

Transcript: Episode 228

Nijay Gupta: Women Leaders in the New Testament

James Early [00:00:00]:

Hey there, everyone, and welcome again to the Bible Speaks to You Podcast. I wanna thank you so much for being here today. We're gonna talk about women in leadership roles in the bible with a special focus on the early Christian church and what that means for us today. And I am so delighted to have Nijay Gupta as my guest this week. He's recently written a book about this very topic, and we'll get into that in just a few minutes. Nijay, welcome to The Bible Speaks to You.

Nijay Gupta [00:00:30]:

Thanks, James. It's an honor.

James Early [00:00:32]:

Yeah. Well, it's a real honor to have you too on the show. I really appreciate you being here and I hope you can shed some light. I know you're gonna shed a lot of light on what has really become an increasingly controversial topic, the role of women in the church and to what degree they can or should take on leadership roles. I first became acquainted with you all several months ago. You interviewed Scot McKnight on a Facebook live or something about Bible translations and his new translation of the New Testament. And Scott had been a guest on my show last May, and so anyway, made that connection and reached out to you and I just really appreciate you responding and, being willing to be here today. Before we jump in, I wanna tell my listeners a little about you.

James Early [00:01:19]:

Doctor Gupta is currently a professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary. He has his PhD in New Testament from the University of Durham. He's been studying the Bible officially and unofficially for most of his life, I guess you could say.

Nijay Gupta [00:01:39]:

Yeah. Yeah.

James Early [00:01:41]:

Isn't it true that there's just a lot of life experience that comes into the... you read the same thing over and over and over for years years and you see new things? I'm sure you've had that experience.

Nijay Gupta [00:01:53]:

Yeah. Absolutely. I mean, it's that way with other things too, like movies and books where if you put them in context, you learn more about the time period. I remember reading, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Cost of Discipleship when I was in high school, and maybe in college, and it was just like, okay. This is good to stop literature. And then I actually read a biography of Bonhoeffer, and I realized what was really going on at the time in Nazi Germany, and that just brings a whole nother texture to his writings. And same thing with the Bible. If we study in context, if we study it understanding what was going on at the time, it just adds so much depth.

Nijay Gupta [00:02:32]:
So I love bringing that to my students and to my readers.

James Early [00:02:36]:
And what I've found is, you know, you read something like when you're in your twenties and you think very idealistically, isn't this wonderful? But then you have some life experiences where you see the depth of the truth of what's there, and it just adds a whole new dimension.

Nijay Gupta [00:02:50]:
Mhmm.

James Early [00:02:50]:
Texture. I love your word texture to it.

Nijay Gupta [00:02:53]:
Yeah. Yeah.

James Early [00:02:54]:
Nijay has written several books. One is called *Worship That Makes Sense to Paul*. Another one is *A Beginner's guide to New Testament studies*. Another one is *Paul and the Language of Faith*, and I'm sure I'm leaving some out. But if you are interested in pursuing your own PhD in biblical studies, he's written a book called *Prepare, Succeed, Advance, a Guidebook for Getting a PhD in Biblical Studies and Beyond*. So if that's something you're interested in, you should check those out. He's also written lots of commentaries in theological journals and stuff like that. The thing that I think is really cool is that he served as a senior translator for the *New Living Translation of the Bible*.

James Early [00:03:40]:
I really love that translation. I quote it a lot on my podcast. It just brings it alive. I mean, it is a living translation. It's I love the title even. He also is cohost on a podcast called *Slow Theology*, and I'll have that link in the show notes.

James Early [00:03:59]:
You can check that out. And he has a blog on Patheos called *Crux Sola*. That's where he shares his insights on whatever he's thinking about currently. But we're mainly here today to talk about your recent book that came out last year called *Tell Her Story, How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church*. And this is such an important I love this book and and we're gonna jump into that in in just a minute. But, you know, Nijay, before we get going, I would just love to hear what's new and exciting in your life these days. What's God doing in your life right now?

Nijay Gupta [00:04:38]:
Yeah. A couple things. One is, I know you weren't necessarily asking for a book pitch, but I just, in a couple weeks, a new book is coming out for me called *Strange Religion, How the First Christians Were Weird, Dangerous, and Compelling*. This is kind of a follow-up to *tell her story*,

and and the whole idea is we are we're in a crisis in American Christianity Christianity of integrity, a crisis of ethics. And it's not every church. It's not every Christian, but certainly when I look at the landscape of American Christianity, there's a lot of hypocrisy. There's a lot of watered down Christianity.

Nijay Gupta [00:05:18]:

There's a lot of, missteps that we're taking in terms of what's the heart and depth of the gospel. So I love going back. That's my job. I love going back to the Bible, going back to the apostles, going back to Jesus and say, how how did this thing get started, And what was it confronting culturally? And what was the engine that drove the early church? I'll just let that tease you to read the book. But I'll say one thing that one thing that we can be for sure about is culturally, Christians were strange. They deviated from the norms, and so what you can't do is just stick a Jesus sticker on pagan culture. You have to transform churches and people from the inside out with the gospel, the truth of the gospel, the beauty of the gospel, the goodness of the gospel, the righteousness of the gospel.

Nijay Gupta [00:06:18]:

That's what happened in early Christianity, and I don't know if that's always what's happening today. And so I want to inspire people that. So what's getting me excited, I'm re I'm listening to this podcast. I listen to podcast too. I'm listening to a podcast called The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God with a great Christian influencer, Justin Brierley, British guy. And he has launched this whole podcast document series about how new atheism is kind of dying out and we're starting to see all these secularists start to rediscover how Christianity shaped the West in good ways, like the dignity of the individual and the importance of monogamy, things like that, justice for everybody. So, yeah, I think that fits very well into what I'm doing, so that's that's what I'm getting currently excited about.

James Early [00:07:13]:

Oh, that is so cool. I'll just run with that for a second. I love Ephesians 4:22, 23, and 24 where Paul says, put off the old man, the old self. Yes. Yes. And then renew yourself in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, the new self. I think part of the problem is I see this in a lot of Christian culture today is they're holding on to the old self. They're trying to fix it up.

