

Grandma Never Robbed a Bank: *Preparing Men for God's Women's Movement*

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My recent weekend men's conference was flowing well until the final afternoon, when about halfway through the last session, I became strangely disengaged. In fact, for the first time in thirty years of conference speaking, I stopped my teaching altogether and just stood there, baffled.

"Somehow I'm not connecting with this topic 'The Wolf Loves the Lone Sheep' and getting into small support groups," I confessed. "I've taught this all over the world for years and it's always impacted the men deeply, but today..., it just seems blah for some reason."

Knitting my brow, I turned away—*Father, what's going on here?*—then faced again the hundred-plus men who sat uncertain before me.

"How many of you," I asked on impulse, "are already in a small support group yourselves?"

To my surprise, most raised their hands. "Wow—that's great!" I exclaimed. "No wonder I feel disconnected—I've been preaching to the choir!"

Encouraged to see this dedication among the brothers, nevertheless I hesitated. Clearly, the small-groups topic was done—and I had hardly begun the two-hour session. *OK, Father*, I prayed quickly under my breath, *where do we go from here?*

As the men shifted uneasily, a sense of peace rose up within me. Smiling, I shrugged my shoulders.

"Well...", I sighed, "...we still have a good bit of time left, so let's go to the Father and see what other topic He might have in mind for us now."

Waiting silently in prayer, I soon saw a picture in my mind of the men gathered together tightly and surrounded by a circular "rim." Outside the rim, women were moving about randomly.

At ease now in the Spirit, I told the men what I was seeing. "It seems like the Father is showing me that you men have done well," I declared. "He's called you to bond together as brothers, and you've done it. I sense the Father is saying, 'I'm proud of you!'"

"But the action or vitality in this vision is with the women, who are basically outside your fellowship, not bonded either together as women or with the men.

"I've spent years writing books and ministering worldwide to get us men healed," I noted. "All my resources from that are available on my website for any men who need to play catch-up.

"What I see here this morning makes me wonder: Could the Father be saying that He's drawn us together as His men for a larger purpose than just the great fellowship and growing together among ourselves? It's like He's led us into a deeper level of security as His sons, so now we can see what He's doing among His daughters, without feeling threatened—even feeling confident to bless that.

“Scripture says, ‘One of you brings a message and the others are to judge what is being said.’ Does the word I just shared sound like God to anyone else here?” (1 Corinth. 14:29).

Slowly, the men began nodding in agreement.

Amid a few “Amen!”s, I hesitated.

Lead me in this, Father, I prayed silently—then stepped out.

“OK, here’s a place we might jump right in, to understand where women today are coming from: my grandmother was barred from voting in any political elections until she was 30 years old. Do you know why?”

Furrowed brows, puzzled looks, and low murmurs spread around the room.

No hands went up.

“You may know that what most often disqualifies a citizen from voting today is a felony conviction,” I continued. “But I’ll give you a hint: Grandma never robbed a bank. Her only crime was that she was a woman, and that was enough for men to judge her as unintelligent, incompetent, and otherwise unfit to exercise any authority that might affect them.

“I don’t know about you, but if the government told me I couldn’t vote in an election because I was a man..., well, let’s just say I wouldn’t appreciate that.

“In fact, no women in the United States were allowed to vote until the nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920.”

Encouraged by thoughtful nods, I added, “Basically, that means that fifty per cent of our national experience and wisdom—were not being used. What kind of business or institution would allow such a waste of its resources?”

From there, the discussion leapt to the #MeToo movement. Many of us confessed that we never realized how most women have been harassed or abused without any protection or recourse to hold men accountable.

I told my wife Mary’s story, who in 1980 when studying for her PhD in psychology went to the college dean, a man, to present her dissertation. The two were alone in his office; when Mary had finished her presentation, the two rose to shake hands. To her shock, the dean pulled her to him and kissed her. Struggling to stay composed, Mary backed away, then turned and left.

“I never reported it,” she told me. “Who would believe a student’s word against an otherwise respected, tenured professor?” It took her seven years to overcome the shame from that experience and complete her doctoral program.

One man at the conference mentioned the #ChurchToo hashtag; “Christian leaders do it, too!” he declared.

Other men talked about how churches too often disrespect women by not allowing them to exercise all their gifts in the fellowship. Dads spoke up about wanting their daughters to discover and develop their God-given abilities freely at church.

“I was privileged to help pioneer the Father’s men’s movement thirty years ago,” I noted. “Back then, we needed to pull away from the women and turn inward together, in order to gain confidence by getting real with God and each other. Now that we’ve been getting healed together since then, I sense He’s calling us outward; otherwise, we could become ingrown among ourselves.

“I believe the Father is moving again, this time among our sisters. It’s time for us men to break out of our huddle and get into the Father’s larger game, that is, *to discern*

how He's moving among women today and how He wants us to bless them in His greater purposes for us all."

The excitement was palpable. Now the time flew by as in the two earlier sessions, and eventually I had to call an end to the discussion and to our conference. Yet because this final discussion trail had clearly been blazed by the Father's Spirit, I knew its vitality would continue among the men and even their families after the conference.

The next morning, I preached at the Sunday service to the entire congregation, including women and families, out of my new book for couples *Loving to Fight or Fighting to Love: Winning the Spiritual Battle for Your Marriage*—which includes a chapter by Mary.

