

Sermon Notes: Women in Leadership

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Introduction

- Question: “*Can women teach, lead, and carry the same spiritual authority as men?*”
- We must approach this with **charity** — honoring brothers and sisters who disagree while staying faithful to conscience (Rom 14:5).

1. The Cultural Backdrop

- Women were not formally taught scripture.
- Their testimony was invalid in court.
- Public worship was male-dominated.
- Rabbinic prayer: “*Blessed are you, Lord, who did not make me a Gentile, slave, or woman.*”

2. Creation and the Curse

- Genesis 3:16 — male rule is part of the curse, not God’s design.
- Jesus broke the curse (Gal 3:28).
- The church should embody new creation — men and women partnering together.

3. Jesus’ Treatment of Women

- **The bleeding woman** — Matt 9:20–22 → He calls her “Daughter,” restores dignity.
- **The sinful woman** — Luke 7:37–38 → Elevates her as the example, the “sermon” in the Pharisee’s house.
- **Mary of Bethany** — Luke 10:38–42 → Sitting at His feet = posture of discipleship. Jesus defends her right to learn.

- **Mary Magdalene** — John 20:11–18 → First witness of the resurrection, commissioned to proclaim.

4. Women in the Early Church

- **Lydia** — Acts 16:13–15, 40 → Businesswoman, first European convert, patron of the Philippian church.
- **Phoebe** — Romans 16:1–2 → Called a *diakonos* (deacon); carried and explained Paul's letter to Rome.
- **Priscilla** — Acts 18:24–26 → Corrected Apollos alongside Aquila; often listed first, showing prominence.
- **Junia** — Romans 16:7 → "Outstanding among the apostles." John Chrysostom praised her.

5. The Difficult Passages

1 Corinthians 14:34–35

- *"Women should remain silent in the churches..."*
- Context: Corinth = chaos (sexual immorality, disorder in worship).
- The word *sigao* = situational silence (cf. 1 Cor 14:28, 30).
- Women already pray and prophesy in church (1 Cor 11:5).
- Issue = disorder, not permanent gag order.

1 Timothy 2:11–12

- *"I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man..."*
- Context: Ephesus, Artemis cult, women domineering.
- Word *authentein* = "to domineer/usurp," not healthy authority (*exousia*).
- Paul instructs a season of learning in peace.
- Not permanent exclusion, but protection from chaos.

1 Timothy 3:1–2

- “*Husband of one wife...*”
- Phrase *mias gynaikos andra* = “one-woman man” = faithfulness, not gender ban.
- Otherwise Paul himself (unmarried) wouldn’t qualify.

6. Theological Summary

- Galatians 3:28 — “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
- Acts 2:17 — “Your sons and daughters will prophesy.”
- The church should reflect heaven: equal partnership in Spirit-empowered ministry.

7. Counter-Arguments & Straight Answers

1. **“Paul appeals to creation order.” (1 Tim 2:13)**
→ Situational correction, not permanent ban.
2. **“Elders must be husband of one wife.” (1 Tim 3:2)**
→ Idiom about faithfulness, not gender.
3. **“Church fathers were against women leaders.”**
→ They were divided. Chrysostom praised Junia as an apostle.
4. **“Women must be silent.” (1 Cor 14:34–35)**
→ Situational silence for order, not universal gag.
5. **“Headship means men lead.”**
→ *Kephale* = source/origin. Male rule = curse (Gen 3:16), reversed in Christ.
6. **“Tradition says male leadership.”**
→ Tradition can err. Spirit gifting is the qualifier. (Acts 2:17; Rom 12:6).

8. Closing Exhortation

- Silencing women amputates the body of Christ.

- We lose:
 - Feet that ran with resurrection news.
 - Hands that opened homes for the church (Lydia).
 - Minds that sharpened theology (Priscilla).
 - Hearts that understood worship (Mary).
- Christ is the head of the **whole body** — not a half-cut boys' club.
- The Spirit gifts **sons and daughters** to prophesy, teach, lead, and shepherd.

Final Word

"I firmly believe women were never meant to be sidelined. They were meant to lead beside us with fire, wisdom, humility, and power. The church needs their voices. Jesus broke the curse, restored the image, and poured out His Spirit on all flesh — that means everyone in this room."

Women in Leadership: Counterpoints & Straight Answers

1. "Paul appeals to creation order — Adam was formed first." (1 Tim 2:13)

- Yes, Paul mentions creation. But look closely: he uses creation all over his letters, and always to make a situational point.
- In Ephesus, women were coming out of Artemis cult dominance. They needed grounding before teaching.
- Creation isn't a permanent ban — it's Paul saying: *"learn first, then lead."*

2. "Elders must be 'husband of one wife.'" (1 Tim 3:2)

- That Greek phrase literally means "**one-woman man**." It's about **faithfulness**, not gender.

- If we take it woodenly, Paul himself couldn't be an elder (he was single). Absurd.
- Paul was addressing men in that moment, but he wasn't slamming the door on women for all time.

3. "The church fathers were against women leaders."

- Not all of them. John Chrysostom literally praised Junia as an apostle: "*Oh how great is the devotion of this woman.*"
- Some fathers parroted Greco-Roman patriarchy more than Scripture. Others saw women leading in the text and called it out.
- Bottom line: the fathers disagreed. Scripture is the authority, not tradition.

4. "Paul says women must be silent." (1 Cor 14:34–35)

- Same chapter, Paul assumes women are **praying and prophesying out loud** (1 Cor 11:5). So it can't mean permanent silence.
- *Sigao* = "be quiet for a moment." He tells men the same thing when it's out of order.
- The problem wasn't women speaking, it was **chaos**. God's heart is order, not muzzles.

5. "Headship means men lead, women follow."

- *Kephale* ("head") usually means **source**, not CEO.
- Male rule shows up *after the fall* (Gen 3:16). It's curse language, not creation design.
- Jesus broke the curse. Galatians 3:28 isn't a cute slogan, it's kingdom reality: no male/female hierarchy in Christ.

6. "History says men led. Can we really change that now?"

- History also said slaves should obey forever, that common people couldn't read the Bible, and that women couldn't vote. Bad history doesn't make good theology.
- Every time the Spirit breaks out — Acts, revivals, missions — **women step up**. Fruit proves calling.

Quick Recap:

- Creation = situational correction, not permanent ban.
- Elder language = about faithfulness, not gender.
- Silence = situational, not universal.
- Fathers = divided, not decisive.
- Headship = source/origin, not dominance.
- Tradition = flawed. Spirit gifting = the qualifier.

