



I

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man [adam] to be alone. I will make a helper [ezer] suitable for him.” (Genesis 2:18)

IDENTITY

CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

“I read that Adam and Eve story in Genesis,” she said, shaking her head. “And what happened with Eve was not cool.” I had to agree with my young friend Ann, who had recently started reading the Bible. As I (Suzanne) looked into her eyes, I saw reflections of my own heartbreaking disappointment with Eve. *Good grief—I’ve never met the woman, but she follows me everywhere.*

For pinned on her shoulders, tied to her sorry reputation, and sealed with all the force of hardened cement, remain our perceptions of the woman who was first deceived. Put bluntly, I’ve come to believe that our thoughts about Eve in general ain’t pretty. And who could blame us? Her deception led to our tendency to be deceived. Her sin birthed our sin. Her selfishness ushered daily pain into our lives. We have pain in childbirth and broken relationships to thank her for, misunderstandings and outright evil and injustice, not to mention the daily grind of trying to follow God in a world gone wrong.

And it all started with Eve . . . or so we’ve been told. (Not that we would have done any differently, if given the choice.) But still. The nicest thing we might say about Eve is that in every Bible story book we’ve ever read, she has great hair! But as everyone knows: those pictures don’t count for anything.

So that leaves us with nothing. Absolutely nothing good to say about Eve. Or does it?



For years, I nursed a secret grudge against Eve. I don’t remember talking about it openly, and I’m not sure I admitted it even to myself, but I had serious Eve issues. Some of them were almost comical; others were downright disastrous. Only in the last few years have I begun to realize where my thoughts on Eve went wrong.

As a single woman who longed for a godly husband, I suppose I first resented the fact that Eve didn't have to use an online dating site to find Adam. I envied the absolute assuredness that they were made for each other. *Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.* Sigh. Simmering beneath the surface was also the ugly fear that as an unmarried woman I didn't measure up to God's ideal. Forget about having kids as my biological clock ticked on: since I couldn't even find the right Adam, I often felt I hadn't even passed *Womanhood 101*.

Then there was Eve's obvious gullibility factor. All Satan had to do was ask her a question, "Did God really say?" and she was a goner. Never mind the fact that the account in Genesis 3 may have recorded the conversation when it was already halfway through. Or that Adam, too, willingly ate the fruit. I got the impression that Eve was easy prey, making her—and every woman after her—seem somehow inferior.

Finally, my grudge culminated in an outright anger over the effects of sin the first couple ushered in. "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). At the time, the desire for a husband seemed like it would be an outright blessing, rather than a curse. But the "rule over you" part made me feel somehow subservient to every man with whom I came in contact.

I never really brought up my Eve issues in polite conversation. I didn't exactly hear them covered in a Sunday sermon. And I never managed to bring the specifics to the surface in my counselor's office.

Yet Eve and the issues she raised in my heart were there, following me wherever I went. These issues caused me to question God's intentions toward me. They affected the way I owned (or didn't own) my role and responsibility in relationships. And many times, they kept me stuck in patterns that resigned me to a self-image that screamed "second best." Much like my eye doctor pre-

scribes contact lenses to correct my nearsightedness, I would come to see that my Eve vision needed an adjustment to the truth. But at least I wasn't alone.

A closer study, and even a stroll through Eve's lengthy Wikipedia page, revealed a troublesome reality: throughout Christian history, Eve was often seen as a temptress. A sexual temptress. This led many church fathers to express the view that women couldn't be trusted, that they were danger waiting to happen. They were "the devil's gateway," said Tertullian, the man who coined the word "Trinity."¹ Thomas Aquinas claimed that women were inferior to men.² And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

More troubling to me than the disparaging comments casting Eve as a bad girl was the complete lack of scriptural support to back them up. We've got Eve issues, all right, but it's not the Bible's fault. Mercifully, God's Word says, "The truth will set you free" (John 8:32). And so I eventually peeled back the pages of Scripture to uncover the truth about the real Eve of Eden.

Along the way, I realized that for many if not most of us, it is Eve's sin that defines her. Those irrevocable moments when she sought wisdom apart from God. If only she hadn't listened to the serpent. If only she hadn't pursued her own self-importance. If only she hadn't eaten the fruit. If only Adam had stopped her. If only.

