

Wednesdays in the Word
Digging Deeper
May 13, 2020
2 John
“Cyria”

Happy Mother’s Day to all of you who make life so sweet for the rest of us. In today’s text and in light of the celebration of this holiday we will focus on a single word. In verses 1 and 5 of 2 John we find that gentle word, Lady. In the Greek it is translated from Kuria, a feminine form of Kurios. Our transliterated form of this word is Cyria. To follow the Greek progression of this we see Kurios is a male supremacy or controller often translated as Lord or Master. In the female form, Kuria, it’s meaning shifts to Mistress. A related form being Cyria was a proper name denoting a “Christian Lady”. When we consider the power and influence of christian ladies in all of our lives we can look to history both biblical and secular to find many wonderful illustrations. John focuses on the love and truth of a pure relationship with Jesus Christ and the resulting ripples in the pond of families of ladies who have embraced His indwelling Holy Spirit.

Portions of this paper have been edited and excerpted from an article written by Laura Polk. While we cannot agree with some of the doctrinal differences highlighted in these accounts we must understand the integrity of the lives here devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ.

20 Christian Women Who Shaped History

It’s not often in our history books that women are highlighted. Christian women, even less so. But, there are many Christian women in our past who shaped their communities, their countries, and even our world for the better. For each of them, their faith played a dominant role in their missions and their impact can still be felt today. Here are 20 such women who changed our world through the truth and love of Jesus Christ. Think about their lives, their legacies, and ask yourself -- what small thing might God be calling me to that could have ripple effects that change the world?

1. Florence Nightingale was a member of the Church of England and often prayed for God to give her a task that would define her life. During the Crimean War, she trained and organized nurses to care for wounded soldiers and became known as the founder of modern nursing.
2. Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her work in “bringing help to suffering humanity.” Known to minister to those that others wouldn’t even consider, she became one of the most famous missionaries of all time. Teresa’s faith was quite human and contained many doubts, “Most people know Mother Teresa as an iconic figure of piety, self-sacrifice, and faith. What most people don’t know is that throughout her life she felt plagued by the pain of doubt. She wrote: ‘I feel just that terrible pain of loss, of God not wanting me, of God not being God, of God not really existing.’ And in another personal letter, she struggled with accepting the love of Jesus: ‘Jesus has a very special love for you. As for me, the silence and the emptiness is so great that I look and do not see, listen and do not hear.’”

Even still, her doubt did not decrease her trust in God. Those who struggle with doubts too can turn to her example and know that they don't doubt alone. We do not care to tear down the faith of this great woman but simply to see in her the presence of ourselves. While we are hesitant to admit it most of us have had precisely the same hurts and feelings. Only faith in our Saviour can offset the weakness of humanity.

3. Susan B. Anthony. Born into a Quaker family with a long history of anti-slave activism, Susan developed an early sense of fairness and justice. She dedicated her life to women's suffrage after joining the women's rights movements in 1852. She campaigned for the abolition of slavery, the right for women to own their own property, to keep their earnings, as well as their right to attend higher learning institutions. Anthony was deeply faithful and "refused to secularize the women's rights movement, knowing it would take both the religious and the irreligious to change society."

4. Rosa Parks was known as the "Mother of the Modern-Day Civil Rights Movement," Rosa was a seamstress and civil rights activist who became famous for her refusal to obey a bus driver's demand that she give up her seat to a white male. Her arrest for civil disobedience triggered the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which launched one of its organizers, Martin Luther King, Jr, to the forefront of history. In her book Quiet Strength, Parks says this about how God helped her the fateful day she refused to give up her seat. "I felt the Lord would give me the strength to endure whatever I had to face. God did away with all my fear...It was time for someone to stand up--or, in my case, sit down. I refused to move." Mom's, this same fortitude exists in you if your life is in Christ.

5. Evangeline Cory Booth. After her parent's jointly founded the Christian Mission, which later became the Salvation Army, Evangeline Cory Booth dedicated her life to the same missional mindset and led the Salvation Army for 30 years before becoming the first female General in the International Salvation Army. Among her many writings were hymns. Perhaps the most famous was "The World for God."

The world for God! The world for God!
There's nothing else will meet the hunger of my soul...

6. Charlotte "Lottie" Moon was a Southern Baptist missionary who spent nearly 40 years working and living in China as a teacher and evangelist with the Foreign Mission Board. She helped to lay the groundwork for today's solid support of missions among Baptists in America. Except for a few visits back to the United States, Lottie Moon ministered in China for the rest of her life. She started schools, shared the Gospel in various villages, and helped improve the conditions for missionaries. The offering that was begun by the Baptist Women's Missionary Union is still collected every year as the "Lottie Moon Christmas Offering." It is the largest single missionary offering of that denomination each year.

7. Joan of Arc. As a young peasant girl, she believed God had chosen her to lead France to victory over England. With no military training or background, she convinced the crown prince to allow her to lead a French army to take the city of Orleans, and was victorious over the English. She was eventually captured, and tried for heresy and witchcraft at the age of 19.

According to Christianity.com, "As could be expected with such a stacked trial, she was convicted. In a terrified moment she recanted with the caveat that she did so only as far as it was God's will. Quickly she regained her courage and did not waver again, even when brought to the stake. She asked that a crucifix be held before her face, and called upon the name of Jesus as long as breath remained in her. Subsequent inquiries exonerated her.