SILENT, SHAVED HEADS, SET ASIDE

WHY DON'T YOU TELL US WHAT YOU
REALLY THINK OF WOMEN PAUL?

Can women teach, lead, and carry the same
spiritual authority as men?
What does scripture say?





IS THIS THE IDEAL CHURCH?



IS THIS THE IDEAL CHURCH?

**“WOMEN ARE TO KEEP SILENT
IN THE CHURCHES...”**

(1 COR. 14:34, NASB)

**“IF A WOMAN DOES NOT COVER
HER HEAD, HAVE HER ALSO CUT
HER HAIR OFF...”**

(1 COR. 11:6, NASB)

1. WHAT DID PAUL ACTUALLY MEAN IN
THESE VERSES?

2. CAN WOMEN BE TEACHERS, ELDERS,
AND LEADERS?

3. WHERE DOES THIS LAND IN THE
BIGGER STORY OF JESUS AND THE EARLY
CHURCH?



Phoebe is widely regarded as the one who carried and delivered the letter of Romans from Corinth (or nearby Cenchrea) to Rome

Romans 14:5 (NASB)

“One person values one day over another, another values every day the same. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.”

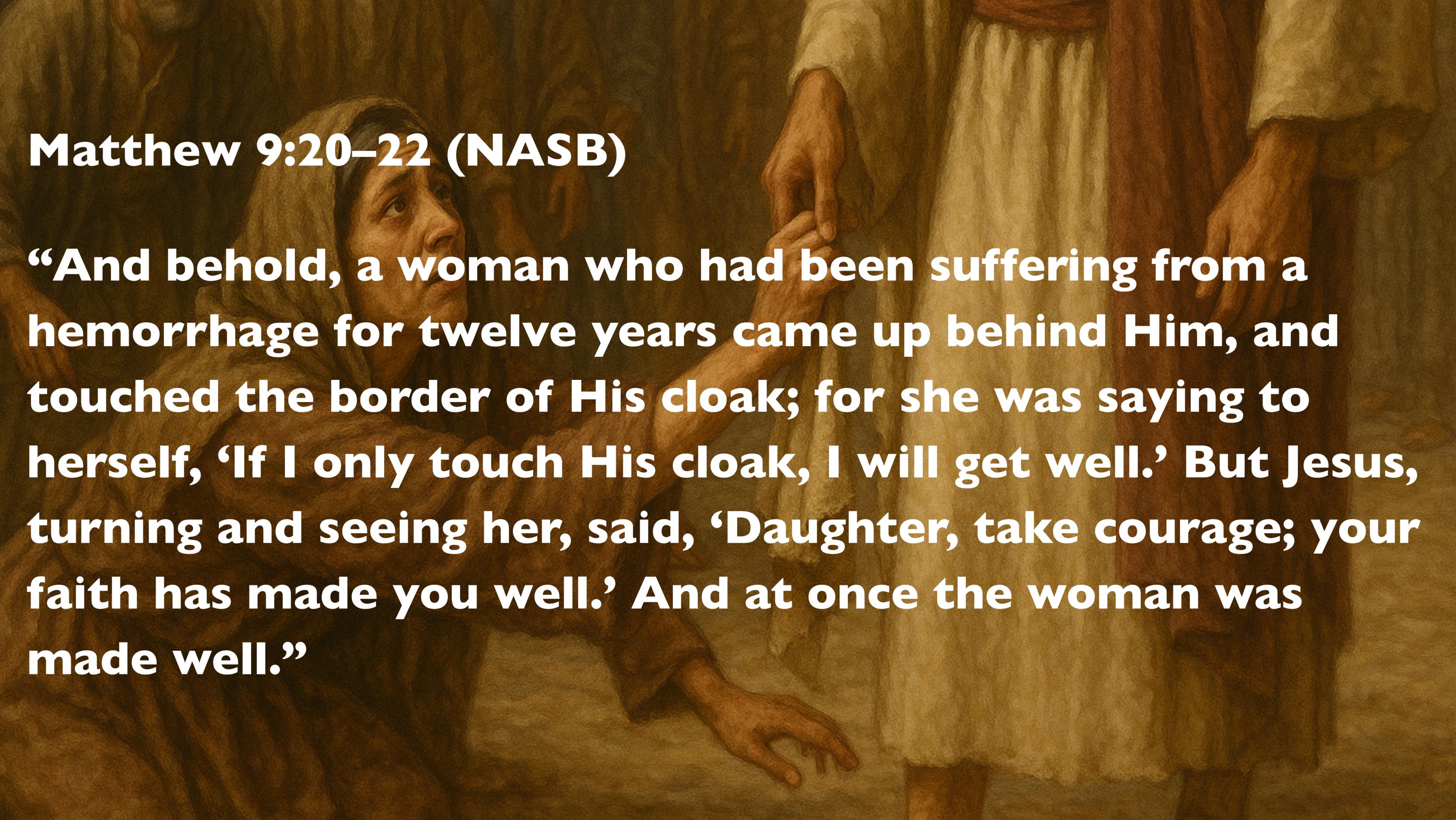
**“Blessed are You, Lord
our God, King of the
universe...**

**... who did not make
me a Gentile.**

**... who did not make
me a slave.**

**... who did not make
me a woman.”**





Matthew 9:20–22 (NASB)

“And behold, a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind Him, and touched the border of His cloak; for she was saying to herself, ‘If I only touch His cloak, I will get well.’ But Jesus, turning and seeing her, said, ‘Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.’ And at once the woman was made well.”