James Early [00:07:39]:

They're trying to put a band aid on the old man, the old self instead of get rid of it. Paul says, in Christ, old things are passed away. Mhmm. All things are new and Yeah. We're trying to hold on to the old, the old materialistic view of ourselves and try to be a better materialistically viewed, mindseted person when we should be having a whole new mindset. And that's really what my podcast is about is getting back to the original Christianity of Jesus, getting back to what did Jesus actually tell us to do? How did how does he want us to think and

Nijay Gupta [00:08:13]:

Yeah.

James Early [00:08:14]:

Love and interact with people? So that's why I love you so much. I don't even know you hardly at all, but I just love your whole operation here of trying to get back to what Jesus really wanted and the impact it has on us today in the church individually and collectively. So

Nijay Gupta [00:08:31]:
Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

James Early [00:08:13]:
I've got so many questions about your book. The one we're talking about today, Tell Her Story about women leaders in the Bible. I don't really even know where to kinda jump on this merry-go-round. There's so many things I'd like to talk to you about. And I also have some questions that I have from some listeners I put on Facebook last week that I was gonna be talking to you and I said, do you have any questions?

Nijay Gupta [00:08:57]:
People always have questions.

James Early [00:08:56]:
Oh, and it's good. And some of them are comments, and they're not all totally on on topic, but I think they're they're important because they shed light on some of this stuff. So what got you interested in this whole idea of women in leadership roles in the bible and then, of course, how that applies to us today? What was the spark that? because you didn't grow up necessarily believing that.

Nijay Gupta [00:09:25]:
No. No. Good question and an important question. Out of all the things you can do, why did I do this? You know, it it comes out of partly my own story. I became a believer in high school. My parents are Hindu. I grew up in a Hindu household. That's a story for another time.

Nijay Gupta [00:09:25]:
But, and I did it you know, the the Christian literature I was introduced to is very classic Christian literature, C S Lewis, Max Lucado, Dallas Willard, all that stuff, which is great. In college, I was heavily involved in Campus Crusade for Christ. I had a great experience. I did missions work, with Crusade in Eastern Europe, and my ministry leaders introduced me to the writings of Wayne Grudem and John Piper, and both of those guys were becoming well known for their work in a theology that establishes complementarity between men and women, but the kind of bottom line is that men should have, the leading role and women should have the following role when it came to the most important aspects of leadership in the church like preaching, teaching, eldership, and so forth.

James Early [00:10:39]:
Could you just for a second for my listeners, they may not all understand the word complementarianism. You kind of defined it, but could you explain that just a a moment? So tje'll know what you're talking about.

Nijay Gupta [00:10:50]:

Yes. Complimentarianism, you know, it it literally means fitting together like puzzle pieces. Right? So it means two people, man and woman, fitting together. But within the context of this discussion, it means women by nature have a place in nurturing and supporting, and then men by nature have a role in leading and being the final decision maker and preaching and teaching and so forth. Different people within that camp have slightly different, approaches and views on that, but that's sort of the gist of it. The alternative is called egalitarianism, this idea that men and women are different, but when it comes to leadership, they can be gifted by God in the same ways. Another term that's emerging is mutualism, a mutualist view, which is similar to egalitarianism, but this idea that egalitarianism can sound like individualistic, and mutualism says men and women can and should lead together, but they can lead as they're gifted in the same ways.

James Early [00:12:01]:
So where would you put yourself in that spectrum?

Nijay Gupta [00:12:00]:
Yeah. Let's go back to the story. So I certainly in college would have been complementarian, although I wouldn't have known the term, And I think I just sort of took it as a package. I call this package theology, when if you like what Piper is offering on enjoying God forever, if you love what Grudem is offering on Coherent Systematic Theology, You just say, I'm gonna take the whole package. And with that came this view of men and women, and I just assumed, hey. There are these texts in Ephesians and First Corinthians and First Timothy, and it just sort of takes for granted and even supports this idea that women should be silent, women should be submissive, men should be out front preaching and teaching and leading. And so I didn't question it. I didn't think much about it, and then I went to seminary and for the first time, I was in a learning context that included women pastors, that included women who were training to be pastors, that included denominations that supported women pastors.

Nijay Gupta [00:13:12]:
And at first, I shrugged that off as liberalism. I just thought, okay, they're given into culture. They are riding the train of liberalism, and I was even told by some professors to avoid women students who were studying for pastoral ministry.

James Early [00:13:28]:
Oh my goodness.

Nijay Gupta [00:13:07]:
Because they'll poison your faith. They don't trust the scriptures. They're putting personal opinion over over God's word. And, we had a cafeteria. And so I would end up in conversations with some of these people, including the person I'd ended up marrying, Amy, who was I was doing a Mastor of Divinity, and Amy was doing a Mastor of Divinity. We had a lot in common, Amy and I. We both grew up in the Midwest. We both have a passion for missions.

Nijay Gupta [00:13:58]:
We both were involved in campus ministry, and we have a heart for evangelism, and we both love the Bible. And so, you know, we got talking, and it really struck me. We believe the same

things about the Bible, so how could it be so wrong for these women to be discerning a call to ministry? I actually wrote my first systematic theology paper in seminary on why women shouldn't be pastors.

James Early [00:14:28]:
Mhmm.

Nijay Gupta [00:14:26]:
And I'm not sure why I chose that subject. I think I want, I think I was unsure, so I did this as a way of convincing myself that I belonged in the same circle as Piper and Gruden even though I part company on a variety of theological issues. But after I wrote that paper and I started to engage more with Amy and other professors that supported, women as leaders in the church, I decide I need to do a two year deep dive, so I did. I spent about a year and a half reading everything I could on the subject in Greek, in Hebrew, and all of that, all this all the secondary literature. At this time, it was Ben Witherington, Craig Keener, Gordon Fee. And I realized there are actually a lot of scholars I deeply respect who are not just okay with, but support women as pastors, and elders, and leaders, and so forth. And my view started to change, not because of liberalism, not because I stopped trusting the Bible, but because the issue is actually very complex.

