

# Gender balance: A new lens for reading and studying the Bible, Part 1



## Author:

Robin Gallaher Branch<sup>1,2</sup> 

## Affiliations:

<sup>1</sup>Department of Religion and Theology, Faculty of Religion, Christian Brothers University, Memphis, Tennessee, United States of America

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

## Corresponding author:

Robin Gallaher Branch,  
rbranch3@cbu.edu

## Dates:

Received: 21 Apr. 2023

Accepted: 14 Nov. 2023

Published: 04 Mar. 2024

## How to cite this article:

Branch, R.G., 2024, 'Gender balance: A new lens for reading and studying the Bible, Part 1', *In die Skriflig* 58(1), a2978.  
<https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v58i1.2978>

## Copyright:

© 2024. The Author.  
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

This two-article submission suggests a new lens through which to read and study the Bible. This lens generates new perspectives for teaching, preaching, and writing about the Bible. Called gender balance, the lens applies to both the Old and New Testament.

Gender balance not only is simple, but also is in plain sight. If there is a story, passage, theme, or text about a man, look for a similar one about a woman; if there is a story, passage, theme, or text about a woman, look for a similar one about a man. The accounts often not only complement each other, but also provide additional details and insights.

Combining canonical and literary methodologies, these two articles acknowledge the preponderance of biblical references to men. However, they show that a similar reference to a woman can usually be found quickly.

Given that these two articles represent a survey with examples, an extensive exegesis is not provided. Comments on each gender balance entry are brief and framed in supplemental scholarship. The examples incorporate a conscious choice of looking for a similar story, passage, theme, or text about the opposite gender. The examples illustrate the premise that gender balance is clearly within the Scriptures.

While a new way, a new lens of looking at the Bible, is presented, the first article supplies an extensive literature review showing it is a new idea. It then proceeds with examples of gender balance from the Old Testament and ends with a short conclusion and a bibliography. The second article contains New Testament examples of gender balance, a longer conclusion, and a bibliography.

**Contribution:** The concept of looking at the Bible through a new lens – that of gender balance – may be both revolutionary and revitalising. It may be a tool for evangelism (for it consciously seeks to show stories about men and women); it may prove a more effective way to teach, preach, study, and write about the Bible (for it seeks complementary passages for both genders). These articles – by illustrating the concept through literary tools such as round and flat characterisation and literary categories such as epic tale – offer more ways to address the Bible's wonderful diversity. These two articles advocate making gender balance a standard practice in reading the Bible. They illustrate that the lens of gender balance offers new perspectives and insights on the Bible. After all, it is in plain sight! Gender balance affirms the Bible's glorious, wide-armed, concluding invitation to all – Jew or Greek, slave or free, rich or poor, male or female – 'Come' (Rv 22:17a).

**Keywords:** gender balance; literary methodology; canonical approach; Old Testament; New Testament.

## Introduction

The Reformed tradition has trained many fine preachers – mostly men. They have delivered thousands of fine sermons. However, some sermons seem to some to be more about men and more directed to men. In such cases, women may leave a service wishing that a woman's story had been mentioned too. They may therefore long to hear 'her voice', a woman's voice from Scripture, for it is surely there (Branch 2020).

This article, as well as the one following, represent a survey which presents examples that address the concept that gender balance can be found in the Bible. They address the Old and New Testament respectively. Yes, if there is a story, theme, emotion, or text about a man, look for one about a woman, and vice versa. The research for this two-article submission entailed looking at specific Scriptures in the Old and New Testament and finding counterpart stories, themes, emotions, or texts chronicled in the opposite gender. I found that examples appear most frequently in biblical narration.

## Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

The research method was to look at a text, list its major literary components, think about other Scriptures featuring the opposite gender, and compare notes. Part of gender balance invites a conscious pattern of seeking gender complements in Scripture.

