened, all manner of diseases were healed after that.

God has got so much in store for The Crown over the next few years. As women in the Crown, our challenge is to use these talents, gifts and opportunities God gives us. I want God to be pleased with me and say well done Louise. You did all this with your talents!

How are you going to be using yours?