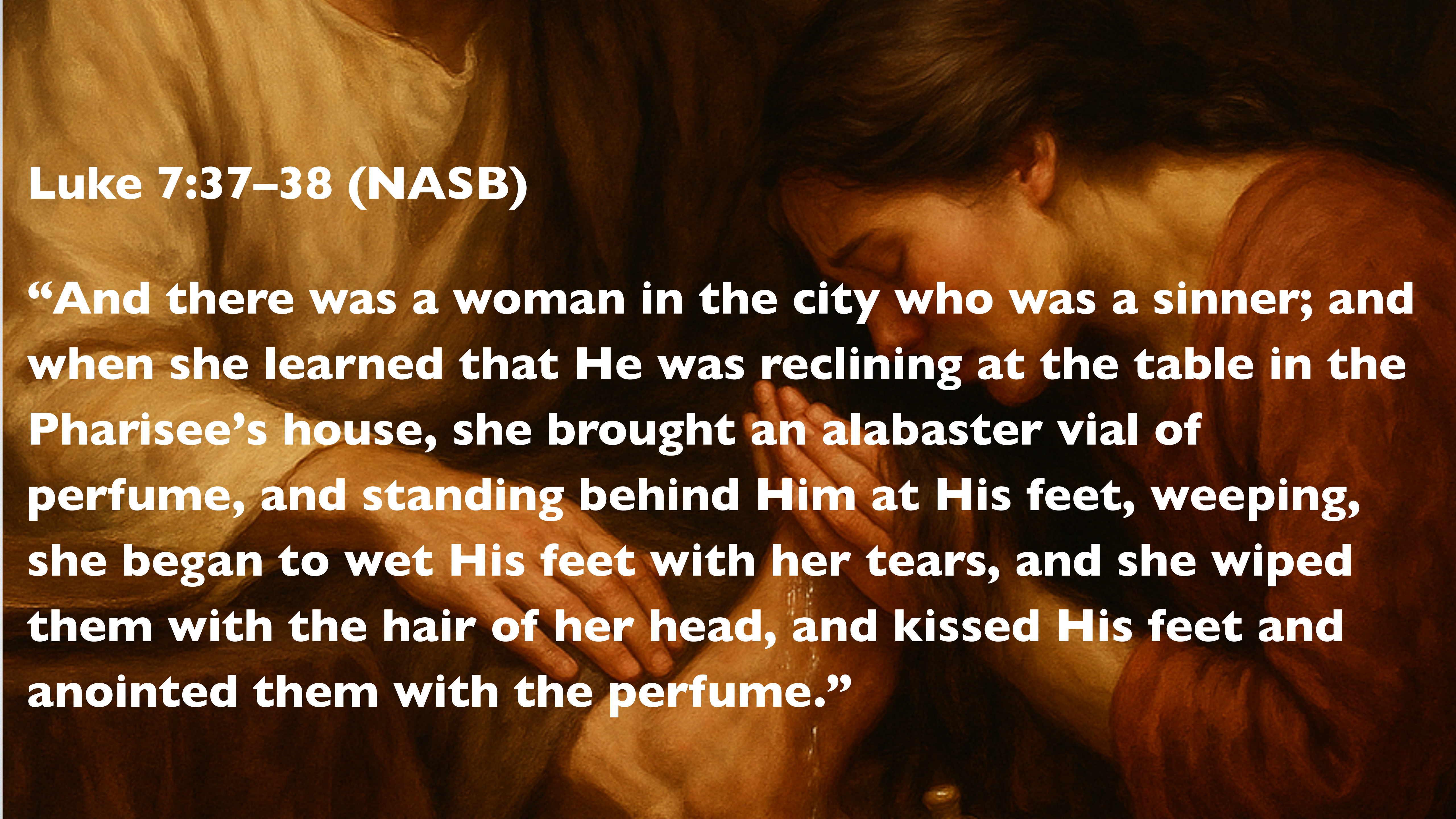


Allowed her to touch Him vs social/religious taboo

Affirmed her as “Daughter” vs public shame

Made her clean vs becoming unclean

Gospel preview: His holiness overcomes impurity

A painting depicting a woman with long dark hair, wearing a reddish-brown garment, kneeling and washing the feet of a man in a white robe. She is using her hair to wipe the foot, and a stream of liquid is visible on the foot. The background is dark and indistinct.

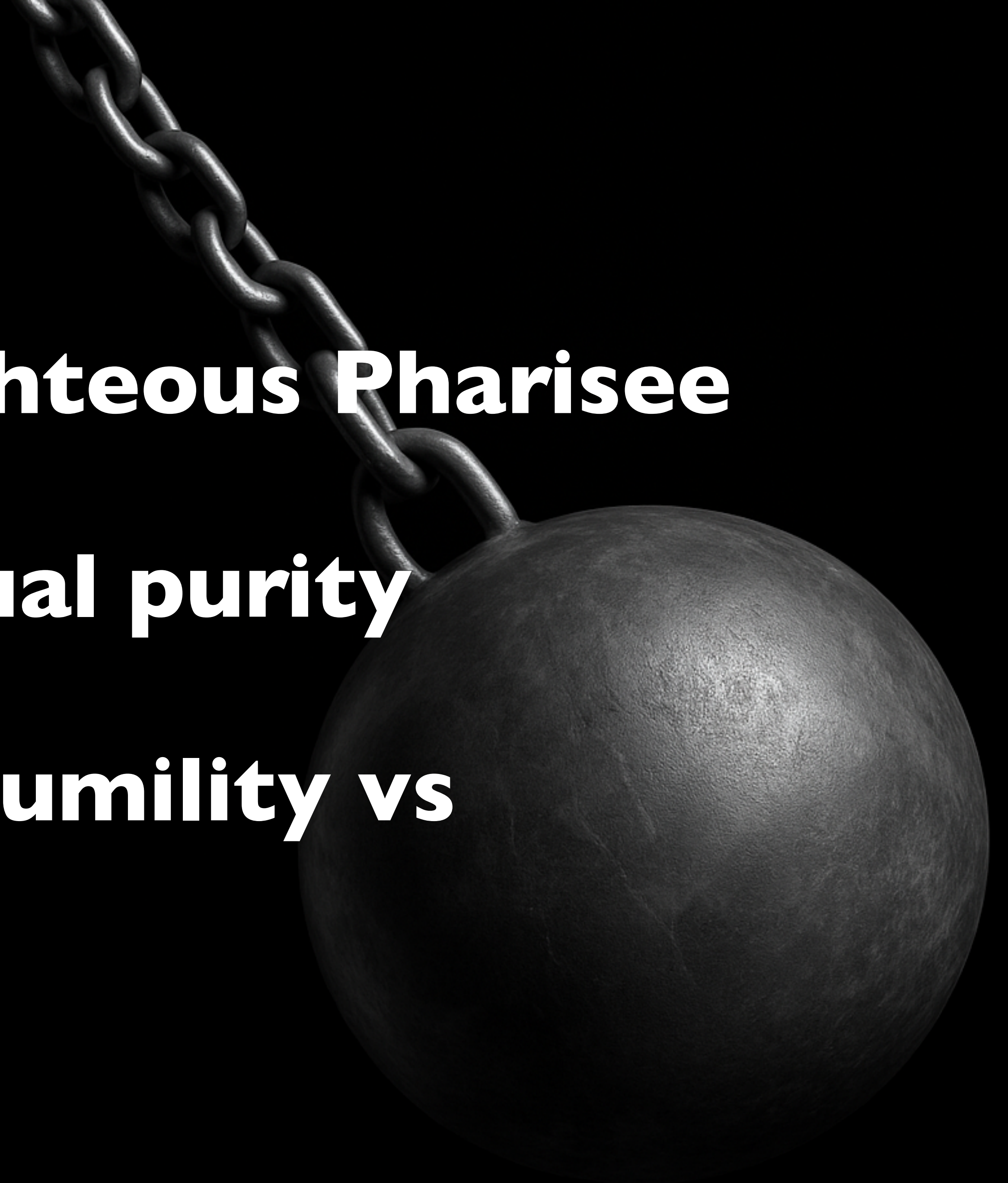
Luke 7:37–38 (NASB)

“And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and she wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet and anointed them with the perfume.”

