

10 THINGS  
JESUS TAUGHT  
ABOUT  
WOMEN

AND A FEW THINGS  
HE DIDN'T TEACH

❧ JESUS, FRIEND OF WOMEN ❧

SUSAN  
HYATT

# 10 THINGS JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT WOMEN

AND A FEW THINGS  
HE DIDN'T TEACH

Susan C. Hyatt



Psalm 67:1-2

*A Publication of*  
**INT'L CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S  
HISTORY PROJECT & HALL OF FAME**

❧ AN IMPRINT OF HYATT PRESS ❧

2009

TEN THINGS JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT WOMEN  
AND A FEW THINGS HE DIDN'T TEACH

By Susan C. Hyatt

© 2009 by Hyatt International Ministries, Incorporated  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Published by

Int'l Christian Women's History Project & Hall of Fame  
An Imprint of Hyatt Press and Hyatt Int'l Ministries, Inc.

*Mailing Address (2009)*

9933 S. 108<sup>th</sup> East Avenue  
Tulsa, OK 76133 USA

*Internet Addresses*

*Email:* DrSueHyatt@aol.com or DrSueHyatt@gmail.com

*Web Site:* www.icwhp.org

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations  
are taken from the HOLY BIBLE  
NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society

First published in Great Britain 1979

Inclusive language version 1995, 1996

Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton, a member of the Hodder Head-  
line Group.

All rights reserved.

Book Design: Susan C. Hyatt

ISBN 978-1-888435-13-9

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Control Number

Pending

# CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>		
<b>Surprised by Jesus</b>		4
<i>What Jesus Taught #1</i>		
<b>Women &amp; Women Are Equal.</b>		9
<i>What Jesus Taught #2</i>		
<b>Women Are Not Property.</b>		13
<i>What Jesus Taught #3</i>		
<b>Women Are More Important than Religion.</b>		16
<i>What Jesus Taught #4</i>		
<b>Women Are Equal Partners in Marriage.</b>		18
<i>What Jesus Taught #5</i>		
<b>Women Have Equal Authority in Ministry.</b>		21
<i>What Jesus Taught #6</i>		
<b>Women Can Represent God.</b>		24
<i>What Jesus Taught #7</i>		
<b>Women Are Equal in God’s Family Values.</b>		27
<i>What Jesus Taught #8</i>		
<b>Women Are Not Confined to the Kitchen.</b>		31
<i>What Jesus Taught #9</i>		
<b>Women Are Not Measured by Child-Bearing.</b>		33
<i>What Jesus Taught #10</i>		
<b>Women Can Be Apostles.</b>		35
<i>About the Author</i>		39
<i>Resources</i>		40

# SURPRISED BY JESUS

This little book is a Bible study that explores what Jesus taught about women. It provides insights that bring understanding to what Jesus said and didn't say, and to what He did and didn't do in His encounters with women. As these truths unfold, they bring new hope, new joy in living for Jesus, and confidence in doing His will. This is liberty! Jesus was woman's best friend.

As a result of these truths, I believe that Mary's command to the servants at the wedding feast in Canaan: *Whatever He says to you, do it!* (Jn. 2:5 NKJV), will be met with fresh enthusiasm on our part: "Yes, Lord! I can do it! By your grace, I will be what you want me to be and do whatever you want me to do!"

The purpose of this book is not to answer all the questions about women in the Bible and the church. Instead, it is the *starting point*—what Jesus taught. The right starting point is necessary if we are to get an accurate understanding of God's will for women. Starting with Jesus gives us His view of the entire landscape, that is, of what the whole Bible really teaches about women. This is especially important when it comes to those parts of the Bible that have been called "the difficult passages." As Christian believers, what we believe about women is to be in line with what Jesus taught. May it be so!

Unfortunately, traditional Christian teaching begins with the idea that woman is inferior, unequal, evil, and unclean, and this starting point perverts the message that Jesus taught. If

you would like to see the evidence for this, read John Alvin's Schmidt amazing book, *Veiled and Silenced*. The negative starting point has brought about terrible distortions of Scripture, resulting in the silencing, subordination, submission of women, and domestic abuse within the church and Christian homes.

Jesus did not teach any of these things, or even imply them. For Him, women were no more inferior, unequal, evil, and unclean—if you like—than men! The truth is that men and women have equal need of a Savior! But gender is not the issue.

So then, Jesus did not treat women as secondary or subordinate. It is helpful to consider it this way:

Jesus taught that women are equal with men in terms of

- SUBSTANCE/IMAGE (what constitutes the female in creation)
- VALUE (what women are worth)
- PRIVILEGE (opportunities and freedoms for women)
- RESPONSIBILITY (what women are accountable for)
- FUNCTION (tasks and roles women can fulfill)
- AUTHORITY (rights, power, and influence for women).

The things that Jesus did *not* teach about women shatter the traditional teachings, removing all excuses for control and domination. He did not teach or even allude to the idea of male *headship* or leadership and female *submission* or subordination. There is no indication that Jesus ever promoted or suggested a male hierarchy in the home, the church, or the society-at-large. He had opportunities to do so in his many personal dealings with both single and married women (*e.g.*, Lk. 8:1-3; Jn. 4:4-42). Instead, Jesus was always helping women to get God's picture of themselves—a picture that is opposite to the picture that shows

women in female roles dictated by religious culture. He was always doing things to dislodge the comfortable mindset of the men on His team, often shocking them by His dealings with women! Jesus was a teacher of change, not a conformist who reinforced the wrong around Him. Because He loved people, He took every opportunity to correct the wrong thinking that held them in bondage.

The Gospels tell us that women, as well as the Twelve men, travelled with Jesus in His “inner circle.” The significance of this tends to elude us because of the emphasis in the church that men were the dominant ones in Jesus’ life. But women were a very much a part of the picture—even as equal players on the team, in Jesus’ eyes. This becomes clear by His choice of a woman disciple—instead of one of the Twelve—to be the first apostle after His resurrection, at which point He is totally free of the expectations and restrictions of human culture.