Here's the difficult truth: Eve's disobedience colors the way we feel about ourselves as women, even when we don't admit it. I'll say it again another way. The way you feel about Eve reflects the way you feel about yourself. If Eve is dangerous, you are dangerous. If Eve is gullible, you may be gullible too. If Eve is inferior, then surely something about women in general is simply not up to par.

So, tell me, what's a girl to do with the problem of Eve?

UNFREEZING EVE

Rendezvousing with the serpent. Believing the lie. Biting the fruit. In the story of Eve, many of us have pressed the pause button, flash-freezing Eve as she grabs a shiny apple or sinks her teeth into a luscious piece of fruit. But what if the primary truth about Eve is different from our strongest impressions of her? What if the most memorable images in our Bible story books neglected to communicate Eve's true identity? And what if we've skipped over a portion of her story that holds the keys to our own identity as God's daughters?

Only God's Word can unlock the answers. And unlock them it does, if only we look close enough. When we do, we discover God's glorious vision for women created in his own image, as strong agents of rescue in his kingdom, and the ideal finishing touch to his very good creation. (Yes, keep reading—there's more good news!)

We understand that both Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, that they broke relationship with God—and that sin now colors our human experience, making this world a battleground for the heart of every man and woman. Tragically, we know we are born into sin. But we also understand that as daughters of Eve we can now embrace a new reality: the power of Christ's victory over evil. What the serpent cleverly disguised as power and wisdom has been revealed as fallen. What Satan came to steal, kill, and destroy, Christ came to redeem and restore. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, *the new creation* has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, emphasis added).

And so we press the play button, unfreezing Grandmother Eve. Yes, the beauty of Adam and Eve's partnership devolved into a selfish battle for individual power. But the story must not end there; indeed, it doesn't end there. Hold on tight, for our story, as described by author Scot McKnight, takes a dramatic turn: "The good news

story of the Bible is that the fall eventually gives way to new creation; the fallen can be reborn and recreated . . . The implications of the fall are being undone for those who are in Christ.”³

As we unfreeze Eve, we set ourselves free to discover her anew in the Bible’s first pages. And in doing so, we will discover ourselves—or perhaps recover ourselves—as women created with astounding intention and purpose. For as we awaken Eve from the pages of the Genesis creation story, we begin to understand her vital importance to God’s cause.

What we learn next will take us beneath the layers of any girl’s or woman’s exterior to the biblical truth regarding her soul-DNA. It will most likely excite us, move us, and stretch us. And the journey will start at the beginning, in Genesis 1.

“IN THE BEGINNING . . .

. . . God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

“All he had to do was speak and there was light,” the teacher would say. Clothed in what was most likely a pastel polyester dress, I eagerly soaked in the wisdom of my early Sunday school teacher. I could see God stretching out his hand, and with a poof and perhaps some smoke, light appearing. I innocently pictured the same method being used to make elephants, insects, plants, and great bodies of water. In my little mind, creation was a cosmic magic show, and God the Father, the ultimate show-stopping magician. The great illusionist David Copperfield had nothing on the Creator of the universe.

No one I know remains truly neutral about the Genesis creation account. God’s creative power demands a response, an acceptance or rejection, and so thousands of books have been written about whether God did this, and how he did this, and even why he did this. Since the first book of the Bible isn’t a science textbook,

we can't completely answer all of those questions. (Though that hasn't stopped many from trying.) But every Jesus follower I know does seem to agree on this: the creation account attempts to tell us who we are, if only we will listen. I personally think Genesis 1–3 should come with its own warning label. *Handle with care: clues to your identity contained here.*

At age five, it was God's magic show of creation that enthralled me. At age forty, it is the universal beauty and truth contained in the first chapters of Genesis. Open your Bible to its very first chapter and you'll discover it for yourself: Genesis 1 speaks clearly to people of every age, at any time, in every situation, in any location on this great planet. It's not hard to understand that God existed before the earth did, that he created the earth and the heavens and everything in them, and that he did all of this with incredible intention and purpose.⁴ We find comfort in knowing God creatively brought into existence the light and the darkness, the plants and the animals, the oceans and the dry lands.

We understand that the earth we stand on and the heavens we gaze at didn't happen by happy accident: God created them. We recognize God's power in this and take comfort in his loving creativity and provision. And the wonder of it all is that he created this sustainable planet with people in mind. With Adam and Eve in mind. To get a bit more personal, with *you* in mind.

