

The Purple Corner

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On The Shoulders of Other Women

When reading the Bible we find stories of women from varying backgrounds, women with different life situations. But have you noticed that many of these accounts of women come in pairs? Ruth had a Naomi, an older woman who took the younger one under her wings so to speak and mentored her. Yes, they were related by marriage but the point is that they were in pairs. It started out as a threesome but ended in two women standing by each other through the stick and thin, the good and the bad. In a situation like this both women can benefit from the experience of the other. Each has something to pour into the life of the other and each can learn something from the other, if they are willing to do so.

Martha and Mary were two sisters who were as different as night and day and yet each had something that complemented the other. Many people give Martha a hard time for being so busy with household chores while Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet. Each of them operated in their own special gift. Again the two of them were as different as night and day and yet each possessed a certain quality that set them apart from each other. If they were the same who would have done the thing that the other one chose? Jesus never said that what Martha did was wrong he simply said Mary chose the good thing. Had they known he was coming perhaps both of them could have gotten things ready so that when he arrived both could have sat at his feet and basked in his presence.

In the book of Luke we find another interesting pair of women- Mary and Elizabeth. When Elizabeth, the older woman went to visit the younger woman we read that a strange thing happened. At the very sound of Elizabeth's voice the baby inside Mary's womb leaped. Elizabeth spoke words of encouragement to Mary which I'm sure she needed given her situation. They could relate to one another because they had something in common, both were with child. Elizabeth was carrying the son who would announce the son in Mary's womb. Again each woman had her own special gift and each had her own special assignment and they chose to be there for each other. In the absence of what was missing in their lives they found comfort in company of each other.

When life is hard and you're going through some rough times you should be able to turn to some other woman and find comfort. After all God brings us through trials, comforts us in the midst of our storms so that we can give comfort to others who are going through.

This is true with abused women. It is why support groups are of value to these women and it is why the faith community has an important role to play in offering such help. God is a relational God and he created us to be relational. Every Ruth needs a Naomi, every Martha needs a Mary and every Mary needs an Elizabeth. We can easily switch the names around and say it the other way. The message is simply this, we need each other and that's the way God meant it to be.

Where do you see yourself in these women? Perhaps you feel like singing the Oprah Winfrey theme, "I'm Every Woman."

When I say On the Shoulders of Other Women, I mean that there are women who have gone before us to pave the way. They have traveled the road we must take or sometimes they are on the same road. Whatever the case we can lean on each other and learn from one another. I also mean that we should see those shoulders as a place of safety, a place where we can be ourselves and not be judged. Those shoulders are receptacles for our tears when we need to cry and pillars when we need to be propped up while we regain our strength. Today you may need the shoulder of other women but tomorrow those same women may need to stand or lean on yours. It's the way God intended so who are we to deny Him his will?

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