Honored her vs self-righteous Pharisee

Showed mercy over ritual purity

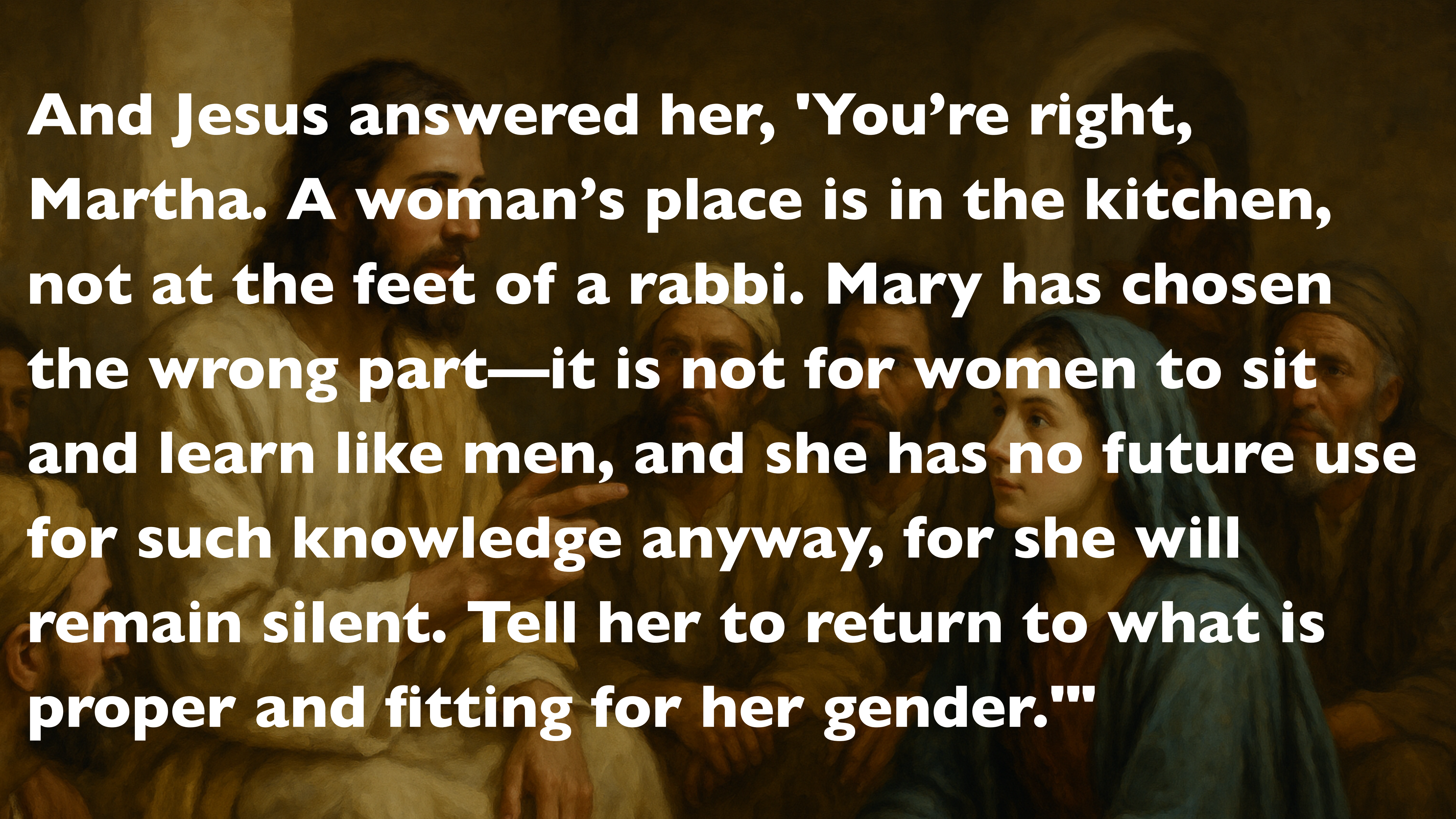
**Elevated her love and humility vs
“respectable” men**





Luke 10:38–39 (NASB)

“Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. And she had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, and was listening to His word.”



And Jesus answered her, 'You're right, Martha. A woman's place is in the kitchen, not at the feet of a rabbi. Mary has chosen the wrong part—it is not for women to sit and learn like men, and she has no future use for such knowledge anyway, for she will remain silent. Tell her to return to what is proper and fitting for her gender.'"

