

Articles and Sermons :: WOMEN OF FIRE by J. Lee Grady**WOMEN OF FIRE by J. Lee Grady - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2010/5/14 23:58**

Sister Peng pays a high price to be a Christian in China. She has been arrested many times, and she will go to jail again if the police catch her preaching the gospel. Forced to live as a fugitive, she must sneak into her home at night to visit her husband and young daughter.

The first time Peng was taken into custody, just after the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing in 1989, she was delivering a fresh shipment of Chinese Bibles to some unregistered pastors. She was thrown into a dirty detention cell and tortured with an electric cattle prod in an effort to force a confession of her "crimes." She shivered in that cell for months. Guards offered no coats, blankets or feminine hygiene supplies.

"For eight months I had no contact with anyone. I just ate soup in my cell," Peng told me when I visited China three years ago. "It is really God's mercy that he fed me and kept me warm."

When Peng was transferred to a women's prison, she spent two lonely years there. But during that time she led 32 female inmates to Christ. Upon her release, she immediately resumed her itinerant preaching ministry.

Now 43, Peng doesn't let her thin frame or her femininity stop her from taking on dangerous assignments. And she is not alone. She is one of the many female heroes of China's underground church movement.

When I visited a group of unregistered church leaders in a city near Hong Kong in 2001, I discovered that between one-half to two-thirds of all church planters in China today are women, most between the ages of 18 and 24. These women, along with their male colleagues, lead an estimated 25,000 people to Christ daily.

One evening after a meeting with these humble Chinese leaders, I returned to my hotel room and discovered two of the female leaders waiting at my door with a translator. "They would like you to pray for them," the translator said. "Are you pastors or evangelists?" I asked, hoping to better understand their needs. They smiled and replied, "Yes." "How many churches do you oversee?" I inquired. The translator pointed to the woman on the left. "This one oversees 2,000 churches, and this other one oversees 5,000 churches," he said.

I was stunned. Some denominations in the United States are still arguing about whether a woman can stand behind a pulpit, I said to myself. Meanwhile, women in China are engaging in dangerous missions and governing thousands of new churches. There's something wrong with this picture!

Sister Peng is a woman on assignment, and her passion is not waning. On the last day of my visit, she shared with me her plans to take teams of Chinese Christians into the Muslim republics on the western border of China - a place where she expects to encounter harsher persecution than anything she experienced under the communist police.

Her ultimate goal, she told me, is to see the Chinese church "march from China to Jerusalem until all the Muslim world hears the gospel" Peng added, "I used to think that missionaries going from China would not happen until after I die. But God has shown me that it will soon be time. I want to raise up 700 missionaries. God is going to raise up apostolic teams throughout China. It's our time to go to the world."

God Needs a Junia

Since my trip to China I have met many other women who face incredible hardships as they engage in bold ministry. Like the female apostle Junia, who served alongside the apostle Paul and who was imprisoned with him (see Romans 16:7), these women are willing to die for Christ.

One of these modern Junias is Natasha Shedrevaya, a Russian church planter who was recently appointed to head her denomination, based in Moscow. The first woman to be appointed a bishop in her country, Shedrevaya oversees 30 churches in Russia and 300 churches in the former republics of the Soviet Union.

Shedrevaya is a woman on a mission. Her goal is to plant a church in every village in the Siberian north - a region spanning several time zones where most people have never heard the gospel. She is fulfilling her vision with little aid from the West and no help from the Orthodox religious establishment in her own country.

I met another modern Junia two years ago when Kayy Gordon visited my office in Florida. Gordon spent 40 years in the far north of Canada, reaching the isolated Inuit people sometimes called Eskimos. Never married, this dedicated woman obeyed God's call and went to live in a desolate place most people would never dare visit.

Gordon had to travel from village to village by dog sled during the first years of her difficult ministry. Later, after more workers joined her team, she lost one of her best staff members in a plane crash.

Yet even the most discouraging circumstances did not take Gordon off the front lines. At the time she retired, she had planted 12 churches and founded two Bible colleges. The seeds she planted in the Arctic tundra produced a spiritual awakening throughout that region.

Amazingly, when I share stories of women like Kayy Gordon, Natasha Shedrevaya or Sister Peng, some people still object. They say, "I don't think women can be leaders," or "God wants men to be the initiators, not women."

You might expect such responses from men who are blinded by a chauvinistic mindset. But I have learned that many women in the American church today hold the same views. They don't think it is proper for a woman to display the courage necessary to plant churches or take nations for Christ. How ridiculous! The Bible calls all believers not just men - to be bold witnesses. And the Scriptures do not suggest that only men can initiate. All of us should display the kind of overcoming faith that drives us to surmount obstacles, believe for miracles, trample on devils and challenge the status quo.

Why do so many American Christian women shy away from this "challenge?" I've identified four reasons:

1. They are too comfortable in their religious boxes.

There is a religious spirit in the church that tells women they must fit a certain God-ordained "female role." Many conservative Christians believe that a woman is not fulfilling this role unless she stays home all day and focuses on domestic duties.