In my sermon, I focused on an upending, even prophetic story in the first chapter, "Finding Your Voice: Starting apart, Finishing Together." Ten years earlier, a thriving men's group working through my book *Fight like a Man: A New Manhood for a New Warfare* asked me to bring Mary there to help them draw their wives into their healing process.

"We've grown so much as men and brothers over these past months together," the men's leader told me. "But now our wives are starting to feel left out, even suspicious about our new strength. We don't want to lose what the Father's given us, but we don't want to lose our wives, either!"

Later in my sermon, I also told the congregation how at our men's conference the day before, Father God had cut off my planned final teaching and led us to finish the weekend with a lesson in seeing women with His eyes.

I closed out the morning's worship by inviting everyone to bow their heads and wait on the Father to see if He had any special word for us at that point.

Eventually, I saw in my mind Jesus' standing side by side with a woman, his right arm extended behind her back and hand grasping her right shoulder as they both faced outward. I told the people what I was seeing, then reported what I saw Jesus doing.

"Jesus has a big smile, like something's making him really excited," I noted, pausing to see what He was doing. "Now I see: He's proud—of the woman—and He wants to tell everyone about her. 'This is my daughter!' He says loudly, puffing out His chest. 'This is MY daughter!'"

"It's like He's introducing the woman to the world, presenting her both to other persons and to the heavenly hosts. 'I am so proud of this daughter of mine!' He declares, pointing to His chest with pride and squeezing her shoulder to Himself.

"He's about to continue, when the woman interrupts Him. 'But Jesus...,' she says, then hangs her head. 'You don't know what I've done.'

"Jesus draws up and smiles, a look of wonder on His face. 'I, who was there at the foundation of the earth, don't know what you've done?' He bursts out. 'No, my daughter,' He says, again hugging her from the side. 'It's not that I don't know what you've done, but that *you don't know what I've done!*'"

I paused. "It seems as if this woman Jesus is so proud of has done something she's ashamed of, and feels that disqualifies her from her Father God's love and pride in her. Jesus wants her to know that He blazed the trail to her Father's heart, so she wouldn't have to carry her shame any longer, but could release it all to Him and get on with the Father's purposes for her life.

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’, as Paul declared in Romans 8:1.”

Finally, I told the congregation that I sensed Jesus was asking the woman, “Would you give me your shame and let me lead you now to your true Father?”

At that, I knew it was time to yield the floor and let Jesus speak for Himself. “Father,” I prayed out loud, “if this is a word for your daughters here this morning, if you want any woman here to give you her shame and let you lead her to the Father, please speak to her now.”

“Brothers,” I added, “this is your time to step up and pray quietly for our sisters.” I then stopped talking so Holy Spirit could move freely in the hearts of the women there, and prayed silently.

Soon, the sound of sniffles and sobs broke out in the sanctuary.

As I stood there quietly praising Jesus, I remembered Mary’s and my ministry ten years before with the men’s group and their wives. Soon after that event, my book sales had dropped off, along with my speaking engagements. In fact, I began to notice that fewer men’s ministry events were taking place anywhere.

Confused, even perturbed, I asked the Father, “What are you doing with your men? What’s the future of your men’s movement?”

To my surprise, I heard one-word: “Women.”

Baffled, I wondered back then what it could possibly mean that the future of the Father’s movement among men is women. I could only surrender it all to Him with a prayer, “If that’s you speaking to me, Father, I leave it with you to give me understanding in your time.”

Looking out amid the women’s tears that Sunday morning ten years later, I sensed at last that such a time had come. “I initiated my men’s movement over thirty years ago,” I believe the Father was saying. “but my agenda was greater than you or anyone else could see back then. In fact, I was securing my sons in their manhood so they could see today what I’m doing among my daughters, and bless it.”

The Scripture came to mind: “Male and female He created them, in the image of God...” (Gen. 1:27).

Yes, men and women need to spend time separately with the Father to rediscover our true identity in Him. But the Father’s ultimate goal is to unite His whole family together. Now, I believe He’s preparing a major strategic move to accomplish that.

“Father, make them One,” as Jesus prayed for His followers before going to the cross, “just as you and I are one” (John 17:11).

And so, my brothers and sisters, I bring you this word today. As Scripture instructs, I now leave it with you to judge.

Men, do you see women being lifted up with a new authority and strength, in your home as around the world? Do you sense the vitality—even the pain and anger—that our sisters are beginning at last to face in themselves and express among other women and to us men?

Most significantly, Do you want to be a part of what the Father of us all is doing now among both men and women to draw us closer to Him, closer to each other, and thereby, closer to His plans for this world?

Those who have the same father are called “brothers” and “sisters.” Do you sense that our Father God has ordained this time for men and women to recognize each other no

longer as strangers, even opponents, but as family members? Are you ready to listen to each other's stories with a new sense of mutual respect and *philia*/brother-sister love for each other?

Finally, are we men and women ready to stop fighting each other and instead, to fight in the power of Holy Spirit: side by side against our common enemy, after our ordained purpose together as the very image of God?

If so, let's begin by thanking the Father for our common heritage in Him and determine now to join Him in our common destiny.

GORDON DALBEY's first of nine books *Healing the Masculine Soul* helped pioneer the Christian men's movement in 1988 and is still a bestseller today. He and his wife Mary have recently authored *Loving to Fight or Fighting to Love: Winning the Spiritual Battle for Your Marriage*. They minister internationally and live in Santa Barbara, CA. See www.abbafather.com.