Nijay Gupta [00:15:33]:
More complex than I was ever taught. And there's more than one kind of thing in Scripture, and so you have to reckon with all of that. One thing that we might come back to later, James, is our theology on any important subject can't be built on one or two verses.

James Early [00:15:51]:
Oh, I say that all the time.

Nijay Gupta [00:15:49]:
Yeah. That's true for ecology. That's true for the Spirit, Pneumatology. That's true for the church, Ecclesiology, that's true for Christ, Christology can't be built on one verse. You could create some very bad doctrine by just using one or two or three verses.

James Early [00:16:10]:
It's been done.

Nijay Gupta [00:16:12]:
It's been done. We have to look at the whole council of scripture. So Yeah. I ended up being a TA almost by accident for a woman named Catherine Kreger, who was the founder of Christians For Biblical Equality, this organization that supports women in ministry. She was just so sweet and charming, and she didn't push anything on me. But getting to know her and how well she knew the Bible, I really changed my mind on the issue. I actually wrote my final systematic theology paper on why women must be pastors and support the church together with men side by side. But why did it take me 20 years after that to write a book on the subject? Since 2016, and we all know some of the things that happened in 2016.

Nijay Gupta [00:16:09]:

Since 2016, I've been troubled by divisions within the church that have been very unhealthy. And not just the fact of the divisions, but the tone of the divisions

James Early [00:17:08]:

Mhmm. Totally.

Nijay Gupta [00:17:06]:

Of hostility and judgmentalism. I think truth is important. I think righteousness is important. I think Biblical faithfulness is important, but there's a spirit of how we should do these things. There's a Christian tone for how we should do these things. And in 2019, there was a men's conference with John MacArthur. I think John MacArthur is a good person. I think he's a Christian that has done a lot of good for the world, but he's someone that I disagree with on some things.

Nijay Gupta [00:17:40]:

And he was at this conference, and someone asked him, who who was hosting the conference, "What are two words that you think of when I say the name Beth Moore?" Now at this time, Beth Moore was speaking out against the Southern Baptist Convention not doing enough to deal with sexual abuse in the Southern Baptist churches. And she was speaking out very publicly, very boldly about these problems. She was talking about the church hiding abuse issues and looking after their reputation versus trying to stop unrighteousness. And John MacArthur replied, "Go home." Now that probably meant 2 or 3 things at once. It probably meant she's a public Bible teacher, and sometimes she'll speak on a Sunday morning, which seems a lot like preaching. I would call that preaching, but talk about that later. Beth Moore never called that preaching because she wanted to just use her gifts, perform her ministry without all the controversy.

Nijay Gupta [00:18:42]:

But I think part of it was, "Hey, Beth. You're not really a preacher, so don't pretend to be. Go home." But it was also don't get involved too much in this Southern Baptist stuff that's not your business. But as my day job as a Bible scholar, and I've worked a lot on the New Testament in terms of research that made me think: Where are women and what are they doing? And you know what, James, They're often not at home. Now, the Roman world had a culture of what's called the domus and the forum. The domus is the household. Right? Women belong in the household, and the forum is the public square.

Nijay Gupta [00:19:22]:

Men belong in the public square. But in practice, women could be found in various places doing various things. And it's true in the New Testament that we often find women not at home. So what are they doing? Well, it's interesting. Junia is in prison for publicly representing the gospel. She's out there doing something dangerous. We don't know what, we could talk about that later. You have the women of Luke chapter 8.

Nijay Gupta [00:19:21]:

Joanna, Susanna, Mary Magdalene. They're not at home. They're traveling with Jesus, and Luke goes out of his way to tell us when Jesus went to Cheesecake Factory, they paid for his bill. Now that's interesting because I'm used to thinking, Oh, Jesus had 12 male disciples. So when he went, you know, made a reservation in a restaurant, he made it for 13. No. Luke chapter 10, we have 70 people that are sent out in mission. And because Luke chapter 8 was just two chapters before, it made sense that they are male female pairs, not male male pairs.

Nijay Gupta [00:20:28]:

We'll talk about that later. The women at the cross are not at home while the men are hiding. Mary Magdalene was sent by Jesus to tell the male disciples while they were hiding. And think about this. Jesus could have appeared to anyone anywhere. In fact, he does that later on in the gospel of John. Right. And if you look at the gospel of John, who was at the tomb right before Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene? Peter and John.

Nijay Gupta [00:20:27]:

Why didn't Jesus appear to Peter and John? Right? I think he's honoring the fact. That the disciples abandoned Jesus at the cross and the women showed up for Jesus at the cross and at the tomb. Women aren't at home. Phoebe was sent by Paul from Cancrea which is near Corinth, I think 600 miles, if I remember the calculation, or kilometers, to Rome to deliver Paul's letter to Rome.

James Early [00:21:27]:

Yeah. That's a long way even today.

Nijay Gupta [00:21:30]:

It's a long way without a car. Yeah. It's a long way on horse or donkey or

James Early [00:21:37]:

Or boat or whatever.

Nijay Gupta [00:21:35]:

Even Uber, it's a long way. Scooter, it's a long way on scooter. So that got me thinking, Gosh. Have we failed to notice women in the Bible and what they're actually doing? We tend to focus on what's called the prohibition passages, the don'ts. And we sit around saying what what can women do or not do, all the while women are everywhere and doing everything. And that's what my book is about is to actually sit down and observe. Who's Junia and where is she and what's she doing? And even the women that I never grew up hearing about, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Mary of Rome, Persis, the mother of Rufus, the sister of Nereus, Nympha, Yodian Syntyche, Demaris, Susanna. There are so many of them.

Nijay Gupta [00:22:25]:

This is a cloud of witnesses. Right? And I just wanna say, let's let these women have their moment and say, Who are they? What did they do? Paul says Euodie and Syntyche, their names are written in the book of life, meaning these people have worked very, very hard for the gospel. What are they doing? Let's honor them. That's what my book is about.