David Scholer, an eminent, evangelical Bible scholar, writes, It is important to stress the inclusion of women in the group of Jesus’ disciples, since the Twelve have often been used in the history of the church to argue that only men can exercise authority and leadership in the church. Jesus indicated clearly that discipleship was a higher priority than gender roles. Both Luke 8:19-21(//Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 12:46-50) and 11:27-28 place obedience to the word of God above the role of mother/motherhood. Thus it is not surprising that Jesus’ group of disciples included women (“Patterns of Authority in the Early Church,” 1993, p. 47).

Some examples of women in the Gospels remind us of Jesus’ female disciples. Luke 8:1-3 tells us that women were with Him,

providing of their substance to support Him. At least one of the women was married: Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. Most church leaders today would probably insist that these women return home and look after their husbands. But Jesus did not do that! The fact that He allowed the women to travel with Him is evidence that He was not promoting a traditional role for women that confined them to the home. He honored their right to make decisions that took them outside the home. This one example signals how far traditional teaching on women has moved from the message of Jesus.

The Gospel writers tell us that Jesus related on a personal level to other women, such as, the woman at the well (Jn. 4:4-26), Mary and Martha (Lk. 10:38-42), Mary Magdalene (Mt. 27:55-56) and *the many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him* (Mt. 27:55). NEVER do we find Jesus telling these women to submit to men. Instead, He apparently related to them on the same level as He did the men. He allowed women to make their own choices and set their own priorities.

The Holy Spirit continues to teach the truths that Jesus taught, and He continues *not* to teach the things that Jesus did *not* teach! This is important because the Holy Spirit is everything to us that Jesus would be if He were here in the flesh, so the Holy Spirit, who now lives in us, continues to teach us what Jesus taught and didn't teach.

Because the church, for the most part, has not followed Jesus' teaching in this matter, it has often created an unhealthy tension within God's women. The church teaches one thing; the Holy Spirit, another. This conflict causes emotional problems such as depression, anger, and frustration, as well as behavior such as aggression, passivity, or manipulation in relationships.



The Good News is that, as we get the truth in our minds from the Bible, it confirms what the Holy Spirit has been telling us all along in our hearts. It doesn't confirm what the church has taught us! That is because The Word of God and the Spirit of God agree! And as we embrace the truth, the conflict within us subsides. A wonderful peace fills our whole being! The truth makes us whole! It sets us free!

This ongoing work of Jesus through the Holy Spirit on behalf of women is evident in the New Testament, the Early Church, and church history. It is especially obvious during times of revival—those times when God breaks in and disrupts human culture and church tradition with *His ways*. At such times, the Spirit of God always elevates women toward equality with men to the extent that the culture has been changed by the revival to accommodate the ongoing ways of God.

For our own sake as consecrated believers in the Lord Jesus, we need to let Him teach us in this vital area. For the sake of evangelism and discipleship, and the sake of hurting people everywhere, it's important that we get it right—that we teach what Jesus taught about women.

My prayer for you, the reader,  
is David's prayer in Psalm 119: 17-19.

*17 Do good to your servant,  
and I will live; I will obey your word.*  
*18 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful  
things in your law.*  
*19 I am a stranger on earth;  
do not hide your commands from me.*

## *MEN & WOMEN ARE EQUAL.*

Jesus came to reveal God and to inject into our lives, the values—the motives, the character, the ways and means—of Heaven. He came to turn on the Light in our darkness! And this included turning on the Light so we could get it right—from Heaven’s perspective—about women. When Jesus turned on the Light, it showed God’s point of view: women are created, regarded, respected, and commissioned as equals with men. What a contrast with the terrible ideas that prevailed in the dark!

In the church, for some strange reason, a very firm line based solely on gender has been drawn between the sexes. Men do this; women do not! Men rule; women serve. As a result, precious gifts—given by God for His glory, for His children’s personal fulfillment, and for the salvation of the nations and the healing of hurting people—lie unopened! A gift that God should have given to a man—it seems!—He gave to a woman instead, and so it can never be used as He intended. Many of us have felt the sting of this, and Florence Nightingale said it well,

“I would have given her (the church) my head, my hand, my heart. She would not have them.”

But our walk with Jesus is a walk with the lights turned on. We can see, open, and use the gifts He has deposited in our unique personalities, if we will. A few years ago, when I asked the Lord to help me in a difficult situation related to all of this, I heard these words in my heart:

*RECOGNIZE what I have given you;  
VALUE what I have given you; and  
GIVE what I have given you  
TO THOSE WHO  
RECOGNIZE what I have given you, and  
VALUE what I have given you, and  
RECEIVE what I have given you.*

The truth is that Our Creator has blessed each of us, irrespective of gender, with Himself (*The Greatest Gift*), and with precious gifts of *His* choosing. He wants to work through us, using these *gifts*, and He will do so if we will but open them and follow Him. As we walk in the Light, we can do this, even defying tradition—as we surely will! But He is glorified in this.

God gives us gifts and personalities so that we can express Him to other people. Nothing indicates His sovereignty and His specific, personal will for us any more clearly than this. And this is what we bring to Him as we consecrate our lives to Him, that we might do our small part in His big plan.

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ...  
teaching them to observe  
ALL THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU....  
Jesus (Mt. 28:19-20 NKJV)*

In relation to the Great Commission, allow me to share a personal experience I had in prayer during a doctoral seminar on missions strategy. While simply resting, with my head on my desk, while others worked at praying, I was caught by surprise when the Holy Spirit jarred me and I began interceding. It was

Spirit-initiated, Spirit-filled, and Spirit-directed prayer! The words I heard in my heart as I prayed were these:

*The church has all the money, means, and methods to take the message to the whole world, but what I want to do is purge the message that it is taking so that it is My Message.*

As I yielded in prayer, it was clear to me that a big chunk that must be purged is the traditional message about women. If the church is to advance the Gospel, that part must go! God's will is that we teach *the Message of Jesus about women*. That is God's Word to us, and we are to apply the knowledge available to us to read the words and deeds of Jesus in the social settings of His day and derive the meaning He intended.

When we understand the PREVAILING THINKING about women in Jesus' day, we begin to understand how radical His teaching was. We begin to see what He was up against.