So far so good, right? That depends. If you want to stick with the cosmic creation magic show of your youth and go no further, you might be tempted to disengage. If you've got Eve issues of your own, you might prefer to leave the first couple frozen in the freeze-frame of their sin. At least nothing would change, and you could resume life as you know it. I'm hoping, though, that you'll choose what's behind door number three. For woven into God's intentions for his first humans remains a plan that can literally change the

world. Where loneliness reigns, God yearns for community. Where hatred flourishes, God longs for respect and love. And where injustice bubbles up, God aches for equality and impartiality.

Truth be told, “God has never given up on his original dream.”⁵ A man and a woman placed in a garden, created to love him, to partner with each other, and to creatively and peacefully rule over the earth he created together. Do you long for what God longs for? Does your heart rise up to agree with God’s original dream? No wonder: for this is your story, daughter of Eve. The story you were made for.

LET’S GET THIS PARTY STARTED

“Mom, are Jesus and God married?” asked three-year-old Andrew. You’ve got to chuckle when a preschooler attempts to unravel the marvelous mystery of the Trinity! Right from the beginning, the creation story affirms the presence of a three-in-one God—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit or *Ruach* makes its appearance in Genesis 1:2, and John the apostle reminds us that in the beginning was the Word, Jesus Christ, who was active in all of creation. This is the creator God: a God of relationship longing for even more community. And those he creates would be beautifully interdependent together, just like their Creator.

I have yet to meet anyone who doesn’t want to know where he or she came from, who doesn’t want to know he or she was ushered into the world in love. It explains why I rehearse to my niece Cassie the holy moment I witnessed her coming into the world, as I stood nearby with tears of joy on my face. Whether biological children or adopted children, boys and girls want to be assured that there was a great story being told by their entrance into the world—a grand reason for celebration.

I believe that’s why the creation story in Genesis speaks so profoundly to us. The garden of Eden, created by God’s own hand,

flourished and teemed with plant and animal life, and God himself called it “good” (Genesis 1:1-25). But it wasn’t until Adam and Eve were fashioned that God announced things were “very good.”

That defining moment marks the time when God the Creator’s grand vision for men and women fully expressed itself. Adam, Eve, and God started relating to, enjoying, and appreciating one another. The celebration of community commenced! The party, indeed, had started.



The party God started in the garden of Eden brings a smile to my face, until I realize how far we’ve flown from his original idea. History shows us that God’s plan for men and women working together has so often gone terribly wrong. Perhaps you and your husband have entered into World War III in your kitchen, or you’ve endured abuse from a man who should have been protecting you. Maybe you’ve noticed the sheer number of women around the world who daily face injustice and outright brutality. Even the privileged American woman who has the right to vote and the opportunity to pursue employment almost anywhere still struggles to come together with her brothers in whole, joyful relationship. And in the middle of the mess, I believe the heart of God weeps.

At times I wonder if we as followers of Jesus are truly pursuing our Creator’s dream for us in the place it matters most: in the kingdom of God. “I would have given her [the church] my head, my hand, my heart,” wrote nurse Florence Nightingale in the 1800s. “She would not have them. She did not know what to do with them. She told me to go back and do crochet in my mother’s drawing room.”⁶

Sadly, Ms. Nightingale might have written those words last week. Did God really mean for women to be full, card-carrying members in his kingdom—or did he relegate them to second best?

Did our Creator create us to look beautiful while our brothers bear the bigger load for advancing his cause? Or did he mean what he said when he put two image-bearers in a garden and asked them to rule together over his very good creation?

EVE AS GOD'S IMAGE-BEARER

First, let's look at the humans God created from the way he primarily identified them, the way he *knew* them. After all was said and created, save humankind, God made a stunning announcement in Genesis 1:26-27:

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind *in his own image, in the image of God* he created them; male and female he created them. (Emphasis added)

God, in community with himself within the Trinity—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—held a meeting. "Let *us* make mankind in our image, in our likeness . . ." What an outrageous proposal! What he proposed, what pleased him, was to make humans resemble him. Are you so familiar with this passage that you've forgotten how shocking this is? God made you, as a woman, to be like him!