James Early [00:22:43]:

Yeah. I knew a few of these women that you've mentioned in your book. Some of them, I still can't even say their names.

Nijay Gupta [00:22:51]:

Yeah. And that's the problem because we don't know the genderization of them, so you don't know Persis as a woman. Right? Many people don't know Junia as a woman.

James Early [00:22:59]:

Well, Junie was translated Junian or something. Junias Yeah. That person was considered a male for however long. But one thing in your book I noticed is that you go back to some of the ancient writings like in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd century and there was an open acknowledgement that Junie was female, that these women had leadership roles. They were not trying to suppress that.

James Early [00:23:29]:

When did that suppression happen, start happening, do you think?

Nijay Gupta [00:23:34]:

Yeah. Well, if you're listening and you're kind of confused, let me just say open up to Romans chapter 16 verse 7 where Paul's commending a variety of people, men and women, and he mentions greeting Andronicus and Junia or some translations say Junias with an s. And if you're reading Junias then the translator, the English translator is telling you they think it's a male, short for Junianas. And if you're reading Junia, then the translator thinks that this person is a female. Now what James is saying here is when you look at the New Testament Greek text, it's actually unclear. It's not made clear by the Greek text what the gender of the person is. You just have to know what the name is to know whether the person is male or female. James Early: So how do you figure that out?

Nijay Gupta [00:24:23]:

Good question. So we use a few tricks of the trade. One of the tricks is, is there attestation of the name elsewhere that would tell us whether this is a male or female name? And good news, Junia was a common female Latin name in the Roman world.

James Early [00:24:45]:

Mhmm.

Nijay Gupta [00:24:46]:

So if I say Junian, which is the form of it, which is like we we can use pronouns like him, which is the form of the word he. Right. Well, Junian is a form of the word Junia. So we have lots of examples of a woman's name, Junia. We have no, and I mean no examples of a male named Junianus or Juni as. So it would be pure speculation that this was a male name. The only reason that theologians throughout time have thought this must be a man, is because Paul says, that Andronicus and Junia are noteworthy among the apostles. We'll come back to that in a minute, but it appears that Paul is saying they are apostles and they are the best of the apostles or some of the best of the apostles.

Nijay Gupta [00:25:38]:

So one clue is how common is the name and is it treated as a female name? It's always treated as a female name. Second is called reception history. What did the earliest Christians after the New Testament tell us about these people when they talk about them? And because Romans is so important in early Christianity, you have a wide variety of what we call patristic writers writing in that early church father's age, like you said, 3rd, 4th century, 5th century. People like Saint John Chrysostom, Jerome, Origen, Theodore, of Mopsos Tia, Theodoret, and so forth. Loads and loads of folks, and we have other clues as well. And unanimously, they refer to this person as a woman and as an apostle. Now exactly what it means that they are apostles is unclear. They're certainly not part of the 12.

Nijay Gupta [00:26:33]:

Right? Right. Because they replaced Judas with Matthias. That's okay. Now you have 12. You add you just throw Paul in there somewhere, and you have 12 plus 1. Right? Paul's the little engine that could. Right? He's trying to hang on. So he's kind of the awkward 13th apostle.

Nijay Gupta [00:26:52]:

But I think that there is an apostolic school because Jesus sends out these 70. And so there's clearly apostles who are first among an apostolic community or school. For example, Barnabas is assumed to be an apostle. And then Paul in 1st Corinthians talks about these so called super apostles, which are kind of his nemesis, you know, maybe his thorn in the flesh. So we know from these patristic writers that these people like Andronicus, male and his probably wife, Junia, female, were apostolic leaders, but you asked how did that ever change? Well, there's a scholar named Eldon Epp who did a study of the transmission of Bible translation throughout time, and how things were changed specifically in relationship to Junia, and he says we could detect a shift in the 13th century, where perhaps because of kind of, reaffirmation of patriarchy of a kind of manly leadership, There was what appears to be an intentional corruption of the manuscript tradition, where they wanna affirm that this person is a man or assert and not a woman. Now it wasn't absolute, but it certainly started a trend. And so we see the female name crop up here and there. For example, the King James Bible gets it right.

Nijay Gupta [00:28:24]:

But in English translations, most of them opted for the male name Junias until the 1970s and 80s. When biblical scholarship really pushed this hard yeah. So for, you know, more than a 100 years in the English tradition, it was assumed to be a man. It wasn't really until, I would trace it honestly to the women's civil rights movement where we have now the emergence of more women scholars to say, "Wait a second. Let's do our Bible study. Let's do our early history and get back to the truth." There's a woman named Bernadette Bruton who wrote on this and kind of turned the tide and sparked an emergence of new scholarship on this, to the point now where most translations now, even so called conservative translations, recognize that Junia is a woman.

Nijay Gupta [00:29:17]:

But there's still a question about whether noteworthy among the apostles means noteworthy as apostles or noteworthy to the apostles. I'll make just a quick comment about that. I think the most natural reading of the Greek text is noteworthy as apostles, but to add fuel to that, Paul says, number 1, they are 3 things. They are Jewish. They were Christians before Paul, and they were in

prison for the gospel. With those three things combined, there's every reason to believe, I think, they were either part of the 70 that were sent out by Jesus or they were people that Jesus appeared to during that resurrection period before his ascension.

James Early [00:30:07]:
Wow.

Nijay Gupta [00:30:07]:
Hit me hit me with more questions.

James Early [00:30:06]:
Well, I'm just gonna comment on that. Junia, right, why would she have been put in prison if she wasn't out actively preaching and teaching and doing all the things that she said being a strange Christian in the society. Yeah. That makes total sense.

Nijay Gupta [00:30:25]:
One thing I learned about and, you know, when I researched for this, I was really blown away. In the Roman world, we have very little evidence of women going to prison. Very, very little to the point where it's it would be extremely unusual for a woman to be sent to prison because prison wasn't, number 1, it wasn't a punishment for criminals. It was a holding place until trial before a magistrate. And magistrates were very busy, and they wouldn't bother themselves with a woman. So if a woman committed a petty crime like shoplifting, she would be either beaten on the spot. If she was wealthy, she would be fined, or she would be sent home to be punished by her family, by her father or her husband.