Defended her disciple's posture vs cultural ban on women learning from rabbis

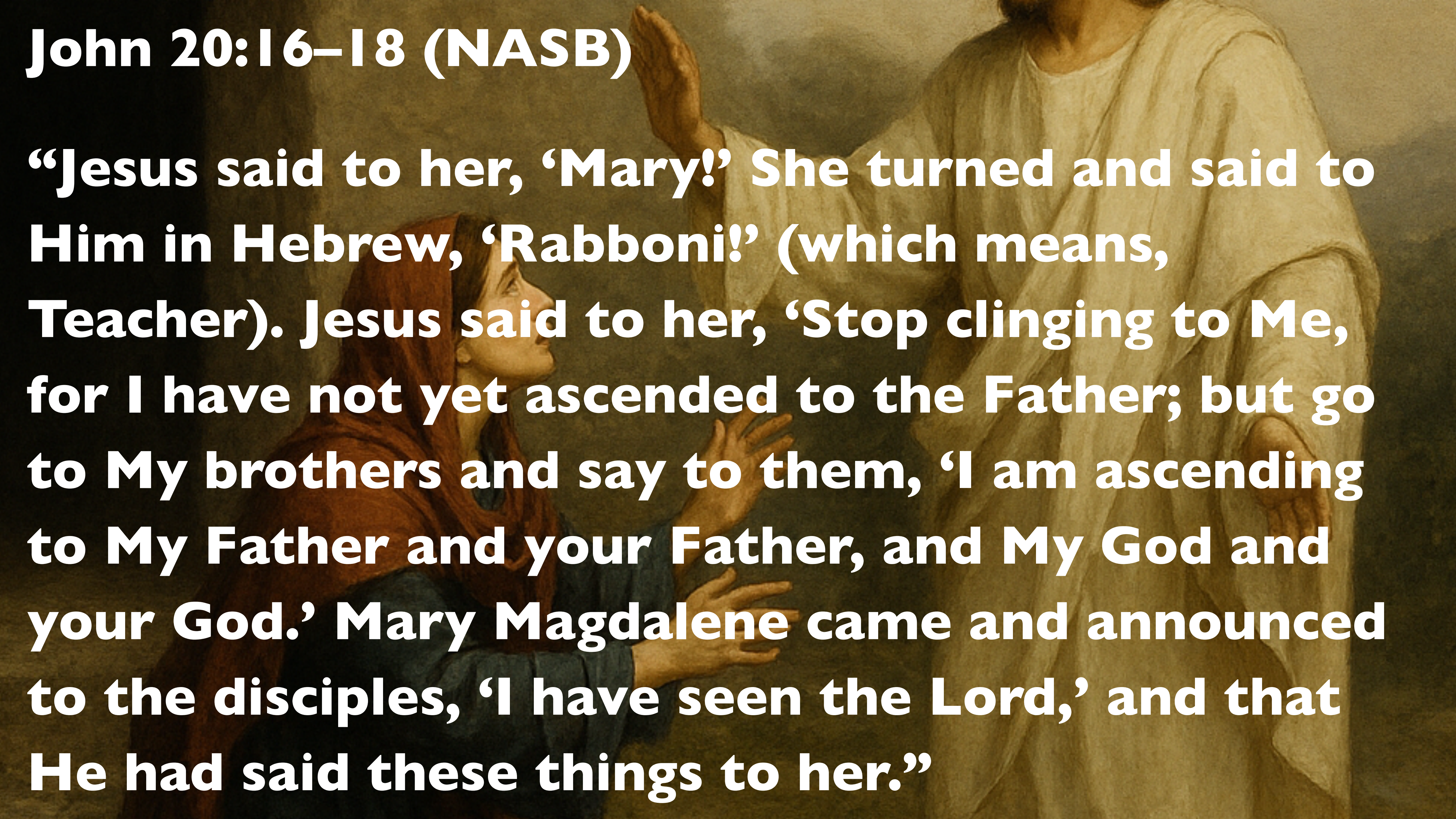
Declared "She belongs here" vs male-only spaces of instruction

Endorsed women as theological learners vs societal exclusion from study

Affirmed learning as the gateway to ministry vs silencing women's growth

Positioned Mary as true disciple vs relegated to domestic roles





John 20:16–18 (NASB)

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means, Teacher). Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’ Mary Magdalene came and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord,’ and that He had said these things to her.”

Chose a woman as first witness vs marginalized female voices

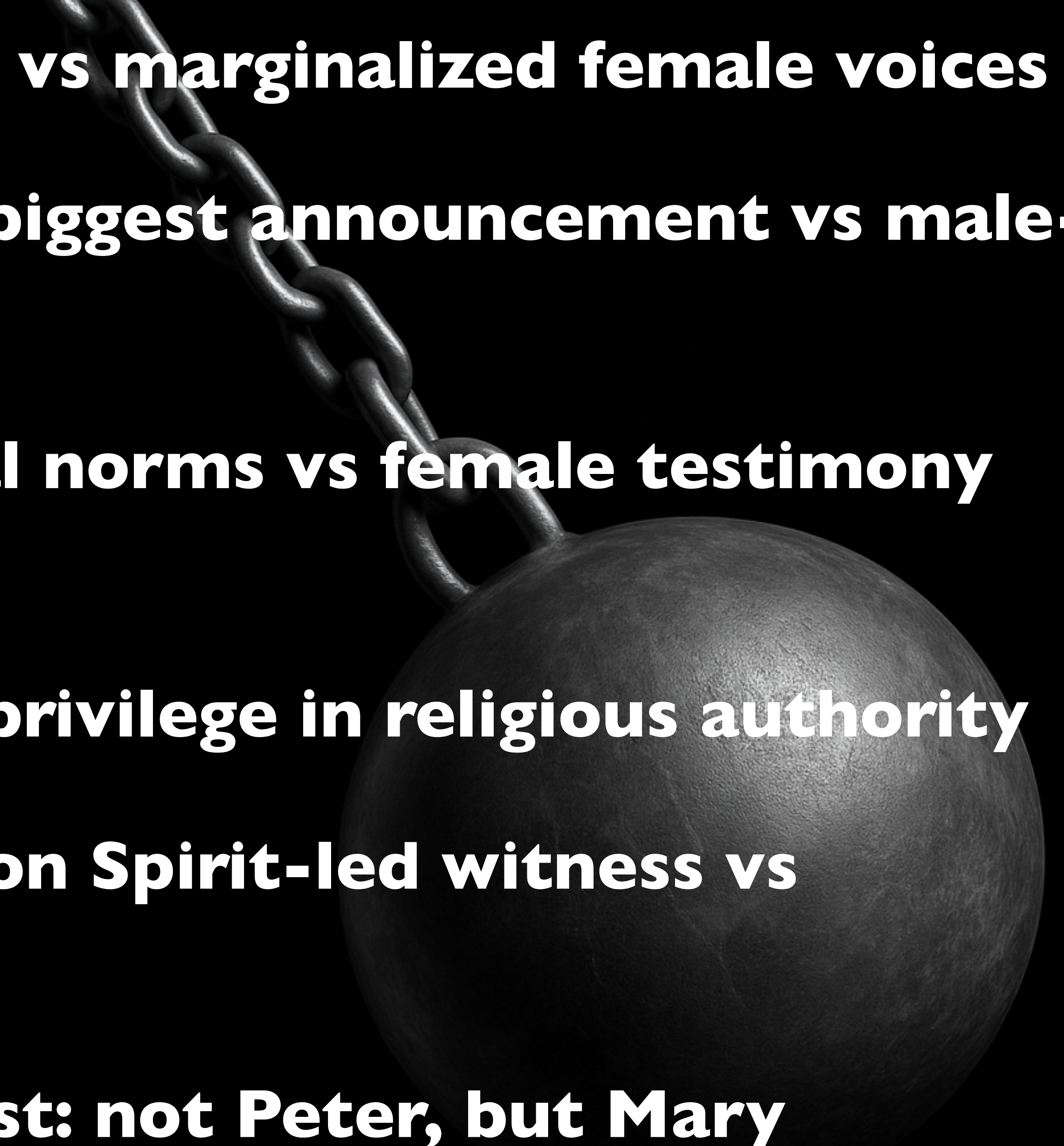
Entrusted Mary with history's biggest announcement vs male-only credibility