- The oral law of Jesus' day said: Let the words of the Law be burned rather than committed to women. . . . If a man teaches his daughter the Law, it is as though he taught her lewdness (*Sotah* 3:4).
- A woman is inferior to her husband in all things. Let her, therefore, be obedient to him (*Apion* 2:25).
- Let a curse come upon the man who must needs have his wife or children say grace for him.
- Praise be to God that he has not created me a gentile; praised be God that He created me not a woman; praised be God that he has not created me an ignorant man. (This is a Jewish thanksgiving prayer of Jesus' day. *Menahot* 43b.)

- It is well for those whose children are male, but ill for those whose children are female . . . At the birth of a boy all are joyful, but at the birth of a girl all are sad . . . When a boy comes into the world, peace comes into the world; when a girl comes, nothing comes . . . Even the most virtuous of women is a witch (*Niddah* 31b).

When we become aware of SOCIAL PRACTICES regarding women in Jesus' day, we gain further insight into the revolutionary nature of His teaching.

- In the Jerusalem temple, women were limited to one outer portion, the women's court, which was five steps below the court for the men.
- A rabbi regarded it beneath his dignity to speak to a woman in public.
- Women were kept for childbearing and rearing, and they were always under the strict control of a man.

These prevailing thoughts and social practices reflect the sinful nature of humanity resulting from the fall. They also reveal how the thinking of God's Chosen People had been corrupted by syncretism with pagan cultures.

When we read the Gospels with knowledge, we understand that the writers clearly show us that Jesus rejected the idea that women are evil, inferior, unclean, and unequal. Nowhere do the Gospel writers portray women as being of lesser value than men. Nowhere are women restricted to certain roles, and nowhere are women treated as the property of men or subjects under male authority. Instead Jesus, Our Lord, demonstrated most vigorously that women and men are equal.

## *WOMEN ARE NOT PROPERTY.*

How could it ever be right to think that one person should own another person? Yet, the prevailing belief has been that husbands own their wives and daughters. The notion is that wives are the property of husbands, and therefore they are expected to serve in “their proper place” as the domestic and maternal overseers of the man’s household. Written in such blunt terms, the error of this thinking should almost jump off the page!

Do you know that Jesus actually confronted this thinking? In John 8:3-11, He made it clear that women are not the property of men and are not to be treated as such. This point can easily be lost because most of us lack the knowledge to read it with understanding. But let’s look at Jesus’ encounter with the religious leaders in this passage and see what we can learn.

The religious leaders brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught in adultery. According to Deuteronomy 22:22-30, she was to be stoned to death in public. The religious leaders used this occasion to challenge Jesus about whether or not He agreed with the Deuteronomy command.

Normally, in a cursory reading of this passage in John’s Gospel, we focus on the efforts of the religious leaders to trap Jesus. We give little attention to the fact that they were willing to exploit a woman to do so. Does this reveal what little regard the religious leaders had for women, that they could use a woman to their advantage this way?

According to the religious law, the woman was the property of one man, and the sin in this case was that his property had been damaged. The sin was not her behavior *per se*. The problem was that she—as property—had been misused. The sin was that the man—her owner—had been violated. Accordingly, this woman was now considered a disgrace to her owner and should be killed.

Also, according to the law, the man was to be stoned to death, not for adultery *per se*, but because he had violated another man's property. His part in all of this seems to be unimportant to the religious leaders. Why? Where was he? Why did the religious leaders bring only the woman to Jesus? The answers can only be attributed to the prejudice toward women, and perhaps, also, to the anger of the religious leaders toward Jesus' compassionate and equal treatment of women. The end of the story is that Jesus turned the tables on them and they left.

Jesus was so different from the religious leaders! He demonstrated an entirely different set of values from theirs. Jesus did not treat the woman as a man's property. He treated her as a person of equal human worth.

Also, a fact often overlooked is that He spoke directly and personally to her in public. This kind of recognition is almost always a sign of respect, and in this case Jesus made this woman *a subject of His respect* instead of *an object of social disgrace*. (How many times have we—simply because we are women—been treated as though we were invisible or with disrespect?) Beyond this point, Jesus, by speaking to the woman publicly, was doing something that the culture prohibited.

Another thing of note in this story is that Jesus' words to the woman were forgiving and compassionate. Without embracing

sin, He related to her in a way that did not cast blame or shame on her. He gave her a new start in life: *“Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more” (John 8:11 NKJV).*

The stated purpose of the religious leaders in this situation had been to trap Jesus (Jn. 8:6). But Jesus refused to take their bait, and since He was not controlled by other people, He put the focus where it needed to be. He proactively changed the focus to what really mattered! That was what God thought of all of this, of the error of the leaders, and of the welfare of this abused woman. And He showed that this woman was not a piece of human property, not a tool of religious systems, not a worthless item to be used as men pleased. She really was worth something to God!

Today, whose values do we embrace?



## *WOMEN ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN RELIGION.*

Now, with our new awareness of the prevailing attitudes about women that play into the Gospel stories, we can get closer to the truth in passages such as Matthew 9:20-22. This passage tells the story of Jesus healing the woman with the issue of blood. Because of her condition, she was considered unclean. Can you image the awful sense of hopelessness, rejection, and alienation she had been feeling? Sick. Weak. Depressed. Useless. Hopeless. Rejected.

Yet, this woman's determination to press through the crowd to touch Jesus personally says much about her belief that He is different from the religious leaders—that He really cares about HER! Her courage gives us the sense that she believes that He accepts her and that He can and will heal her. He can and will meet HER need.

Such expectation could not possibly have arisen in a vacuum! She had become aware of Jesus, probably through reports from others, and perhaps from seeing Him with her own eyes on previous occasions. She saw love that vanquished rejection. She felt faith that drove out the fear that had bound her. Blazing hope burned up the hopelessness and despair. She had met Jesus, and He had changed everything!

It is important to recognize that this story is not just about

Jesus healing someone; *it is about Jesus healing a woman*. It is about the circumstances in which He healed her. It is about Jesus' confrontation with the religious leaders, and how He offended them personally by breaking their sacred laws—to help a woman! In all of this, He showed that one woman is more valuable than sacred rules and religious rituals.