Suppose you had lived in the time when Genesis was written and witnessed this outlandish idea. Let's say you were listening as the scroll containing the creation account was read aloud in the Hebrew language. I imagine this might be your response: *Come again?!*

For in the ancient Near East culture there was one thing generally understood: only kings who ruled were made in the image of deity. This, in fact, gave them the right to rule. So right here, in

Genesis 1, God himself is making clear that the humans he creates “share the status of royalty.”⁷

What could this mean, daughter of Eve, except that you resemble God? And that you represent him in this world. Let’s keep reading in the first chapter of Genesis:

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:28)

God’s instruction to have children is not a command, but a blessing. So we know we have not fallen short if we do not physically have a child. But for both man and woman, this short paragraph contains definite marching orders. *Male and female, go out filling the earth, ruling it, and taking care of it.*

Note that you as a female are not given a role, but a responsibility, together with Adam. You (and every male and female in this world) are given broad, sweeping instructions to represent God by using and caring for and creatively overseeing his good world. The Creator of the world has some high expectations for you, and he delights in seeing each of his children fulfill them.



**“God has put something noble and good
into every heart his hand created.”**

—Mark Twain

God’s intentions toward us are both humbling and awe-inspiring. We are made in the *imago Dei*—or image and likeness of God—and so something about us reveals something about our Creator. In the Old Testament, the word *image* stood for forms and shapes of idols, while the word *likeness* describes a similarity. We

are formed to be similar to God, not physically but in our personality or nature and in our ability to make moral decisions. So while Adam and Eve looked at each other, taking in the image of God in one another, they were simultaneously commissioned for serious business: to be God's representatives in the world.⁸

If God wanted someone stronger for the job, he might have commissioned a lion or a bear. But God wanted beings who were similar to him, a man and a woman who could rule by the "power of their minds and personalities."⁹

He could have chosen two creatures who would have been equal in their physical strength. But God made a strong statement by creating a man *and* a woman. Though the man was physically stronger, the woman displayed a facet of God's image that only she could reflect. And so Adam and Eve stood equal before God, complementing one another, offering their uniqueness to cooperate and collaborate as partners.

Making Eve in God's own image not only says something strong and wonderful about every woman in the world but also says something fascinating about her Creator. He can be recognized in the strong characteristics of both male and female image-bearers, because he transcends the categories we understand.

He is sovereign over all and incomprehensible, and we as image-bearers are left in wonder. For as we go about our home-keeping, our careers, our childrearing, and our ministries, we are interacting directly with other image-bearers—beautiful beings made in the very likeness of God. Astounding.

We are created to be the very likeness of God to this world. And because of his good plans for us, and his work in us, we are also created to represent him. This is true for each of us whether or not we recognize God as Creator and Sustainer. The question Eve had to answer and every woman after her is this: *Do I represent God well?*



Perhaps we've now pressed play, unfreezing Eve from the story of her sin and setting us free to discover God's plan for Eve and every woman after her. I imagine "storybook Eve" transforming into the woman who clearly displays God's grand intentions for his daughters. We as women are fully made in the image of the almighty God. He cared so much about our sin problem that he made a gracious plan of rescue through his Son. He promises to restore our hope and redeem our hearts, if we trust in him.

And yet.

There's still a nagging uncertainty, buried beneath Sunday morning smiles and well-intentioned hearts. If all this good news is true, then why did God create woman after man? Is Eve's primary vocation in life to serve Adam? Did the Creator of all say anything else about his intentions for Eve and every woman after her?

As a matter in fact, he did. I personally believe he made a statement twice in Genesis 2 that might just amaze you. It's buried beneath centuries of biblical study that quickly dismissed Eve as Adam's "helper." Admittedly, scholars say it's not easy to translate Hebrew into English. But along the way, throughout our Christian history, Eve has often been painted as an inferior helper to Adam. Let's just say that something vitally important has been lost in translation.

For if she is a helper, Eve is a helper as God himself is a helper to his people. Read the last sentence again to make sure you got it right. For plain as day in Genesis 2, verses 18 and 20, God uses the Hebrew word *ezer* (seen as "helper") to describe Eve. It just so happens this same word is used sixteen times in the Old Testament to describe God himself and how he comes through for his people in a time of great difficulty.¹⁰

Without further adieu, let me present . . .

EVE AS EZER

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper [ezer] suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18).