Nijay Gupta [00:31:15]:
A woman would have to have committed a crime against the State to disturb the Roman order, the Roman peace, like Paul did, in order to get thrown in prison to await trial. We have so few instances, she had to have done something really serious. And it couldn't be murder or else Paul wouldn't have commended her. So it couldn't be, like, you know

James Early [00:31:40]:
Right.

Nijay Gupta [00:31:40]:
Any anything that would we would think as sinful, had to be so the the the most possible the plausible theory is disturbing the peace like Paul does in Ephesus in the book of Acts, or where the Thessalonians say, these people are turning the world upside down, or they're proclaiming another king other than Caesar. It's those kinds of things. What's she doing not at home? What's she doing in prison? And then once she gets out of prison, what's she doing going back into ministry to the point that she's one of the known leaders of Rome?

James Early [00:32:13]:
You know, this makes a really good point and, it's a comment that somebody, mentioned on my Facebook thing last week and that is it's important to know the historical context, the cultural context because just that little phrase, "was in prison," says so much more. I've just passed over

that when I read that. Okay. So I I didn't know the cultural connotations of that and you really shed light on that so it gives us a lot more information when you know what that means.

Nijay Gupta [00:32:44]:

Paul's normal word for imprisonment is *desmios*, which means chains. And so anytime you read Paul prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ, it's Paul chained chained person. Right? But in the instance where he talks about Andronicus and Junia, he used the Greek word, which means *prisoner of war*. Now technically, they wouldn't have been prisoners of war because they are living within the Roman Empire. So it's a metaphor. They did go to prison, but Paul sees it as a spiritual battle against against evil, against sin and death. And so he's actually positioning Andronicus and Junia as cosmic warriors, warriors for the faith who have been thrown in prison can proudly wear the chains of Christ.

Nijay Gupta [00:33:35]:

I think that's really powerful because there was no greater honor to Paul than wearing the chains of imprisonment for being warriors, spiritual warriors for Christ and it happens to be a male and female pair that's here being given this commendation he only gives to a few people in the whole New Testament.

James Early [00:33:54]:

I wanna shift a little here because we could talk for two or three hours, but we don't we don't have that time. So I wanna, keep going here. One thing I would do wanna talk about is some of those prohibition Sure. Phrases, the place where women are supposed to stay silent in church, only learn from your husband. And this gets back to your point about you can't make a theology out of one or two or three Bible verses. I was actually in a church service one time in New York City, A large church and there was a woman conducting the service, reading from the scriptures, and a man stands up in the back and, you know, basically is calling her out and rebuking her.

James Early [00:34:38]:

It was quite a little interruption of the normal thing, but that's a really strongly held view. How do you see that in the context of the cultural, and and what do you say to people? Again, we could talk forever on this, but just briefly kind of give us some context there.

Nijay Gupta [00:34:55]:

Yeah. Yeah. So I think that's important, and the thing we shouldn't do is tear out parts of our Bible. So I don't do that. I I take those texts very seriously, but they have to be read, number 1, in context, we'll talk about that in a moment, and number 2, with an understanding that Paul and other New Testament writers and Biblical writers seem to contradict some of those things to the point where we have to understand how all the pieces fit together. So for example, in 1st Corinthians, yes, Paul says women should be should be silent in chapter 14, but he also says he also assumes women are gonna pray and prophesy publicly in the church in in chapter 11. That itself needs to be, taken into consideration. I actually start my book with Deborah, even though Deborah's in the Old Testament, because I couldn't help myself.

Nijay Gupta [00:35:49]:

Because anyone that brings up 1st Timothy chapter 2, women should, be silent and should not teach or have authority over men and the church. Anyone that brings up 1st Corinthians 11 or 14, which talks about silence, or brings up the submission passages, they need to have an answer to Deborah because here we have in the Old Testament, heavily patriarchal male oriented society. An occasion where Israel has entered the land, but they failed to do what God had asked by driving out the Canaanites or putting them to death. And so they're being plagued by the Canaanites. They're trying to occupy the land with the Canaanites, and the Canaanites are just troubling them to no end. And so they're getting persecuted and harmed, and God raises up these temporary, but national leaders called the judges. So you might know Samson, Gideon.

Nijay Gupta [00:36:50]:

And Deborah's one of them. But this was an especially evil period of Israel's history. There are 3 things that are repeated in the book of Judges. Everyone did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes, and there was not yet a king in Israel. So I like to say this was Israel's zombie apocalypse. This was complete chaos in Israel.

Nijay Gupta [00:37:18]:

God's Word was not being respected and honored and obeyed. And God chose in this time to use Deborah to lead the nation spiritually because she is a prophet and she's a judge, and there's no other law than God's Word. So when she's adjudicating cases like Moses did the book of Exodus, she's adjudicating them based on the first five books of the bible, the law of Moses. And she goes into battle with Barak. She doesn't fight, but she goes in a battle with Barak. And then she's the only judge that a victory song is sung that gives a theological interpretation of the events that praise her as a Mother over Israel. She is Israel's caretaker, savior, and guardian, and she's clearly a positive figure.

Nijay Gupta [00:38:11]:

So this idea that women should be silent, that women can't be seen out front leading, they have to explain Deborah because we're talking about somebody that is viewed as a hero of the faith. And then you add to that a woman like Junia, who is in the New Testament, who's clearly representing Christianity. She's being thrown in prison. I think she's being called an apostle. And if you think she's not being called an apostle, you have to explain why the Greek speaking church fathers took that for granted. Then you have women like Nympha who are in Colossians. Read Colossians chapter 4. Whenever Paul uses the pattern of "So and so and the church that meets in their house," they're talking about a house church leader.