Beyond this, however, we can learn from what Jesus did *not* do when He healed this “unclean” woman. He didn't attempt to diagnose the cause of her hemorrhage. He didn't tell her she was sick because of some personal sin. He didn't connect the cause of her sickness to authority issues by telling her to submit to her husband or to a religious leader. In fact, Jesus didn't probe for the cause of the sickness! He just healed her! And He did so with the same compassion and simplicity with which He healed men, such as blind Bartimaeus.

We learn more about Jesus' attitude through a couple of things He did that were socially unacceptable in this situation.

- By speaking to this woman in public, Jesus risked rejection or worse, because that gesture was socially unacceptable.
- By allowing this “unclean” woman to touch Him, Jesus was allowing something that made him ritually unclean, according to Leviticus 15:19, 25-27.

Jesus did not heal this woman based on religious rules or for personal gain. He did it for HER! He disregarded laws and shattered opinions to help HER. In so doing, He demonstrated God's values and priorities—and He showed that, in God's Heart, a woman is far more important than religion.

How much are we like Jesus?

## *WOMEN ARE EQUAL PARTNERS IN MARRIAGE.*

When society allows one human being to own another—to define another human being as personal property—something is terribly amiss! Yet women were—and often, still are—considered the property of men. Perhaps the most obvious venue for this practice was—and still is—marriage and the home. And Jesus dealt with this, too.

The Jews of Jesus' day lived by a double standard that can be summed up by the fact that a husband could divorce his wife for any reason, but a wife could not divorce her husband for any reason. She was of secondary value—mere property—so, basically, he could use her and dispense with her at will.

Jesus rejected this double standard. Marriage, he showed, was not to be a relationship designed for the benefit of man. It was to be a relationship of equals in which both the man and woman had equal privileges and rights, equal responsibility and authority (Mk. 10:2-12; Mt. 19:3-9).

My husband, Eddie, contributes the following thoughts:

Matthew 19:3-9 records a discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning divorce, prompted by the Pharisees' question: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" This question was based on Deuteronomy 24:1-4 which stated that if a man had become displeased with his

wife because he had found some uncleanness in her, he could write her a certificate of divorce and send her away. With various personal interpretations possible, Jewish men of Jesus' day had been known to divorce their wives over trivial matters. Perhaps because Jesus was showing an unheard of openness to women, the Pharisees posed this question to challenge Him. Jesus' answer reveals an intriguing approach to Biblical interpretation that has ramifications for a theology of womanhood.

*"Haven't you read," he replied, "that AT THE BEGINNING the Creator 'made them male and female', and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no-one separate."*

The Pharisees quoted Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and challenged, *"Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and send her away?"* to which Jesus replied, *"Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts permitted you to divorce your wives, but FROM THE BEGINNING it was not so."* This response reveals that He considered the Divine model for male-female relationships to be in the Genesis account of Creation, not in later passages that deal with relationships in a fallen world. Moses, He said, permitted divorce *because of the hardness of your hearts.*

His point is that we should not settle for what God has allowed because of our sinful, hard hearts. Instead, we should be seeking God's best for male-female relationships, which He says is revealed in the Creation account *before sin*

entered the world. We are to go back to the original where there was equality and mutuality, with no hint of one having priority, dominance, or authority over the other.

Eddie also shares the following experience. He writes,

While driving one morning to a class I was to teach, I turned on the radio and listened as a well-known pastor with a national audience announce that he would be teaching on Christian marriage. I was astounded when he read the Biblical text for his message! It was Genesis 3:16, *And your desire shall be to your husband an he shall rule of you....* I could not believe what I was hearing and exclaimed out loud,

“No! No! This is not a passage about Christian marriage! This is the curse that is coming into the world because of sin!”

Indeed, these words of God to the woman are not a prescription of what ought to be, but a description of what will happen because of sin. This is the first time in Scripture that we see any sign of hierarchy in marriage and the human family and it is obviously a result of sin and the fall. This passage should never be used to teach on Christian marriage. We must follow the instruction of Jesus and go back to the beginning—before the fall—to find the model for Christian marriage. (For a thorough treatment of Genesis 3:16, see pages 237-243 of *In the Spirit We're Equal*.)

I am grateful for these insights that God has given Eddie! And I would ask, “Which model does the church pursue?” God wants people to do the right thing, and Jesus expressed this in statements, like, *In everything, do to others what you would have then do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets (Mt. 7:12).*

## WOMEN HAVE EQUAL AUTHORITY IN MINISTRY.

Jesus taught a way of thinking about women that challenged His world—and ours—because He lived by the values of Heaven. *Values* are the most basic and intangible things in our thinking that cause us to make the choices we do. I believe that Jesus included the idea of values in His model prayer (Mt. 6:9-13), especially in verse 10, when He said, *Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* I believe He was asking that God's values would characterize all that we think and do so that the ways of Heaven would be practiced on earth. These values are foreign to our world, but Jesus embodied them, and He injected them into everyday life.

When Paul talks about racial and gender equality (Eph. 2:14; Gal. 3:28)—values expressed by Jesus—he says that Jesus broke down *the wall of separation*. When we follow Jesus, we too will proclaim to women what Jesus has done. We will tell everyone that Jesus has broken down the walls of prejudice and separation that have debased women.

One day, Jesus changed the life of a Samaritan woman. According to John (4:4-42), He met her at Jacob's Well. Perhaps the most astounding thing about this encounter was that He revealed, for the first time with unmistakable clarity, who He was—*I who speak to you am He [the Messiah] vv. 25-26.* Imagine!

The first person to whom Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah was a woman! And Jesus said that on the revelation of who He is, He would build His church (Mt. 16:18).

This lowly, Samaritan woman was amazed that Jesus seemed to know all about her. In fact, “I know you” was the message that caught her attention. “And I want you to know Me. Here is who you are, and here is who I am.” It is Jesus caring for an individual and establishing a relationship with her!

This woman was so excited that she ran to her village and told everyone about Him. It didn’t matter that she was a woman. She had met Jesus and social rules had become irrelevant.

What she was doing is what we would call preaching or speaking publicly. She was proclaiming the Good News! Jesus didn’t tell her to be quiet. In some instances, He did tell people not to tell His identity and what He had done (*e.g.*, Mt. 12:16) but on this occasion, that was not the case. Jesus did not silence this woman—or any woman.