Hot tears splashed down my cheeks as my new husband stared at me in confusion. I had been studying the creation story when I stumbled across the strong Hebrew word God used when creating Eve: the *ezer*. In that moment, God’s intentions leapt off of the printed page and started a revolution in my heart. I never would have guessed how highly God thinks of his daughters. I hadn’t understood how invaluable we are to his kingdom. I felt a strange combination of exhilaration and anxiety about what it would mean to stand shoulder to shoulder with my Christian brothers, instead of taking my usual safer back row seat.

The tears eventually dried, but the question remained: Would I be willing to follow the blueprint I discovered in God’s Word, or would I shrink back in fear? The journey for me would mean reevaluating why I wasn’t using some of my spiritual gifts, asking what God meant for my marriage relationship, and reimagining how I and my sister-*ezers* could more effectively join with our brothers in Christ to better serve a world that desperately needs God’s love.

A few years have passed since my initial discovery, but since then I’ve become even more convinced of the necessity of women fulfilling the original purpose God called them to in the garden of Eden. So let’s rejoin the place where it all began—the unfolding creation story in Genesis 2. Unlike Genesis 1, God zooms in to give us a more detailed account of the creation of Adam and Eve.

Picture this: Adam lovingly placed in a garden of exquisite beauty; surrounded by animal couples of every form, color, and kind; with plenty of food and drink, and a benevolent Creator to enjoy. But following the animal parade, in which Adam named

the creatures God had created, we get the first hint that things are not as they should be, that God himself isn't satisfied.

Although up until this point God had declared all things "good," he now makes a startling statement in Genesis 2:18: "It is not good . . ." That is, "It is *not good* for the man to be alone. I will make a helper [ezer] suitable for him" (emphasis added).

Let's see. It is not good for man to be alone, so I will make him a servant or a slave. Nope. It is not good for man to be alone, so I'll create someone who will be a slight help to him in the future. Not hardly. "It is not good for the man to be alone, so I will make [an ezer] suitable for him." An agent of rescue suitable for him!

Let me be clear:

God could have used a Hebrew word meaning "female slave," but he didn't.

He might have used any of the Hebrew words meaning "wife," but he chose not to.

God offered a strong word used repeatedly in the Bible to describe how he comes through for his people in a time of desperate need.¹¹

There are only two options in translating the word *ezer* into English. Either the woman is a "strong helper" as God is a strong helper, or she is a "strong power." The full force of the original meaning of this verse might come out something like this: *to end the loneliness of the single human, I will make another strong power, corresponding to it, facing it, equal to it. And the humans will be both male and female.*¹²

Put that on your next job application or medical form under occupation: *I'm a strong power.* For not only has God identified you as his image-bearer, but he also chose back in the garden of Eden to identify you as a strong power. Nowhere in these two primary

keys that unlock your identity do we find a hint of female inferiority or a whiff of male superiority. Instead, we find the beauty of an interdependent relationship formed by a God of relationship.

Let that sink in for a moment. One woman I know so embraced her newfound identity as a strong power that it changed her perspective on life's challenges. While experiencing a no-good, very-bad day, she stopped in the middle of the supermarket and began singing: "I am an *ezer*, and I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." And a female college student who heard the *ezer* message raised her hand to say that she had not planned to vote in an election, but the *ezer* message had changed her mind.

As the "strong power" was created from Adam's side, it became clear that Eve was not another animal, but was a perfect ally and companion. The creation account will soon draw to a close, but before it does, we witness the forming of Eve as God's ideal finishing touch.

WHAT THE *EZER* ISN'T

After my initial tears and excitement over my discovery of the *ezer*, I began to wonder what it all meant. What made an *ezer* . . . an *ezer*? For just as this one word ties women everywhere together, our stark differences also remain. Only an imaginative God would create a woman such as Mother Teresa, who spent her heart and life on India's poor. He alone was the One who also created the Michele Bachmanns and the Hillary Clintons of the world, the homemakers extraordinaire, female secretaries and business executives, and the many women who serve as prominent and not-so-prominent church leaders. In this dizzying display of diversity, what exactly does it mean to be an *ezer*?

Here in the creation story, in the primary passages God uses to define and describe who men and women are, we find something

totally, noticeably missing: a detailed description of gender roles. Yes, it becomes clear that the woman will carry and give birth to children (Genesis 3:20), but any other ideas we get about individual duties or responsibilities are absent. That leaves us with a wide range of possibilities for a specific calling on any one woman's life. Rather than limiting us, being an *ezer* (strong helper) sets us free!