Nijay Gupta [00:38:58]:

How do we know that? Read about Stephanas in 1st Corinthians. Read about Gaius. Read about Acaiacus. Read about Philemon, read about Priscilla and Aquila. And so here we have what I think in Colossians is the only example, but an important example of a female head of a house church. They didn't use, James, the word pastor in the 1st century, and I show some evidence in my book. They didn't use the word pastor in the 2nd century or the 3rd century or the 4th century. It really wasn't until the medieval period and then especially the reformation where they're pushing against the Catholic church that this term pastor becomes the dominant term.

Nijay Gupta [00:39:41]:

They would think that leaders have a shepherding ministry, which what the word pastor means. But when we talk about the don'ts, what do I think is happening? I think that we probably have in some churches what we call the gender wars. Right? Paul's preaching equality. He's preaching affirmation of women, and you can see how that might lead to some power plays between men and women. And I'm just gonna keep it real simple because I know time is running out. And I have chapters on this in my book, so those listening, don't send hate mail, don't scoff. Read the book. I'm open to conversation.

Nijay Gupta [00:40:18]:

What I think is happening is Paul wants harmony. He wants harmony. Now patriarchy, the rule of men, was the order of the day. And we have something like the household codes where it says, you know, women submit to men. He's not saying women must obey men. If a husband says to his wife, lie about this to so and so. Right? A Christian cannot tell a lie, so it's not obedience. Households operate a lot like a small business, and businesses need organizational leadership.

Nijay Gupta [00:40:53]:

And whether we like it or not for better or for worse, Paul was saying, "Hey, Jesus could come back at any time. Let's not worry about the structures. Let's focus on infusing Jesus's DNA into the systems of the world and see how that permeates who we are and transforms how we live." So take for example, Paul's letter to Philemon. Philemon is a Christian slave master. Onesimus is a Christian slave returning home after doing something wrong. We don't know what. Paul basically says and this is my interpretation, but it's a common interpretation.

Nijay Gupta [00:41:31]:

Paul basically says, It doesn't matter whether you're slave master or not. Leave that in place. What matters is how you treat each other. And if you treat each other with grace and respect, then you live like brothers and not like slave and master. So who cares what the legal documents say? This is what Paul is saying. Who cares what legal documents say? What matters is how you actually treat each other? How you live together? And I think, obviously, society rightfully changed that and abolished slavery. But in Paul's time, he was saying, we need to start with harmony and respect and we inject Jesus and the Spirit into this, it's gonna transform relationships. But you can't just shout shout over each other.

Nijay Gupta [00:42:21]:

I don't know if any of you watched the the GOP political debates. I'm not trying to be partisan here, but I watched them because I'm very interested. I wanted to know what their positions were, but I couldn't hear their positions because they were just shouting at each other. That's just an objective opinion. Anyone watching it will know they just talked over each other, and Paul will not tolerate that. He wants respect.

James Early [00:42:45]:

This reminds me of one of the parables Jesus told about the kingdom of heaven. He said the kingdom of heaven is like a woman who took leaven or yeast and put it in three measures of meal. What I hear you saying is that Paul said, let's take the leaven of Jesus, the yeast of of the Christ, and put it in our daily lives and see how that transforms everything we do. Yeah. And that's what yeast does in bread dough. It totally transforms it. It looks the same on the outside,

but it's totally totally different. You know what? I wanna talk quickly there are some of these questions here and just really briefly.

James Early [00:43:24]:

A friend of mine in Pakistan, Michael, wants to know why American women do not cover their heads while praying when the bible commands it. Is that a cultural thing that we've gone past or is there some deeper spiritual thing? I know when I was a kid, women were supposed to wear hats in church.

Nijay Gupta [00:43:41]:

Sure. Sure.

James Early [00:43:42]:

You know?

Nijay Gupta [00:43:42]:

Yeah. When we read the Bible, that's a great question, and the spirit behind it is Biblical fidelity, which I think is spot on. It's important. However, once the Bible came together as a whole, you know, in the 4th, 3rd, 4th century, It had kinda started to move in that direction earlier on, but it was really a 4th century where the Bible became a whole. Then theologians and church leaders had to decide, how do we make sure people aren't just picking and choosing what they obey, and how do we make sure people aren't misusing the bible? Because you can use a verse here and there to do the wrong thing. And that's where we came up with something called the rule of faith. So this is saying, okay. How do we have certain principles and theological distinctives that guide how we read the Bible? Why am I bringing that up? Because there are certain things that are commanded in the Bible that almost all of us know are not commands that we have to obey.

Nijay Gupta [00:44:34]:

So for example, women shouldn't braid their hair. Right? Most Christians around the world of any tradition think it's okay for women to braid their hair because the problem isn't the braiding. The problem is the symbolic meaning behind that.

James Early [00:44:49]:

Right? Exactly.

Nijay Gupta [00:44:51]:

Some scholars think it was about showing off your wealth. Some think it was showing off your sexuality. Whatever the case, whatever you decide, that was what the heart of the issue was. Right? Or where they talk about not wearing jewelry. Right? I wear jewelry. My wife wears jewelry. Yeah. There's nothing specifically wrong about jewelry.

Nijay Gupta [00:45:13]:

It was really about showing off your wealth and about being ostentatious. Right? So we intuit often when a passage is giving us something. One of the things that my book Strange Religion does is to say pagans, by that, I mean, non Christian religions obsessed over getting rituals right

to make sure God is happy. And one thing that early Christians did is they did away with that. Now they had rituals, but the rituals are a matter of relationship, not fear.

James Early [00:45:48]:
That's a big difference.

Nijay Gupta [00:45:51]:
When rituals are done out of fear, then you're showing that you don't actually have a relationship with God. You're just trying to appease a god that has already been appeased by Jesus Christ. So when we have baptism or the Lord's supper, God's never gonna say in heaven, how dare you not do this 10 times when, you know, when you only did it 9. That's not what it's about. He'll say, where was your heart? Where was your will? Where was your obedience? Right? Yeah. That's gonna be the questions that you'll get asked at judgment, not why didn't you do this ritual x many times. So with the head coverings, these were the cultural codes of the time. Right? When First Peter says, gird up the loins of your mind, we don't actually gird up anything anymore.