Sometimes gender balance is obvious as in Ezekiel 13 – a chapter equally splitting the Lord’s anger against male and female false prophets. In the New Testament, Luke 8:1–3 likewise illustrates gender balance. Jesus and the 12 disciples journeyed through towns and villages on a preaching tour proclaiming the good news. Women, named and unnamed, accompanied them ‘and provided for them out of their resources’ (v. 3). Those verses depict gender balance in preaching or provision categories.

Via gender pairings, this two-part survey shows that the Bible balances genders. Luke’s Gospel often juxtaposes a story about a man with that of a woman (Witherington 1992:2:225). It emphasises Jesus’ outreach to the oppressed, the Holy Spirit’s work and God as creator (Boring & Craddock 2004:175), but also contains multiple gender pairings.

This two-part summary recognises that the preponderance of biblical stories and passages were written to, by and about men (Branch 2021). However, it suggests another lens – a way which is equally valid but at the same time also limiting. If there is a story about a man, look for a similar one about a woman, and vice versa. If a man displays an emotion like arrogance or humility, look for a woman exhibiting the same. If God rebukes a man, look for God’s rebuke of a woman.

These articles represent an inaugural work – a preliminary endeavour sketching the gender balance concept. They recognise that gender balance does not apply specifically to all Scriptures, for example the book of Leviticus, a priests’ manual, covers affairs such as rituals and holy days and ethical matters that apply broadly to all Israel.

This two-part survey seeks to show that gender balance fills a void. Broadly speaking, commentaries, specific books, sermons, lectures, and articles skilfully mention characters, but do not notice Scripture’s inherent gender balance. Seeing the Bible’s message as the same to both genders helps mitigate the sting of what is known as ‘Christian chauvinism’ (Trible 1984:2) – activities and words that overlook silence and exclude women from decision-making roles. This survey, and especially its initial Old Testament article, appreciates the influence of Walter Brueggemann’s writings (2003) and his acknowledgement of imagination, a godly gift.

Practicing gender balance sometimes shows unusual pairings. For instance, this survey in the New Testament article links the magi’s visit to the infant Jesus (Mt 2:1–12) with the widow’s offering in the temple shortly before Jesus’ crucifixion (Lk 21:1–4). The act of generosity links both passages. Likewise, themes such as correction, healing and faith find gender counterparts throughout the Bible.

The hymn, ‘A Place at the Table’, offers verses that speak to justice, peace, and gender balance (Murray 2001):

‘For everyone born, a place at the table,  
For everyone born, clean water and bread  
A shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,  
For everyone born, a star overhead.’ (p. 617)

## Literature review

Gender balance, a new concept, requires a literature review. A check of the phrase *gender balance* yielded two direct references: my online article (Branch 2021) and an assurance from Adele Reinhartz (2015:458), at that time the new editor of the *Journal of Biblical Literature (JBL)*, that the journal’s editors would give ‘close attention to the composition of the editorial board ... to ensure gender balance’. Reinhartz (2015) uses the phrase in terms of professional peer review, while I (Branch 2021) use it differently.

However, the word *gender* frequently appears in the academic disciplines of theology and psychology. They focus on matters of ministry and personhood respectively. No selections were found for *gender balance* specifically in the sense of these articles presented in this survey; yet the following review in alphabetical order gives insight on relevant and current gender-related publications.

Brenner (1985) writes of Israelite women in categories such as queens, wise women, and prophetesses. Her pioneering work is outstanding and has been used by scholars for almost 40 years.

Clouse and Clouse (1989), a married couple, edited a most helpful book of four views on women in ministry. The views (from four evangelicals) range from full equality between men and women in the church and ministry, to women not being allowed to exercise authority over men, to a multiple ministry that raises questions about the ordination of women that allows them to teach, but not to exercise authority. This excellent book presents arguments on a current and passionate topic. The book is available in print – a mode that encourages listening and calmness.

Coleman (2022:187) argues that today’s discussions of women in leadership roles at home, in the community or in church often involve ‘a grab for power (or a fight to keep power)’; both actions go ‘against what Jesus taught’, namely that men and women ‘were created equal’ and are called to mutually submit to one another ‘for the sake of Christ’.