This woman didn’t go to the village elders to see if they would give her permission to speak. Her authority came from Jesus’ revelation to her of who He was. That is enough! It was then, and it is now!

Jesus didn’t seem to be concerned that it was a woman who would be spreading the good news about Him. In fact, despite the fact that a woman’s testimony was not considered valid or acceptable, He entrusted this most important of all testimonies to her. He knew that *the revelation of who He is* would ultimately triumph over human rules. It did then, and it will today—if we will simply trust and obey Him.

Consider this! Jesus didn’t restrict her to sharing her experience only with the other women or children of the village.

The word “men” in John 4:28 is the Greek word *anthropoi*, which is gender inclusive and refers to both men and women, and is best translated “people.” So she told everyone—men, women, boys, girls—about Jesus.

This is so exciting! Jesus did not limit this woman’s function or authority in any way! She was sent by Him and He did not restrict her in any way! How remarkable in the light of the church’s attitude through the centuries—and still today, in many cases!

In His encounter with this woman, Jesus broke three laws. First, as a Jew, He was not permitted to speak to a Samaritan. But He did. (What does this say about Jesus?) Also, as a man, He was not to speak publicly to a woman. Yet, He did! This is why John 4:27 says that His disciples marveled that He spoke to a woman. Finally, as a teacher, Jesus was prohibited from teaching women theology. But He did! (What does all of this say about Jesus? No wonder the disciples marveled!)

Essentially, Jesus called this woman to the same function He called the Twelve and the women disciples. She was to testify of Him! And despite the fact that she was a woman, He did not diminish the authority inherent in the assignment.

Many Samaritans believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony. Is it possible that this woman’s “ministry,” in fact, laid the groundwork for the great revival in Samaria (Acts 8:4-8)?

Do we understand the pattern here? We meet Him, get to know Him, and tell others who He is so they, too, can get to know Him. It does not get any simpler than this! And it should not get more complicated!



## WOMEN CAN REPRESENT GOD.

Jesus referred to God as *Abba* (Mk. 14:36). This was an Aramaic expression a child would use to refer to his or her father. It was an endearing expression, similar to “Daddy” or “Papa.” The point of Jesus’ use of this word was that He knew God as the personal and trustworthy One He could count on—as should be the case with an earthly father. Jesus’ use of the expression could not have been based on gender because God is spirit and therefore transcends gender.

Jesus did not limit His communication about what God is like to this male metaphor; He also used female illustrations to help us understand God. In doing this, He was in harmony with the Old Testament, where God, at times, is referred to in feminine imagery. In Isaiah 66:13, for example, God says to Israel, *As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.* (See also: Gen. 17:1; Job 38:28-29; Is. 42:14; Is. 46:3-4; Is. 49:15.)

We know of two occasions in which Jesus used feminine metaphors to help us understand the nature of God. In the first instance, found in Matthew 23:37, Jesus compares His desire to protect and care for Jerusalem with the protective instincts of a mother hen spreading her wings over her brood. (Is it possible that the protective instinct is, in fact, a characteristic of God that resides within people—both men and women? Is it possible that it is not a trait attributable only to men?)

In the second instance, found in Luke 15:8-10, Jesus tells a

parable about a woman who found a lost coin. In the parable, He uses the image of a woman to portray God. It has been suggested by scholars that Jesus did this on purpose to counter the sexist attitudes of the scribes and Pharisees.

These references to God in feminine terms are important for a couple of reasons. First, traditional theology has inaccurately taught that God is portrayed only in male terms and so only men can represent God. The traditional belief has been that only the male reflects the full image of God—God, being male, in their estimation. Secondly, the picture of God as male has tended to give men a sense of priority, power and privilege. At the same time, it has tended to minister a sense of secondary value to women. As my young friend, Irena, in Bulgaria said to me, “This is new about women for me. We have been told that women are second.”

Since the idea of God as *father* is so deeply embedded in our minds, we should consider it further. *Father* is a metaphor. A *metaphor* is a communication tool used to compare two or more unlike things that have one thing in common. It is a useful tool, but it has important limits that must be remembered always. For example, how would you describe a snowflake to someone who had never seen snow? You would have to say it is like this, or like that, but it isn't completely like this or that. And God is more difficult to describe than a snowflake!

The metaphor of God as father, especially in a male-ruled society, was helpful to God's people because it helped show the stark difference between the true God and the gods of the heathen. The people of Israel understood that their God was personal, predictable, reliable, and loving. This was opposite to the pagan gods, who were impersonal, unpredictable, capricious, and

demanding. As a good, earthly father gives to his children, so God is a Giver, Protector, Provider, and so on. The pagan gods, on the other hand, were takers who instilled only fear and who required constant sacrifice to appease their demands. The God of Israel is consistently good, much like a father is expected to be. Yet He is much more than any earthly parent could ever be.

When we see God *only* as father, we tend to limit God to the idea of fatherhood. He is so much more than that, and He is so much more than we can imagine. He is God. A good discussion about this is found in J. B. Phillips book, *Your God Is Too Small*.

Another very important point to remember is that we are not to make God in our image, regardless of the gender issue. We are to remember that both men and women are made in the image of God; *God is not made in our image*. God warned the Children of Israel not to create any image, male or female, as a likeness of God (Deut. 4:15-16).

*You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully so you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman....*

Although we may not be guilty of making a physical image of God, is it possible that we have made mental images of God that, in most cases, are male?

There is no valid reason to suggest that women cannot represent God. God is neither male nor female and transcends gender. Yet we, as men and women, have equal responsibility, with equal authority, to represent God—to testify to and extend His Life and values. It is our mandate.

## WOMEN ARE EQUAL IN GOD'S FAMILY VALUES.

Much is said, especially in religious circles, about *family values*, and family is certainly of utmost importance. Caution is needed, however, because we can easily promote the values of our religion instead of the values of Heaven. Luke 8:19-21 provides a window into *God's Family Values* to help us with this.