Nijay Gupta [00:46:36]:
Girding up doesn't really matter. Right? When when Jesus says, if someone asks for your overcoat, give him your tunic as well. Right? We're not obeying the forms because we don't use those forms. It's the spirit of it, and that's what we carry on from day to day to day. For example, the language of living with God and pleasing God is the language of walking. Right? What if you have a disability, can't walk? Can you no longer follow Christ? Of course, you can. Right? The forms will change based on the person, culture, and society, but it's really what the forms reflect. The forms reflect obedience.

Nijay Gupta [00:47:14]:
Think about postures of prayer. Think about First Timothy, you know, raising up holy hands. Most of us don't raise up holy hands. I'm a pretty shy worshiper. Right? I don't raise up holy hands. But what do those holy hands reflect or bowing or prostrating yourself? How do we find the cultural codes of our time? So I'd say this listener, let's get back to what the heart of that was, of what the head covering was, which is respect. Signs of respect.

James Early [00:47:44]:
Right.

Nijay Gupta [00:47:45]:
And figure out how we live that out now. And in fact, it was probably a veil, I think, of some kind. One of the reasons we know, this wasn't universalized is it's really not talked about in any other new testament texts. Not even incidentally. And even in later text like the Didache, which is a little bit later in early Christianity. It's not talked about there either. So we, scholars, wanna look for patterns to say how universalized like baptism. Universal.

Nijay Gupta [00:48:10]:
It's everywhere. Everybody talks about it. It has to be done. Like, we have the Lord's supper. It doesn't matter the form. Right? We have some guidelines to that. But the specifics once we get

into ritual specifics, we actually get away from what the Bible teaches about this being a heart and will religion.

James Early [00:48:30]:

Alright. Well, I wanna apologize to my listeners because if we talked about all the things you said that we'll talk about in just a minute, we'd keep going for a while. So I'm gonna have to pass over some of these other questions because a couple of the things I wanna get to before we close-up. And I just wanna make one comment from listening everything you've said, Nijay. You know, Jesus said, you'll know the tree by its fruit and I would say after reading your book and seeing the things I've observed in and for everyone listening, I'd love for you to look at the fruit of women not having leadership roles and the fruit where women have had leadership roles when it's done right. I mean, both men and women can be bad leaders, but they can also be good leaders. So just I wanna encourage you to look at the fruit of what's the result of that. So...

Nijay Gupta [00:49:25]:

Yeah. And along along those lines, I hear sometimes, oh, I've listened to women preachers. They're not good. I've listened to male preachers that are terrible.

James Early [00:49:35]:

That's right.

Nijay Gupta [00:49:37]:

And and so I want listeners to know, like, I'm a person of color. I'm Indian by heritage, and it's really intimidating for me to represent all people of color when I'm preaching or to represent all Indians or nonwhite people. I don't like doing that. I don't like having that pressure on me. And so, be gentle, be kind with women in the pulpit because the vast majority feel like impostors. They feel like the world's against them. People walk out. People yell nasty things.

Nijay Gupta [00:50:07]:

Not all the time, but sometimes. So just know the added pressure there. I know this as a person of color that no one's ever yelled anything to me, but that sense of, I know they're comparing me to the white preachers they've heard and that's really hard for me.

James Early [00:50:23]:

Yeah. I wanna encourage everyone to get Nijay's book. It's called Tell Her Story, How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church, and he's gonna talk in there in much more detail than we've had, the chance to go into here. So I'll have a link in the show notes on how you can order a copy. Nijay, I just wanna honor you for all you've done to help people understand the Bible better, and especially the light that you've thrown on this whole subject of women's roles in the early church, and how that can inform us today, and how we could operate in our own church. I really appreciate your openness and you're willing to share how your views have changed and, you know, you've stood up against centuries of traditional Bible interpretation and said, well, you know what? I have a different perspective here. And that takes a lot of guts and I appreciate that. There are three final questions someone asked you and I hope you can be quick.

James Early [00:51:17]:

Lightning round. Okay. Lightning round. I ask all my guests this. If you could talk to any Bible character other than Jesus, who would it be, and what would you ask them?

Nijay Gupta [00:51:28]:

I mean, it's gotta be the apostle Paul. I've written most of my books about Paul, and he's a fascinating, enigmatic lightning rod kind of figure. I think I'd ask him, Paul, you've been through so much. You've been thrown in prison. You've been nearly beaten to death, nearly stoned to death. End of your life, why was it all worth it? Why was it all worth it? And I know his answer, the love of Jesus Christ, right? I was just reading recently and everyone should read Augustine's confessions, but he has this great reminder of the love of God. It's called late in life I loved meditating on the all-consuming love of Jesus Christ that changed his life. I think that'd be his answer, but I'd love to hear it directly from Paul.

Nijay Gupta [00:52:10]:

My Greek is not as good as Paul, so I'd love if he could get Google Translate to help me out there, but I would talk to Paul. James Early: Okay. 2nd question, is there any Bible character who you especially identify with? Is there any Bible character that I especially identify with? Nijay Gupta: Oh my gosh. It's a good question. I know we just been talking about these women. I feel in many ways like the women that follow Jesus where I'm guessing they were misfits. You know, they had demons cast out of them. They're women that have maybe been, separated from their husbands or divorced or whatever because of their faith.

Nijay Gupta [00:52:53]:

And I've always felt like a misfit. I'm a brown kid who grew up in rural Ohio. I'm not good at the things that I was expected to be good at. I'm good at other things. I just one of the reasons I became a Christian is Jesus is the only one that I fit in with. And, so I think I fit in with the misfits. And I feel like some of these women were misfits, so I'm gonna go with Mary Magdalene.

Nijay Gupta [00:53:22]:

Sorry, Mary, if that was insulting to you.

James Early [00:53:20]:

No. No. I think she's from heaven. That's that's cool. Yeah. Third question, this podcast is about getting back to the original Christianity of Jesus and embracing the mindset of Jesus. How would you describe Jesus's original message of how he wanted us to live our lives?