Yet the Bible does not say all women must fulfill the same role, or that all women should function primarily as maids, cooks and caregivers. All women are not wives and mothers, and all are not called to stay at home full-time. Many women--even those with children--can be called upon by God to do exploits for his kingdom.

I have a friend named Jackie Rodriguez who is a gifted evangelist. In December of last year, Rodriguez took her baby with her to southern Mexico, where she preached in several villages. She led many people to Christ during that week.

Some women would balk at such a seemingly dangerous mission. But Rodriguez has decided that she cannot excuse herself from fulfilling the Great Commission just because she is nursing a baby. She lives outside the box! Of course not all women are called to preach in foreign countries. But my question is this: Are you willing to? Have you taken all your objections and excuses to the cross, or are you keeping God at arm's distance because you think he might ask you to go on a mission that you feel unqualified to accomplish?

2. God has not called any of us to live under the control of fear

God has not called any of us to live under the control of fear, and women cannot use their gender as an excuse to be mousy or fainthearted. In fact, the Apostle Peter commands women to renounce fear in order to be an Army. Daniels was eager to go to the front lines and minister to troops stationed in Iraq and Kuwait. During the Gulf War in 1991, Daniels led many soldiers to Jesus - and she wanted to do it again.

I was struck by Daniels' total lack of fear. Her boldness was such a contrast to the passivity and timidity I see in so many American women - many of whom stopped flying in airplanes after Sept. 11, 2001, because of their fear of terrorism. (Daniels did not end up going to Iraq during the war, but she did minister to servicemen's wives at a military base in Germany.)

God has not called any of us to live under the control of fear, and women cannot use their gender as an excuse to be m

ousy or fainthearted. In fact, the Apostle Peter commands women to renounce fear in order to be true daughters of Sarah (1 Peter 3:6). Have you made sure that fear is not a stumbling block in your heart?

3. They are waiting for men to give them permission.

The conservative church in the United States has conditioned women to be passive. For years we've told women to be quiet, to stay out of church leadership and to wait for men to give them instructions. Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit has been wooing women to tune out the voice of religion so they can hear his voice.

My Bible says that God calls women to special tasks, and certainly God does not need a man's permission before he commissions a woman to do something. The Hebrew midwives, in fact, defied Pharaoh's mandate and deliberately did the opposite. Deborah, the great Old Testament prophet, took her orders from God--not a man. When God announced the coming of the Messiah to Mary, he did not consult her father or her fiancé first.

And let's remember that Jesus came to Mary Magdalene at the tomb before he appeared to his male disciples on Easter morning. If you are waiting for a man's permission to do some form of ministry, that permission may never come. You must obey the Lord's voice. When you stand before the throne of judgment, don't assume that "My husband wouldn't let me do that" will be a permissible excuse.

4. They have not embraced the Great Commission.

So few American Christians - men or women have genuine zeal to see Christ's kingdom expand to the nations. Even though Jesus told us to seek his kingdom first, missionary endeavors quickly drop to the bottom of our priority lists when we are distracted by materialism and the cares of this life.

But we must remember that even in this season of terrorist threats, SARS outbreaks and economic instability, God has not revoked the Great Commission. He has not said to us: "That's OK. You don't have to take the gospel to the nations right now, at least until the threat of Muslim violence subsides."

No, the Great Commission still stands. We must take up the challenge, swallow our fears, and love not our lives "even unto death" (Revelation 12:11). I believe God is calling women like never before to rise to this occasion. Every previous generation has had brave women warriors. From the days of the early church, when women of faith were ripped to pieces by Caesar's lions, the daughters of the church have provided a bold witness.

Where are these women of fire today? My prayer is that they will emerge in this decade with hotter zeal, deeper compassion and stronger commitment than at any other time in history.

Re: WOMEN OF FIRE by J. Lee Grady - posted by HeartSong, on: 2010/5/15 1:01

This is very encouraging for I am becoming very weary of waiting for the men to rise to the occasion.

Yes Lord, set my heart aflame - for no one around me seems to be up to the task and things just can not stay the way they are - everything is so empty and dead and meaningless without Thee. Send down the fire O Lord!

Re: - posted by KathleenP (), on: 2010/5/15 5:16

Thanks for posting Greg. Brother, I am very sad that there are not any men in my area that are completely zealous for the Lord. It is almost as if a spell has been put upon them as they hide from the duty they are called to perform.

Everything in me does not want to be any sort of leader. I pray daily for a meek and quiet spirit, but yet to have the utter boldness for the truth to be spoken in this slumbering land. I live where it is completely New Age and Indian powwows. You can feel it when they perform their ceremonies. To find those that will pray against this is difficult at best; especially to find men of God that will war also, is even a greater lack.

Please, men of God, there is work to do! Don't let anyone take your crown!

Re: WOMEN OF FIRE by J. Lee Grady - posted by Lysa (), on: 2010/5/15 7:33

Quote:
-----There's something wrong with this picture!