*<sup>19</sup>Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. <sup>20</sup>Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." <sup>21</sup>He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."*

When the messenger notifies Jesus that His mother and brothers are waiting to see Him, Jesus' response is very interesting. It must have shocked the messenger! He or she must have wondered how He could ignore His mother and brothers.

But Jesus was a teacher, and He was using something that the people understood to teach them something they needed to learn. He seemed to do this a lot! He would catch people at a moment they least expected and rattle their thinking to help them change their thinking about God and His ways. In this case, Jesus wanted to help the people see that what creates intimate relationship with Him is one thing only: *hearing God's word and putting it into practice*. It is not by any other means.

Who had greater right to intimacy with Jesus than His mother and brothers? Yet He is saying that this privilege belongs to those *hearing God's word and putting it into practice*. He is saying to the people listening,

"You understand the close relationship my mother and brothers have with me. You can have that, too, because intimacy with me is not based on flesh and blood. It is based on *hearing God's word and putting it into practice*."

Jesus really cuts to the chase. He doesn't have to teach them how *not* to have intimacy with Him. For example, at this point, He doesn't warn them *not* to pray as the pagans do. He doesn't caution them about *not* to try to find intimacy with Him through religious methods. He simply says that the one way to have an intimate, mother/sibling quality of relationship with Him is by *hearing God's word and putting it into practice*.

In this passage, Jesus not only uses our natural understanding of family to help change our thinking; He also disrupts the normal definition of family somewhat through His questioning of what it is to be His "mother" and "brother." This is a good thing in that it blurs the social expectations and restrictions imposed by the roles defined by words like "mother" and "brother." He says that real motherhood and real brotherhood—the highest quality "family" relationships—come from Him and are not defined by social expectations of roles found in human culture. Society is not to define what we do and when, why, and how we do it. His word is to do that.

We must let Him define our roles in this life because He has expectations and jobs for us that differ from or exceed those placed on us by our culture, our family, and our religion. Jesus Himself experienced this in Nazareth, where people had social

expectations and restrictions for Him based on His role as a carpenter, a son, and a local boy with brothers and sisters (Mk. 6:3). As a result, He could do no mighty works there (Mk. 6:5). This is the restricting power of socially defined roles, and it is a power that Jesus wants to break. Can we grasp this?

Finally, in this passage, it must be noted that Jesus is not dishonoring or diminishing family! Instead, He is highlighting a principle that supersedes natural family ties and socially governed roles. He is using family as a picture that we already have to show us a picture of God and God's way of looking at relationship. In God's system, it seems that roles as we understand them are replaced by relationship with Him through His Word. This is the one defining relationship that preempts all others. This—not socially-imposed roles with implicit expectations—is what is to define our lives as His people. We are to let God define us, and that happens through *hearing God's word and putting it into practice*.

In most societies, including Christian circles, the female mandate is to function exclusively—or almost so—in the prescribed wife and child-bearing roles. Adherence to this mandate carries with it honor and recognition, but it is all within something called “woman's place,” which is lower on the social ladder than the man's place. For example, Medieval society saw women's proper roles as being that of “wombs and workers.” And in England, King James established the model of the home as a little kingdom, with the man as king, even as he was King of the nation. He also defined the home as a little church, with the man as the high priest and head of the home, even as he was the spiritual head of the church in England. Unfortunately, these concepts have crowded out what Jesus

taught and have become the paradigm of family values promoted by the church.

Jesus is telling us that as we seek to connect with Him, the governing priority is always and only to be *hearing and putting into practice the Word of God*. In all of this, He is not diminishing the need to show respect to mothers and brothers. Instead, He is saying that the honor due family members is the honor we are to extend to every person. God is no respecter of persons, and we are to treat others as He would treat them.

God's Family Values. What an awesome idea!

## WOMEN ARE NOT CONFINED TO THE KITCHEN.

Yes! Jesus was indeed radical in His teachings—and in His teaching about womanhood! We see this again when He visits the home of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). In this visit, He really upsets things. He praises Mary for being His disciple and sitting at His feet while He teaches her the Scriptures, a thing prohibited by the oral law. At the same time, He seems to withhold praise from Martha who is busy doing what needs to be done, and in this case, we could say, she was busy doing “women’s work.”

It has been pointed out by scholars that Jesus’ was showing respect for Mary, first as *a person*. He was not relating to her on the basis of gender. In relating to her as a person, He was highlighting her ability to choose how she would spend her time, rather than being controlled by the expectations attached to a socially-determined, female role. He allowed her to set her own priorities in life.

Her choice was to “sit at Jesus’ feet,” an expression meaning that she was a student or disciple. This expression is used by Paul to say he had been a disciple of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). This discipleship status was a privilege that only men were allowed, yet here was Mary, sitting and learning “theology.” And Jesus encouraged her in this! He even commended her, saying, she



had *chosen the better part*. (Someone has suggested that perhaps this made Him a greater sinner or lawbreaker than Mary.)

On the other hand, Jesus did not commend Martha for faithfully fulfilling the social expectations and obvious needs of her guests. She was properly submissive to expectations of culture, but Jesus did not side with her in her choice. In fact, when Martha complained, He said,

*“Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (v. 42).*

Jesus did *not* condemn Martha, but He *did* highlight that Mary’s choice was more in line with the Heart of God. His response in this situation seems to coincide with His admonition to seek first God’s priorities, ways and means, and then all of life would line up with God’s highest and best (author’s loose paraphrase of Mt. 6:33).

How many women have opted to be “good Christians” by doing what they have learned is their role as women? Women, like men, are to sit at Jesus’ feet and simply let Him unfold their lives like beautiful flowers or mighty oaks. But how many faithful *Marthas* are sad, unfulfilled, disillusioned and co-dependant? The answer? Sit at Jesus’ feet.

Men, too, come under heaviness by conforming to the expectations of culture and religion. And Jesus’ call goes out to all who are thus burdened by religion, *“Come to Me ... and you will find rest for your souls.... (Mt. 11:28-30).* Sit at My feet!

There is nothing wrong with mundane work! Some people enjoy the kitchen! What is wrong is to impose roles, jobs, and obligations based on gender, rather than to allow relationship with Jesus to determine how, when, and where a person’s God-given gifts are to function and fit into His scheme of things.