Commissioned her despite legal norms vs female testimony carrying no weight

Upended cultural bias vs male privilege in religious authority

Resurrection community built on Spirit-led witness vs gendered hierarchy

First preacher of the risen Christ: not Peter, but Mary Magdalene vs expected male leaders

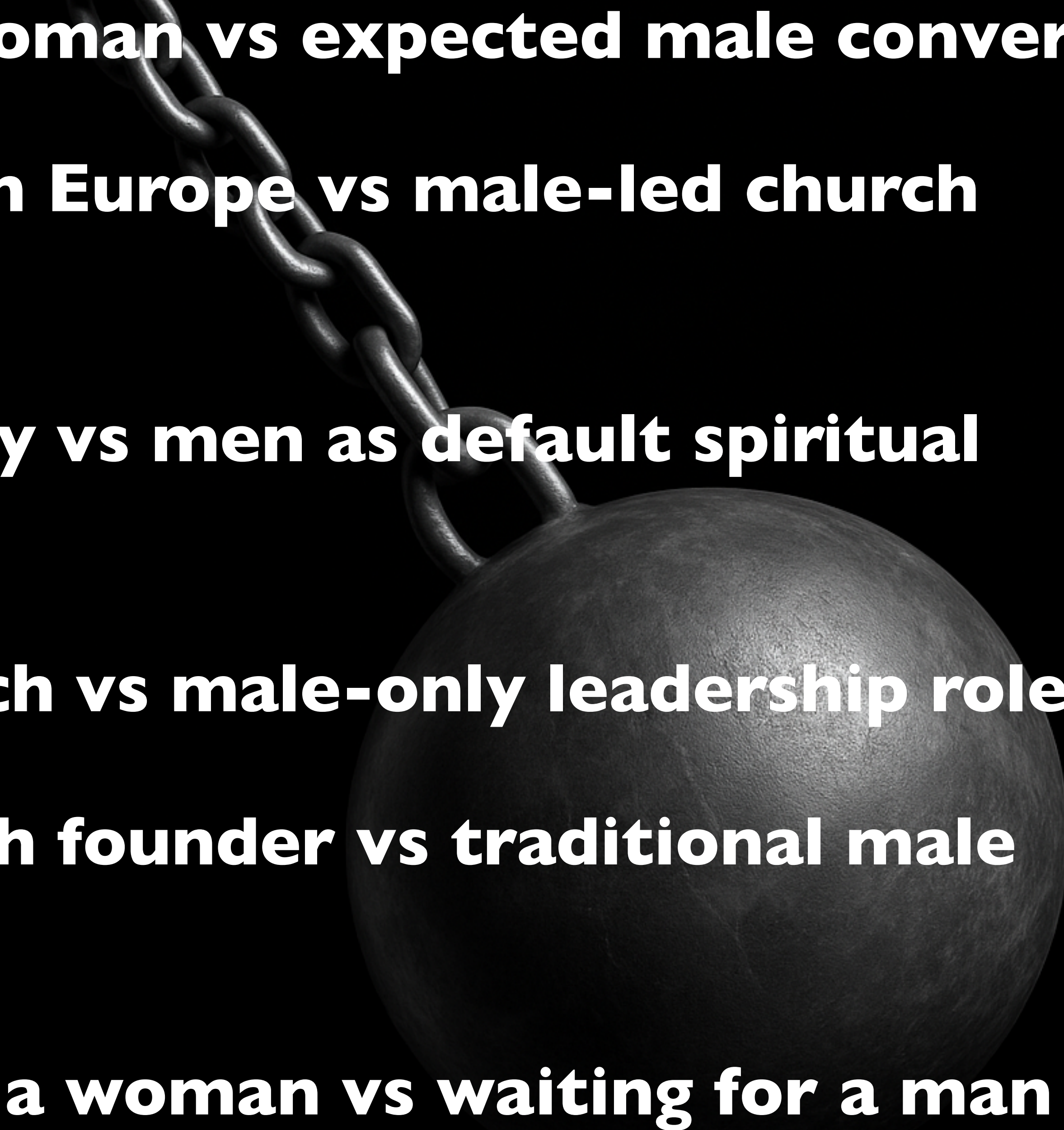




A religious painting depicting Paul and Lydia by a river. Paul, on the left, is shown in profile, gesturing with his hands as he speaks. Lydia, on the right, is shown in profile, listening intently. They are surrounded by other people, including women and children, who are also looking towards Paul. The background shows a river and a distant city.

Acts 16:13–15, 40 (NASB)

“And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were thinking that there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple fabrics from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. Now when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.’ And she prevailed upon us... After they went out of the prison they entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brothers and sisters, they encouraged them, and departed.”



