

Sojourner Truth: Our Spiritual Predecessor

Sojourner Truth (1797 – 1887) fought bravely for the rights of women during an era in history when women were deprived of such privileges. As a contemporary of Frederick Douglass, she joined the cause for freedom and equality of enslaved African Americans as well as for women. Like others, her deeply profound commitment to Christ coupled with her theologically cohesive mind compelled her to confront the injustices of her day.¹ She stated, “To deny women the privilege of voting or preaching because Christ was male was to ignore the fact (posited by Karl Barth years later) that it was Christ’s humanity—not his gender—that made him a sacrifice for both men and women.”²

Through Truth’s life as a speaker, teacher, preacher, and advocate for the freedom and equality of the oppressed, marginalized, and disenfranchised, she instilled in others the worth, value, and dignity she felt as an African American women. In other words, her identity was rooted and grounded in the moral authority of scripture, which energized her to go against the status quo of racism. Even though she understood that the Constitution of this nation excluded her as a person, God’s word did not. She explains, “I take hold of this Constitution and it looks mighty big, and I feel for my rights, but there ain’t any there.”³

Truth’s example as one of our spiritual predecessors provides the encouragement that we, too, can confront injustices, such as racism, as we seek to be deeply rooted and grounded in studying the scriptures, which defines our identity as African Americans. Also, it is through the

¹ Aida Besancon Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad, eds., *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Ministering Together in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 7.

² Ibid.

³ Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today: Revised Edition* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2004), 130.

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studying of the scriptures that develops our core beliefs as biblical and social reformers that impacts and influences our culture in light the status quo of racism today.

GROW. PRACTICE. SERVE.

PRAYER: Gracious Father, thank for the example of our sister, Sojourner Truth, who went against the status quo of racism during her day to preach, teach, and advocate for those subjugated, oppressed, and devalued as less than human. I pray for wisdom as we look at scripture in light her life as one who stood on your Word as her identity, worth, and value.

ICEBREAKER: Describe a time when someone or something caused you to feel worthless or devalued. What were the circumstances surrounding that time? What were some of the emotions you felt?

GROW: Read Psalm 139: 14

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does the Lord describe us as His children?
- Why do you think the psalmist was able to give thanks to the Lord for this spiritual truth?
- Describe how this passage is an important identity verse for believers, especially when we hear derogative narratives about us as a people?
- List some ways our “soul” can keep us from knowing this truth?

Truth showed that the value, dignity, and service of women is located in their truest identity—as heirs of Christ’s sacrifice equally available to men and women.⁴

PRACTICE:

What “next steps” do you need to take to become more rooted and grounded in the scriptures so that your identity can become more defined by the Word and less by what others say?

Who can you invite to help you with this?

SERVE:

⁴ Aida Besancon Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad, eds., *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Ministering Together in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 7.

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List several ways you can help a younger believer to grow deeper in the scriptures so that their identity can be defined by God's word.

Take a step to do so with one person.⁵

⁵ This bible study guide—GPS, is adapted from St. Paul's Baptist Church GPS format.