Even the short, but significant list of things a strong helper is not unleashes each woman to her full potential in whatever situation she finds herself.¹³ Let's review them:

A domestic servant. Think of it! Adam hardly needed a cook, since they picked the perfect nutrition required off the plants in the garden. There was no cleanup, since they lived in the great outdoors. And as far as clothes, who needs 'em? The Bible says they were "naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25). Adam didn't need a servant at all, but a strong partner.

You know as well as I do that women do an amazing amount of homekeeping chores, and that they are often more than capable in this area. It helps me to remember that God has given me the ability to take care of the things he's entrusted to me; he simply hasn't mandated that I must do domestic chores because I'm a woman. It may be part of my weekly responsibilities, but it's not a primary key to my identity.

Defined by marriage or motherhood. Did you notice that Eve was a strong helper before she had sexual relations with Adam? And did you realize that Eve was a complete *ezer*—or strong power—at least nine months before she gave birth to children? This amazing truth, and the fact that God didn't use a word for wife when creating Eve, sets every woman free to be the strong helper and strong power God intended her to be—single or married, mother or not.

If only I had discovered this freeing piece of biblical wisdom in my thirty-five years of singleness! Even now, as I face infertility, I take comfort in knowing I will always be an *ezer*, no matter my social status in life. God has a plan for each of his daughters, and we are defined by his intentions, not by our current circumstances.

Retired. Happily, there is no age limit on being a strong helper. A birth certificate commemorates the entrance of a strong helper into the world, and every woman's funeral reminds us of her ongoing legacy. A woman is a strong helper from birth to death, no matter what her circumstance or station in life, and she will be a strong power in God's kingdom until her final breath and beyond.

After hearing a sermon on the *ezer*, one eighty-plus-year-old woman replied, "Thank you. You helped me to realize I am still worth something." Our calling is not determined by our physical strength or our frailty, but by our Creator.

Any other ideas about Eve's secondary status come from the tragedy that unfolded when sin entered the world. As God grieved at the consequences that would come, he made a sad prediction. Adam would rule over Eve. Eve would have pain when bearing children. (Can I hear an amen?) And Adam and Eve would deal with toil and difficulty in their daily work.

These were tough consequences, for sure. But just as Christ came to restore and redeem us (2 Corinthians 5:17), he also came to put our relationships with him and with others right again. God never gave up on his original dream. And neither should we.

RECLAIMING EVE

Remember my friend Ann from the beginning of the chapter? She was partly right. It's not only what happened to Eve in Genesis that wasn't cool but it's also what has happened to her reputation throughout history. But just as we pressed the play but-

ton, unfreezing Eve from her sin and examining God's beautiful purposes in creating her, we've begun to reclaim God's original vision for each of his daughters.

My secret grudge against Eve has evolved into a spirit of wonder and hope over all the possibilities that arise when women step into their rightful place in God's kingdom. Imagine what could happen if every woman who follows Christ owned her identity as his image-bearer, resembling and creatively representing God on this earth. Dream with me about the potential of women living out their identity as strong partners with their brothers and sisters in making God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. And consider the possibilities of asking God how you can best use the gifts he's given you to care for the world and the people he's created.

Remember:

You are God's image-bearer. Every female ever born bears God's image, resembling him and representing him in this world.

You are an ezer. Every woman is a *strong power* created to join with men, advancing God's kingdom, no matter what your station in life.

A woman's biblical identity is broad enough to apply to the mother of five who homeschools her children, to the fifteen-year-old worshipping the Lord in the church praise band, the professional working woman, the full-time single missionary, and any woman who feels limited by her health or social status.

As we close this chapter, let's thank God together that the story of Eve's sin is not the final word. God's plan of rescue through his Son sets us free to recover his original intentions for his daughters. What the real Eve of Eden teaches us is this: *In God's kingdom, every woman—no matter her circumstance—can be reclaimed.*

Questions for Discussion

1. Before reading this chapter, what were your primary impressions of Eve?
2. How does it feel to learn from Scripture that Eve is not inferior to Adam, but that she is God's image-bearer and an *ezer* (a strong power and an agent of rescue)?
3. How does the message that every woman is God's image-bearer and a strong power affect the way you view yourself? How might it affect your future?