## WOMEN ARE NOT MEASURED BY CHILD-BEARING.

Jesus' radical teaching about womanhood continues! It makes a person wonder what many religious folks would do if Jesus showed up today! (Perhaps He does and we crucify Him all over again, so to speak.) His attitude in Luke 11:27-28 might be one of the most difficult for religious people to grasp.

Jesus was normally proactive in His teaching. He used events and situations to teach truth, so we seldom see Him reacting. But when He did teach by reaction, we see something of how angry God is at sin! This is one of those times!

One day a woman complimented Jesus by referring to how happy His mother must have been to have given birth to such a wonderful son. She simply said, *"Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!"* This woman meant no harm, but Jesus rebuked her, and His rebuke was not gentle! Rather, the word choice and word order in the Greek text indicate that His rebuke was sharp and severe! Jesus seems to have been deeply troubled by the woman's reference to woman in purely reproductive terms. This prompts one male scholar to remark, "Jesus clearly felt it necessary to reject the 'baby-machine' image of women."

Childbearing is a wonderful thing! But Jesus was teaching that childbearing is not to be worshipped. It is not to be the

standard by which a woman's life is to be measured. He seemed to be concerned that women did not see themselves as God sees them. And He seems to take every opportunity to change their thinking.

This is interesting to me because of an experience I had in an African nation in 1983. On this mission, we were being hosted by our African sisters, with each woman in our group being paired with a woman in the host group. Immediately, in an effort to get acquainted, my hostess asked me if I were married, to which I replied yes. With this, she was comfortable! Her next question was whether or not I yet had children, to which I replied no. With this, she was visibly *uncomfortable*! She essentially shut down.

At the time, I didn't know that, for these women, being married and having children were, by far, the main things in life. It was the sole reason for their existence. It was what defined the women. It was their measuring stick of success. Childbearing was the one thing that removed shame and vindicated them as women! Had I realized this, I'm sure I could have been more accommodating—somehow! Yet, even if I had been able to mend the communication breakdown, I'm not sure that this dear woman could have overcome her own limitation in order to continue the conversation.

A sidebar to this story is that the main purpose of the mission was to teach women the Jesus lifestyle, including His message of their equality with men!

## WOMEN CAN BE APOSTLES.

A recent trend has been for some parts of the church to allow women to minister publicly, while at the same time, not allowing them to occupy positions of spiritual or ecclesiastical authority. These groups have usually experienced a degree of revival, meaning that the Holy Spirit has broken in. At such times of visitation, we tend to assume that the Holy Spirit comes to confirm what we believe. According to Jesus, however, the Spirit comes to change us and to guide us into all truth (Jn. 16:13). One of these changes always involves elevating women to equality with men to the extent the culture will allow. In most cases, women find a public voice—because that is God’s will.

When evidence of the Spirit’s manifest presence diminishes in these groups, however, human government replaces the leadership of the Spirit. Normally, male rulership is firmly re-established, all but erasing the elevation of women toward equality that was implemented by the activity of the Holy Spirit. Women may retain a public voice, but little or no authority.

In this popular, contemporary form of church government, the five-fold ministry (Eph. 4:11) seems to be the model of choice. In this structure, *apostleship* is considered the most authoritative of the “offices.” This, coupled with the idea of man as head or ruler, means women are kept under control. At least three problems appear in this approach.

1. *Apostle*. The New Testament meaning for the Greek word

translated *apostle* is simply “a sent one.” It carries no sense of authority over people (1 Cor. 4:6-13).

2. *Office*. Nowhere in the original language of the New Testament is the word “office” or the idea of “ministry office” found, even though some translators opted to insert it (e.g., 1 Tim. 3:1). Words such as *apostle*, *pastor*, *prophet*, *bishop*, and so on, refer to function and responsibility, rather than to an office or a position of power.
3. *Five-Fold Ministry*. The idea of “five-fold ministry” is not necessarily a model for church government. In fact, neither Jesus nor Paul gives us a standardized list of ministries and gifts, or a church structure. Ephesians 4:11-12 is the only place that the “five-fold ministry” is found, and since it is not wise to build a doctrine on only one passage of Scripture, we should be careful not to ascribe too much weight to this form.

Despite these issues, in this new apostolic movement, women are permitted and encouraged to minister. This is enough to make many women feel good after having to deal so long with the doctrine of “Woman, be silent!” Some men in leadership have found this idea beneficial, too, because giving women this coveted freedom to prophesy, preach, and teach publicly has been a means for them to grow their ministries. In fact, ministries that allow women a public voice tend to flourish.

On the other hand, women are not allowed to function in the highest “office” advocated in this sort of church structure. This indicates, first of all, that it is hierarchical, a form that neither Jesus nor Paul advocated. It indicates, as well, that it is patriarchal; that is, men rule; women serve—as teachers, preachers, and so

on, but not in the ruling “office of apostle.” It is all terribly off course, biblically speaking.

With that said, we do need to look at an *apostle*, in the true, New Testament sense. And this apostle was a woman—Mary Magdalene—who happened to be the first apostle commissioned by the Risen Christ (Jn. 10:10-18; Mt. 28:1-10).

It is an acknowledged fact that the women were the last ones to leave the cross and the first ones to arrive at the tomb. When Mary Magdalene visited the tomb early on Resurrection morning and found it empty, she went immediately to tell the others that Jesus’ body was missing. They all hastened to the scene, but they did not grasp the significance of the empty tomb because *they still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead* (Jn. 20:9). So they left, but Mary lingered. It was then that Jesus appeared to her and said, “*Go and tell my brothers....*”

This appearance and commissioning are significant. The Gospel writers explicitly note that it was Mary Magdalene to whom Jesus appeared *first*. The importance that the Gospel writers attach to this fact indicates that it was not an accidental occurrence. It was something that Jesus did on purpose so as to demonstrate God’s perspective on women. All along, He had tried to get this across, but this was the final blow to their traditional mindsets. In appearing first to Mary Magdalene, Jesus was making a very important statement that the disciples had not previously fully understood.

- *Go and tell* defines the commission. Since the New Testament word *apostle* literally means “one who is sent,” Mary was actually receiving the first apostolic commission from

the Risen Lord to be the first to proclaim the greatest fact in history, the Resurrection.