Nijay Gupta [00:53:40]:

Good question. You know, oh my gosh. I'm gonna have to go back. I'm writing a book right now on love, and so this is all I'm thinking about in the last few years. And I gotta say Augustine had it right because he said one of the ways that we have been misshapen as human beings is our loves, the things we're passionate about, our desires are disordered. They're pointed in the wrong directions. So if we attune to God and we align with God and we pour all of that passionate desire that we have towards God, right, seek first the kingdom, and we create just a clear channel of love with God and from God, it's gonna order the rest of our lives.

James Early [00:54:26]:
Totally. Yeah.

Nijay Gupta [00:54:27]:
It's gonna order our loves. It's gonna order how we love our kids. It's gonna order how we love our neighbors. It's gonna order how we love our enemies, and it's gonna it's gonna everything else is gonna fall place. Right? Seek first the kingdom, and all these things will be added to you. And seeking first the kingdom means just what Augustine meant. It means turning our hearts fully to Jesus, to surrendering all of that to Jesus. I think that was the core of his message.

Nijay Gupta [00:54:56]:
It's a love revolution that leads to transformation. I know our time is running out. I wanna read something to you. I have to pull it up real quick. If I can find it in, like, 10 seconds here. Because I heard this quote and it just so touched me and I wanna end with this. This is by theologian named Glenn Scrivener. He says, there's nothing more divine than compassion.

Nijay Gupta [00:55:18]:
It is a supernatural thing. And what is the most natural thing? Survival of the fittest and sacrifice of the weakest. And what do you see in Jesus? You see the fittest sacrificed for we the weakest, so that we the weakest might survive and thrive and pass on the compassion revolution. James, isn't that the best news you've heard today?

James Early [00:55:40]:
Oh, wow. I saw that on your Facebook post the other day. I love that quote.

Nijay Gupta [00:55:45]:
Yeah. Transforming.

James Early [00:55:46]:
Listen, I wanna thank you so much, Nijay, for being here. How can people be in touch with you if they wanna follow what you're doing?

Nijay Gupta [00:55:54]:
I'm on social media, but right now, I'm focusing on Strange Religion, my new book. So definitely check that book out, Tell Her Story. And if you're hungry for more, hopefully Strange Religion will be your next read.

James Early [00:56:05]:
Okay. That's awesome. Thanks again so much. Really appreciate it.

Nijay Gupta: My pleasure.

Dr. Nijay K. Gupta is currently a professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary. He has his PhD in New Testament from the University of Durham.

Nijay has written several books: *Worship That Makes Sense to Paul*, *A Beginner's guide to New Testament Studies*, *Paul and the Language of Faith*. He's also written a book called *Prepare, Succeed, Advance: A Guidebook for Getting a PhD in Biblical Studies and Beyond*. And he served as a senior translator for the *New Living Translation of the Bible*.

Books by Nijay Gupta:

[Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church*](#)

[A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Studies*](#)

[Paul and the Language of Faith*](#)

[Prepare, Succeed, Advance, Second Edition: A Guidebook for Getting a PhD in Biblical Studies and Beyond*](#)

NEW: [Strange Religion: How the First Christians Were Weird, Dangerous, and Compelling*](#)

[All books*](#) by Nijay Gupta

Also mentioned: [The Cost of Discipleship*](#) by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Podcast: [Slow Theology](#)

Blog: [Crux Sola](#)

* Amazon affiliate links

Bible Verses mentioned:

Ephesians 4:22-24 NLT

22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.

23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.

24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT

17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

1 Timothy 2:12 NLT

12 I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly.

Ephesians 5:21-24 NLT

21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church.

24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

1 Corinthians 14:34 NLT

34 Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says.

Luke 8:1-3 NLT

1 Soon afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby towns and villages, preaching and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him,

2 along with some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons;

3 Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's business manager; Susanna; and many others who were contributing from their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples.

Luke 10:1 KJV

1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

John 19:25 CSB

25 Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

John 20:17 NLT

17 "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

John 20:3-6, 10 NLT

3 Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb.

4 They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

5 He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in.

6 Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there,

10 Then they went home.

Romans 16:1, 2, 6, 12, 13, 15 NLT

- 1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea.
- 2 Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God's people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me.
- 6 Give my greetings to Mary, who has worked so hard for your benefit.
- 12 Give my greetings to Tryphena and Tryphosa, the Lord's workers, and to dear Persis, who has worked so hard for the Lord.
- 13 Greet Rufus, whom the Lord picked out to be his very own; and also his dear mother, who has been a mother to me.
- 15 Give my greetings to Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and to Olympas and all the believers who meet with them.

Philippians 4:2, 3 NLT

- 2 Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement.
- 3 And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

2 Corinthians 11:5 NLT

- 5 But I don't consider myself inferior in any way to these "super apostles" who teach such things.

Acts 19:23, 29 NLT

- 23 About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way.
- 29 Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.

Romans 6:17 NLT

- 17 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews, who were in prison [[synaichmalōtos](#)] with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did.

Philippians 1:7 NLT

- 7 So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment [[desmos](#)] and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News.

Ephesians 4:1 NLT

- 1 Therefore I, a prisoner [[desmios](#)] for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.

1 Corinthians 11:5 NLT

- 5 But a woman dishonors her head if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head, for this is the same as shaving her head.

Judges 4 – [The story of Deborah](#)

Judges 17:6 NKV

6 In those days *there was* no king in Israel, *but* every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.

Philemon 1:10, 15-17 NLT

10 I appeal to you to show kindness to my child, Onesimus. I became his father in the faith while here in prison.

15 It seems you lost Onesimus for a little while so that you could have him back forever.

16 He is no longer like a slave to you. He is more than a slave, for he is a beloved brother, especially to me. Now he will mean much more to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

17 So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.

Matthew 13:33 KJV

33 The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

1Peter 1:13 KJV

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Matthew 5:40 NKJV

40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also.

1 Timothy 2:8 NKJV

8 I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

Matthew 12:33 NLT

33 A tree is identified by its fruit.

Matthew 6:33 KJV

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.