First European convert was a woman vs expected male convert

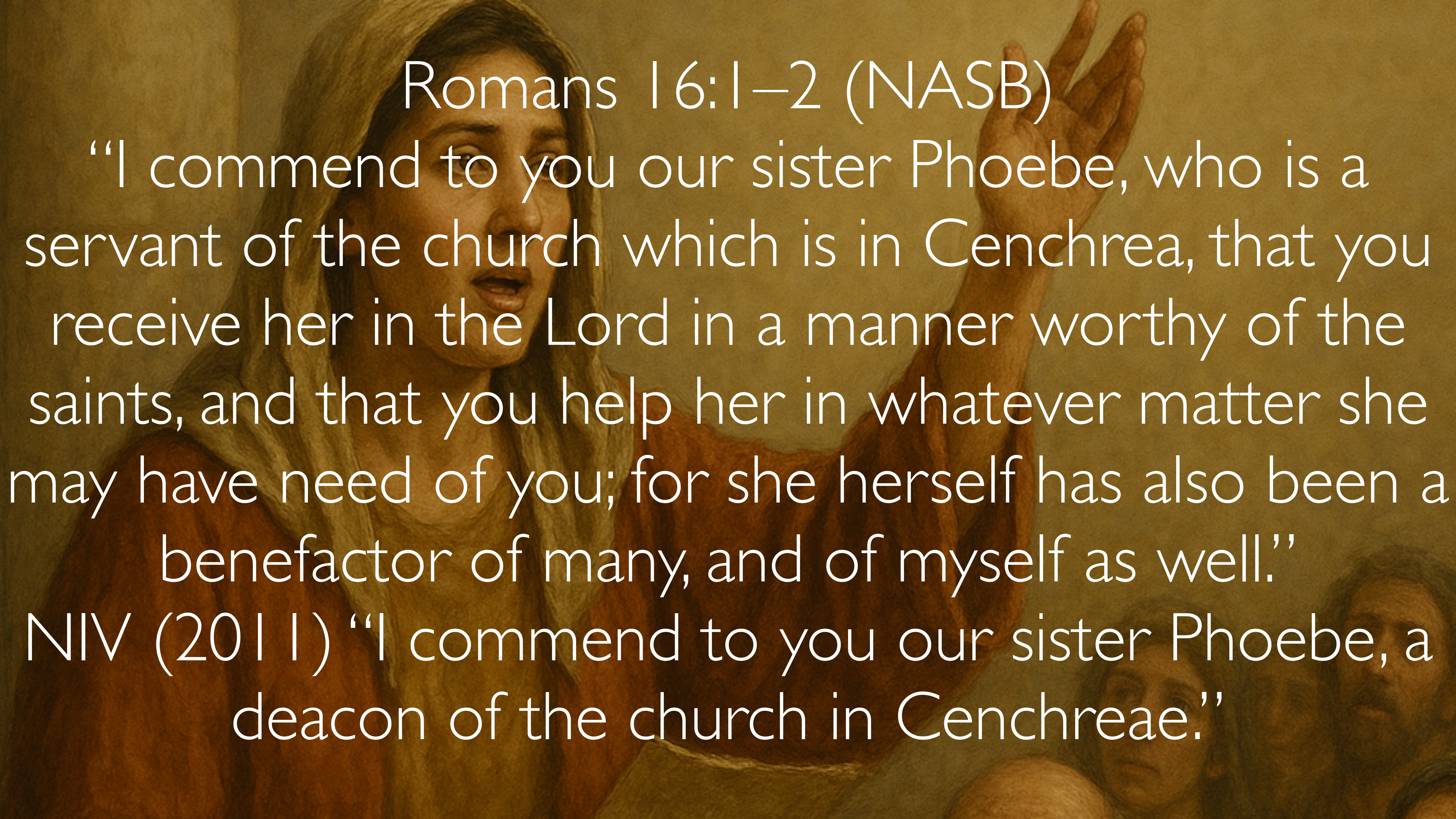
Her faith launched the church in Europe vs male-led church planting

She led her household spiritually vs men as default spiritual heads

Hosted and resourced the church vs male-only leadership roles

Functioned as patron and church founder vs traditional male elder role

Gospel moved forward through a woman vs waiting for a man of influence



Romans 16:1–2 (NASB)

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is in Cenchrea, that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a benefactor of many, and of myself as well.”

NIV (2011) “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae.”

Introduced as a deacon vs assumption of male-only church office

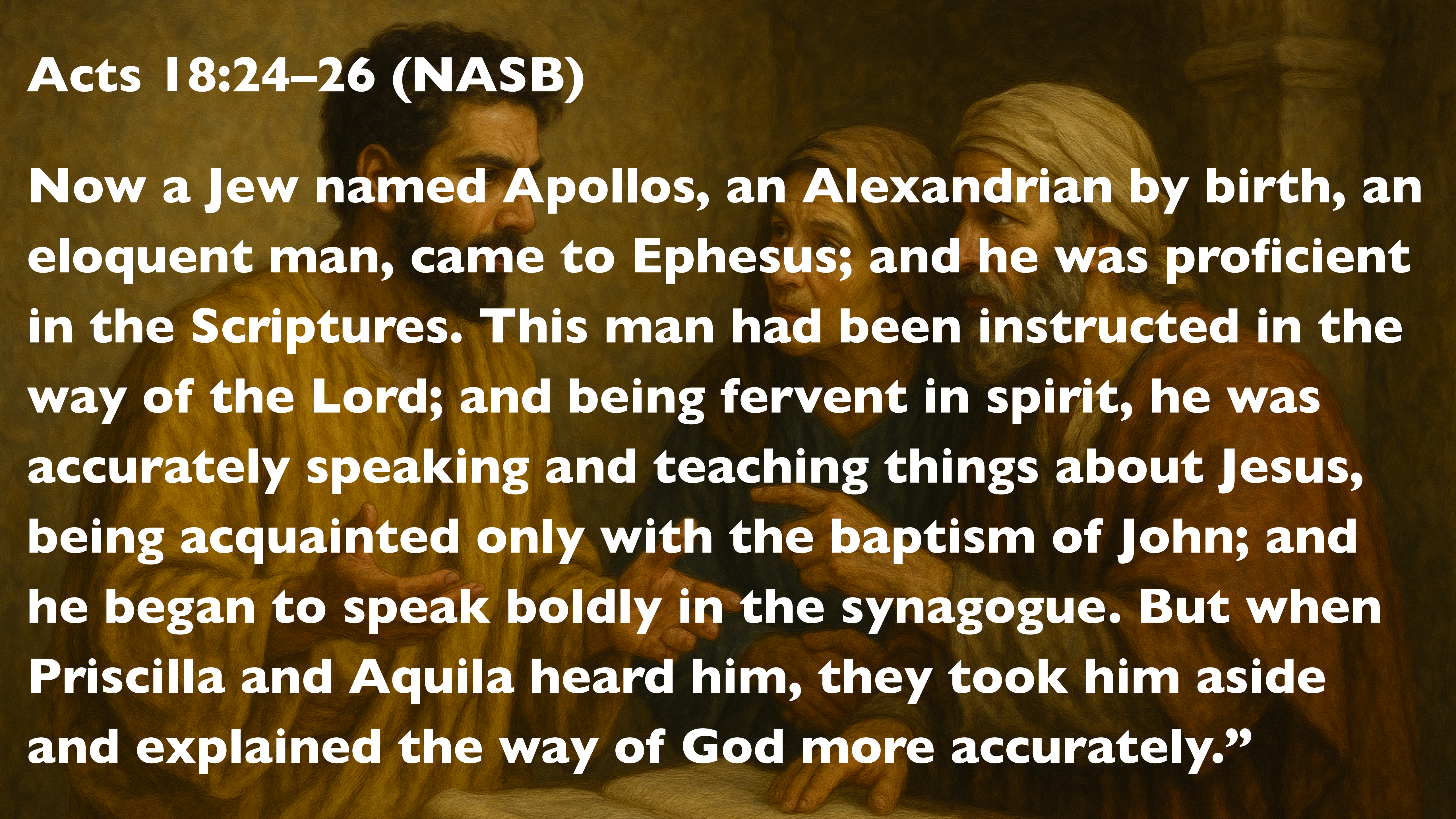
Acted as Paul's envoy to Rome vs male apostolic representatives

Carried and likely read Romans vs male-exclusive teaching roles

Trusted with theological authority vs sidelined female voices

Recognized as a patron and leader vs women hidden behind the scenes

Gospel's deepest letter delivered by a woman vs expected male theologian



Acts 18:24–26 (NASB)

Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was proficient in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was accurately speaking and teaching things about Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the way of God more accurately.”