- *Go and tell My brethren* defines the people to whom Jesus was sending her. *He* was sending *her* to *men*. He was not sending her to other women! In other words, her commission was not to a “women’s ministry,” as is so often the restriction placed on women today. As a result, Mary has been referred to as “the apostle to the apostles.”

The idea of a woman testifying to men was revolutionary because, in both Roman and Jewish courts of law, the testimony of a woman was not permitted as evidence. By appearing *first* to Mary Magdalene and by sending her *to the men*, Jesus was cutting through remnants of prejudice yet remaining in His male disciples toward His female disciples.

No doubt, He was also teaching the women something revolutionary about their responsibility and status in God’s plan. A new day had dawned. Jesus was alive, victorious over sin, and no longer restricted to the social expectations and restrictions of human culture. In three short years, He had walked among God’s Chosen People, teaching them so much about the values of Heaven. Now, it was their turn to pick up the torch, to hold forth the Word of Life (Phil. 2:16). And now it is my turn—and yours! *Whatever He says to you, do it!* (Remember Jn. 2:5?)

The Risen Lord is calling us today—men and women alike—to live according to *His* values in every area of life, and to do our small part in His big plan, carrying out the Great Commission, *teaching them to observe ALL that He has commanded* (Mt. 28:19-20 NKJV). May He find us faithful.

Susan Stubbs Hyatt (b. 1946) is a church historian, Bible scholar, ordained minister (1983), and educator. A Canadian residing in Tulsa, Oklahoma, she is founding coordinator of the Int'l Christian Women's History Project and Hall of Fame ([www.icwhp.org](http://www.icwhp.org)), an undertaking that provides education, resources, relationships, leadership training, and ministry opportunities. She is also founding coordinator of the Christian Historical Society of Canada (2009).

She earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Regent University (2000), two MAs *with honors* from Oral Roberts University (1989 & 1994), a BA *summa cum laude* from Southwestern University (1987), and she graduated *with honors* from the University of New Brunswick Teachers College (1966), and from Christ for the Nations Institute (1976). She also did post-graduate studies at the Center for Advanced Theological Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary (1994-95). She is also a certified Life Skills Coach (1971).

Susan's audience consists mainly of those called to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2). She writes, publishes, and teaches. In 2001, she represented American Pentecostal women at the *Colloque Femmes et Religions* (2001) in Brussels. She wrote "Spirit-Filled Women" in *The Century of the Holy Spirit*, (pub. by Thomas Nelson) and edited by Vinson Synan. She contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization* (2008), writing about women in ministry.

Susan and her husband, Dr. Eddie L. Hyatt, are equal partners in ministry and marriage. They have planted churches, founded Bible schools, and ministered internationally. They are co-founders of Hyatt Int'l Ministries, Hyatt Int'l Bible Institute, and Hyatt Press. Their purpose is to promote spiritual awakening and biblical thinking among the nations, in order that God's ways may be known to and through His people (Ps. 67:1-2).



## How to Contact Eddie & Susan Hyatt

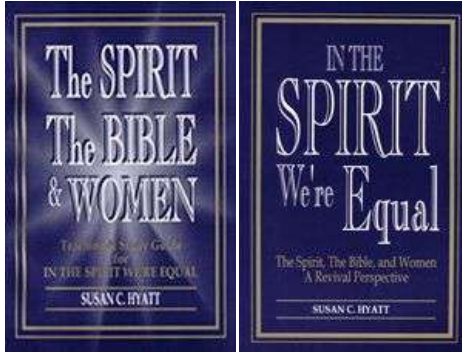
Mailing Address: 9933 S. 108<sup>th</sup> East Ave., Tulsa, OK 74133

Email: drsuehyatt@aol.com and eddiehyatt@aol.com

---

### Available Free Online \* 20 Lesson Course

#### THE SPIRIT, THE BIBLE & WOMEN



To Access the Course, Go To <http://www.icwhp.org/sbw.html>  
TEXTBOOK & MANUAL can be purchased separately for \$15 each.

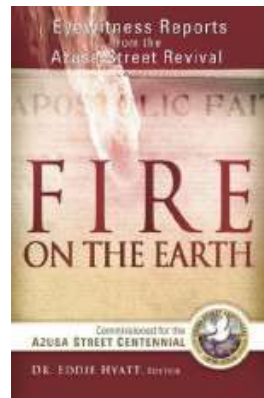
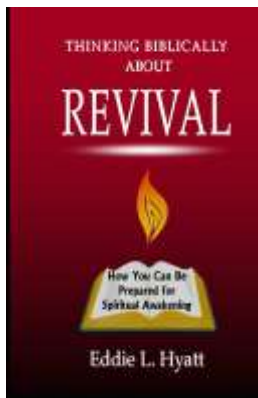
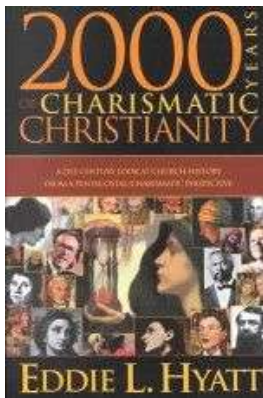
VISIT [WWW.ICWHP.ORG](http://WWW.ICWHP.ORG)

- \* To learn about the Int'l Christian Women's Studies Program
- \* To access more resources, including books and free articles
- \* To visit the online version of the Int'l Christian Women's Hall of Fame

## RESOURCES BY EDDIE L. HYATT

For Books, Articles, and Free Video Teaching by Eddie

Go to [www.EddieHyatt.com](http://www.EddieHyatt.com)



☞ THAT HIS WAYS MAY BE KNOWN, PS. 67:1-2 ☞



**INT'L CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S  
HISTORY PROJECT &  
HALL OF FAME**

*Dr. Susan Hyatt*  
FOUNDING-COORDINATOR

MAILING ADDRESS: 9933 S. 108TH EAST AVE. TULSA, OK 74133  
WWW.ICWHP.ORG      DRSUEHAYTT@AOL.COM

**HYATT PRESS**

**ISBN 978-1-888435-13-9**