Amen!!

Re: waiting - posted by Lysa (), on: 2010/5/15 7:40

Quote:
-----by HeartSong
This is very encouraging for I am becoming very weary of waiting for the men to rise to the occasion.

We grow weary waiting while people die and go to hell.

Kathleen is right. while reading this, I was wondering why she was sneaking home to see her HUSBAND and daughter!! It's like they do have a spell cast on them.

The women in this article are VERY encouraging that they didn't grow weary because they heard and obeyed and went about the Father's business!! OH God, for ears to hear and a mind to obey "quickly."

Re: - posted by Giggles (), on: 2010/5/15 8:09

Thank you for sisters that have replied to this thread. It stirs me and makes me wonder what holds me back from releasing the life I have been given in Christ.

Lord help me, please, to not bury my talent as the world perishes and my sisters look for men to arise.

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2010/5/15 10:40

It might be interesting to some of you that Kayy Gordon is my great Aunt!

Re: WOMEN OF FIRE by J. Lee Grady - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2010/5/29 8:44

Women in leadership vs males...Seems to me the trouble begins when people become primarily concerned with power rather than service to our Almighty God. This mindset bedevils wherever you have a strong person leading, even if it males. If it is males it is called "gifting" that mars relationships. If it occurs among women it is that "woman is out of her place".

Oh well..

Having worked formally in a ministry for years, I have developed a deep appreciation for team efforts. You bounce off each other, giving encouragement when needed, teach each other. I loved these sessions of give and take. We were all there for one purpose and we worked together to accomplish this goal. Such a blessing.

Fascinating article, Greg. Ruth A. Tucker shares similar stories in her book "From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya".

ginnyrose

Re: women of fire..., on: 2010/5/29 10:15

I did a study once of all of the times that women are referred to in ministry in the New Testament.. It is amazing....However...it is clear that women were not allowed to exercise authority in the Elder ship of the local church.

Overall, we must be careful not to compare doctrine with the success or failures historically, such as some of the ladies mentioned, but with the written Historical account in the Gospels. The New testament is the pattern we must adapt, not the experience of some.

Saying that, God seems to always uncover an anomaly here and there, just to prove He is Sovereign and limitless. I think of Judge Deborah. How she must have been envied and maligned, but she was in deed the de facto Princess of Israel.

And then the women evangelists and missionaries.....and the biblical prophetesses...??

As I see it, ALL OF ISAIAH 61, NO LOCAL LEADERSHIP OVER MEN... Part of Isiah 61 is to proclaim the acceptable day of the Lord. Is this preaching? I think so.

Isaiah 61: 1-6

The Year of the LORD's Favor

- 1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
- 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
- 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor.
- 4 They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.
- 5 Aliens will shepherd your flocks;
foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.
- 6 And you will be called priests of the LORD,
you will be named ministers of our God.
You will feed on the wealth of nations,
and in their riches you will boast.

The anointing is neither male nor female. we are one in Christ. This is the anointing, encapsulated as ministry....men and women.

We need to get this right, and we will.

Re: - posted by StarofGOD (), on: 2010/6/25 10:06

are you also related to adoniram Judson Gordon?!

Re: WOMEN OF FIRE by J. Lee Grady - posted by Theophila (), on: 2010/6/25 10:35

The Lord of the harvest uses vessels that are ready and willing. Period.

He doesn't seem to see the male vs. female thing we love to quibble about. He finds such vessels, fills them with His power and voila! souls are brought into the kingdom.

May He find in me, a ready and willing vessel, Amen.

Re: WOMEN OF FIRE by J. Lee Grady - posted by Goldminer (), on: 2010/6/25 10:42

Thank you for sharing this Greg. It is time we all, both men, and women, be about our Father's business.

Do you all feel that we are coming into a new season of effectiveness in gathering the harvest. I am more excited than I've been in years.

I feel another area where we need to get it straight is in the area of age. I see ministers that are retired. They think they have served enough. Well you won't be so tired if you get off your duffs and start engaging the enemy once again. It ain't over until the fat lady sings. We need to get off our duffs, I include myself in this, and let's do what burns in our hearts. I know a wonderful 85 year old apostolic minister that walks around in discouragement and hopelessness, and grieves over the state of the church. He has a fire shut up in his bones, but the younger generation turn him a deaf ear, they are too busy socializing. Well what we need to do, is do it ourselves, and they will follow. I am convinced that this is the way. Step out and begin and it will impact those around us who have a like heart. Obey God and He will supply all that's needed.

We have been called into the kingdom for such a time as this. We are those who will bring in the harvest just before His return. I am ashamed by the testimonies like Greg has shared here, and those of Brother Yun, and the Korean revival by Bro. Goforth. They bled for souls. They could feel the burning fires of hell that were scorching the lives of the lost. Do we? Do I. I am ashamed. That is why I am reading about these wonderful warriors and allowing their testimonies to impact my life. I feel a change and I want it.

Let's ask God to turn up our fallow ground. Amen?