**Taught theology to a man vs cultural ban on women
instructing men**

**Corrected a male preacher vs women expected to remain
silent**

Recognized as a gifted teacher vs female voices dismissed

Highlighted by Luke vs women typically erased from records

**Named before her husband in teaching contexts vs male-
first conventions**

Leadership implied in name order vs assumed male headship

Romans 16:7 (NASB)

“Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsfolk and my fellow prisoners; they are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.”

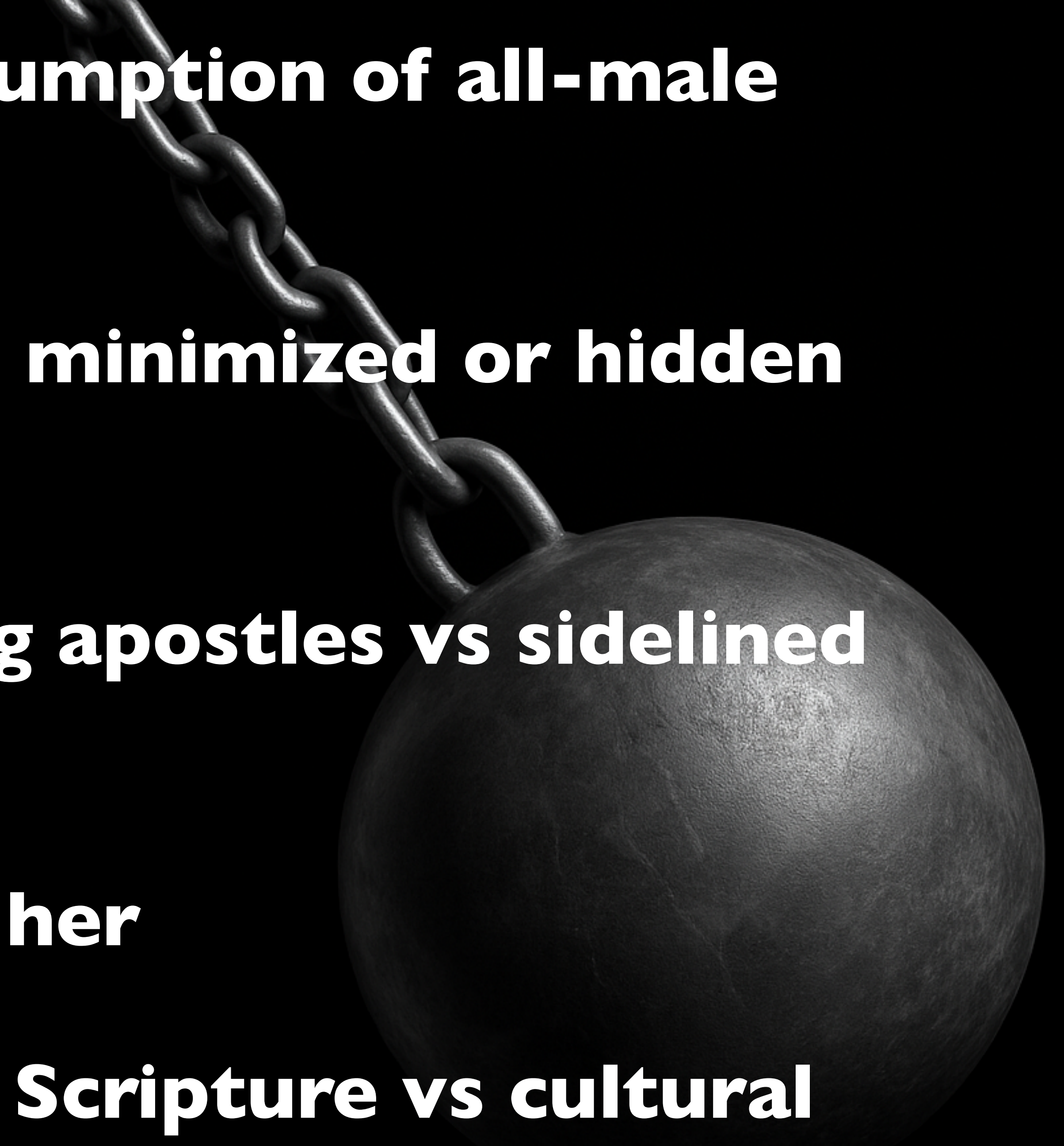
Named as an apostle vs assumption of all-male apostolic leadership

Publicly affirmed by Paul vs minimized or hidden female ministry

Called “outstanding” among apostles vs sidelined women in authority

Later scribes tried to erase her

God preserved her name in Scripture vs cultural discomfort with women in leadership



“The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.”

— I Corinthians 14:34–35 (NASB)

“Paul is not issuing a universal gag order on all women. He’s addressing a specific situation where some women—possibly wives—were causing disruption during worship by talking or questioning things in an inappropriate way. It’s about keeping order, not enforcing silence forever.”

“A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

But I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.”

— 1 Timothy 2:11–12 (NASB)

In 1 Timothy 2:11–12, Paul instructs women to learn with a quiet, teachable posture—something radical in a culture where women were often excluded from theological learning. The Greek terms suggest calmness, not absolute silence, and the restriction on teaching addresses untrained or domineering instruction, not Spirit-empowered leadership. In the context of Ephesus—where false teaching and female-dominated pagan worship were influencing the church—Paul’s concern is order and sound doctrine. His primary command is that women be equipped first before stepping into roles of influence.

“It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching...”

— 1 Timothy 3:1–2 (NASB)

In 1 Timothy 3:1–2, Paul uses masculine language to describe overseers, but this reflects the immediate context—not a universal male-only rule. Coming right after his call for women to first learn before leading (2:11–12), it's natural that qualified men were the first candidates in Ephesus' male-led culture. However, the Greek word for “anyone who aspires” is gender-neutral (tis), and “husband of one wife” emphasizes character, not gender exclusivity. Paul is prioritizing stability in a vulnerable church setting, not excluding Spirit-empowered women from future leadership.

**“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is
neither slave nor free, there is no male and
female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
— Galatians 3:28 (NASB)**

Acts 2:17 (NASB)

**“And it shall be in the last days,’ God says,
‘That I will pour out My Spirit on all
mankind;
And your sons and your daughters will
prophesy,
And your young men will see visions,
And your old men will have dreams.’”**

I Corinthians 12:4–6 (NASB)

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.”