8. Fanny Crosby, though totally blind, wrote more than 9,000 hymns, many of which are among the most popular in today's church denominations. Concerned that her name would be too prevalent in the hymnals, she was forced to use multiple pen names instead. Publisher and hymn writer William B. Bradbury was unhappy with the quality of many of the hymns that were submitted to him for publication. He heard of Fanny's talent, and after verifying her ability, promptly hired her to write hymns for his company, telling her, "While I have a publishing house, you will always have work!" Fanny knew she needed God's help in this new endeavor, and once described her hymn writing process this way: "It may seem a little old-fashioned, always to begin one's work with prayer, but I never undertake a hymn without first asking the good Lord to be my inspiration." And God provided inspiration from all areas of Fanny's life. While passing by a prisoner, she heard the man cry, "O Lord, don't pass me by," which quickly became the hymn "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior." When her friend Howard Doan played a melody for her and said, "See if it says anything to you," her joyful reply was, "Why, that says, 'Safe in the arms of Jesus!'" Within a half an hour, she had finished the poem. Her most famous hymn, "Blessed Assurance," is a personal testimony of her salvation.

9. Sojourner Truth. Born into slavery in Swartekill, New York, Isabella Truth escaped with her infant daughter and went on to become an abolitionist and women's rights activist. She is best known for her speech on racial inequalities entitled, "Ain't I a Woman?" which she gave at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851. In 1843, Isabella had a life-changing experience. She sensed God calling her to adopt the name "Sojourner" and travel the country sharing the gospel and her testimony. When they heard this news, her children were horrified. How could a poor, illiterate former slave hope to survive as an itinerant speaker? Women weren't supposed to speak publicly during this era, and she was also a former slave. Sojourner reassured her family that if, as she believed, the calling was from God, then He would protect her.

10. Amy Carmichael. Determined to fit into the local culture of India, Amy dressed as the Indian women she served and would even dye her skin with coffee. She founded the Dohnavur Mission in India where she helped to save hundreds, and possibly thousands, of children out of prostitution.

11. Corrie ten Boom. When the Nazis invaded Holland, Corrie and her family began hiding Jewish people in their home in hopes of saving them from death camps. When what they were doing was discovered, she was sent to a women's labor camp where she suffered horrific experiences at the hands of the very people she tried to protect others from. Later in life, these experiences led to a worldwide ministry through more than 60 countries where she preached about forgiveness and Christ's love. During this ministry she was able to extend the forgiveness of Christ to one of the Nazi guards who killed and abused her family.

12. Harriet Beecher Stowe brought light to the world about the harsh conditions African Americans suffered under slavery in her book, "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Not only did her book change America's outlook on slavery, it is said to have stirred the Civil War, with even President Abraham Lincoln greeting her once by saying, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war."

13. Liliias Trotter. Defying all taboos and restrictions that deterred European women from entering and ministering to others in the Middle East, Liliias Trotter gave up the wealthy lifestyle she was born into to minister to Muslims in Algeria. According to The Liliias Trotter Center, she "traveled for weeks into the desert to meet with those who did not know Jesus and shined His light each step of the way. Her theological and intellectual acuity are a challenge for us today." "Liliias also expressed her love for God and His world through the beauty of her artwork. Her art and her spiritual life were intertwined, as she used her pencils, pens and paints to capture impressions of the people and places she visited."

14. Carrie Nation. Believing that alcohol and tobacco were the root cause of much of American society's problems, Carrie Nation became an activist to fight against them. When her words were not enough, she turned to violence and became legendary for smashing saloons with an axe. Her efforts contributed to the passing of the Eighteenth Amendment.

15. Lucy Jane Rider Meyer believed that women needed a formal education in order to best serve as Christians and strove to have women recognized as leaders in the church. She is known as a trailblazer in the "deaconess" movement, which pushed to have women in leadership positions within the Methodist church.

16. Mary Kay Ash. Frustrated when she was passed over for a promotion that went to a man she had trained, Mary Kay Ash retired from the company she was working with and intended to write a book for women in business. That book eventually turned into a business plan for what is now known as Mary Kay Cosmetics. With the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12) as a founding principle of her company, Mary taught other women to advance by helping others succeed and opened up new opportunities for women to be in business for themselves worldwide.

17. Aimee Semple McPherson established an evangelical ministry during a time when women were not even allowed to vote. She preached the gospel around the world using theatrical church services and radio broadcasts, drawing in thousands, and rivaling the male evangelists

of her time. She preached upon a concept called the “Foursquare” and founded the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

18. Jennifer Wiseman was a senior project scientist for the Hubble Space Telescope and became the director of the Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion for the American Association of the Advancement of Science. This organization encourages communication between scientists and religious communities throughout the world.

19. Clara Barton. While taking care of her brother, David, during a long suffering illness, Clara found a new love for nursing. While visiting Europe, she worked with the International Red Cross, and upon her return to America lobbied for an American version of the same. The American Red Cross was founded in 1881, with Clara becoming the first president.

20. Flannery O’Connor is one of the most loved fiction writers of the 20th century. Her short stories have been described as shocking and perverse while at the same time, brilliant and deeply Christian. Now considered American classics, her writing challenged the world to rethink the way that faith and fiction collide.

Addendum; Laura Polk is a writer, speaker, and textile designer residing in North Carolina with her three children. Since becoming a single mom, her passion to minister to this group has led her to encourage successful single moms living through The Christian Single Mom on Facebook.

Each of you can in some way add your name to this list. God has indeed made you special and unique. Only allow the work of the Saviour to blossom and flow through you. He has placed you here and now to serve in a way no one else can. Ephesians 2:10. God thanks you and so do I. May He bless you and may you be a blessing.