Crosby and Crosby (2016) write about marital struggles and strengths. As indicated by their book’s subtitle, *Balancing and blending well together*, they explore ways to balance and blend in a godly union.

Noting that since women and men are equal in essence and role (Gn 1:28), Dixon (2021:3, 16) advocates what he calls a *mixed-gender* ministry partnership [*Dixon’s italics*].

Instead of writing a detailed book on whether women should or should not be in church leadership, Eastman (2014:xxii) gives tools for interpreting the Bible and acknowledges the thought processes necessary in forming one's own opinions.

Kroeger and Evans (2002:xiii) clearly state the academic climate of the early part of this century: Most commentaries on Scripture today 'are written from the perspective of white, Western, classically educated, middle-class males, and the questions asked, and issues raised are almost always dealt with from that perspective'. Their commentary (Kroeger & Evans 2002:xv) 'argues for the full inspiration of the Bible and the full equality of women'.

Knust (2011:7) finds that the Bible 'does not speak with one voice about marriage, women's roles, sexy clothes and the importance of remaining a pure virgin for one's (future) spouse'. Her insights on marriage, sex, sexual politics, bodily parts, and other sexual matters show the diversity of issues covered forthrightly in the Bible.

Mathews (2017) explores what paired words like *headship/submission*, *first/second*, and *leader/helper* mean to males and females and how these words lead to gender roles. Mogel (2001:33–34) states the Jewish way of raising children is 'moderation, celebration, sanctification'. Through these principles, a family can achieve a balanced life, no matter what the culture is.

Newsom and Ringe (eds. 1992: xvi), in their groundbreaking work, *Women's Bible Commentary*, list what it covers: 'Aspects of social life, marriage and family, the legal status of women, religious and economic institutions, the ways in which community boundaries were defined and maintained, and other topics.' Gender balance – reading a story about a man and looking for a similar one about a woman, and vice versa – is not specified.

Punt (2014:1) offers 'an ideological-critical investigation of the intersection of translation and cultural studies, from a gender-critical perspective, with a further purpose to demonstrate how gender is (con)figured in New Testament translations'. His excellent article provides significant reflection on Phoebe (Rm 16:1–2).

Schussler Fiorenza (1998:xiv), writing on women in early Christianity, states that she explores 'the problem of women's historical agency in ancient Christianity in light of the theological and historical questions raised by the feminist movements in society and church'. Tribble (1984), in her classic work *Texts of Terror*, analyses the riveting and revolting accounts of rejection (Hagar), the rape of a royal princess (Tamar), the gang rape of an unnamed concubine or wife, and a parent's sacrifice of his daughter to fulfil a vow. Although rarely preached on a Sunday morning, the four stories – bare, bleak, brutal and blatant as they are – spotlight the violence and abuse toward women and girls recorded in the Bible and mirrored in today's world.

Van Rensburg (2002) provides a summary of research on women in church and society in South Africa. His article focuses on the country's Reformed tradition. However, given that the summary adds some information about other religions, its findings have relevance outside South Africa. The project utilised 77 participants in various research capacities and disciplines; I was among them. Among the problems it investigated was the status and role of women in church and society today, legislative implications, and how women's status and role can be aligned with the Bible and legislation (Van Rensburg 2002:720).

### Gender insights from psychology

An article by Abdulla Alabbasi et al. (2022:9) explores the gender differences in creative potential and notes that 'females may initially show greater creative potential, but that males are able to apply their potential more fruitfully in terms of achievements'.

Zell, Krizan and Teeter (2015:10) address the 'common assumption that males and females are profoundly different' and find that meta-analysis demonstrates 'that males and females are highly similar'. Looking at 'data from 20 000 individual studies and over 12 million participants', the researchers found that 'across most topic areas in psychological science, the difference between males and females is small or very small' (Zell et al. 2015:18). However, additional research 'is needed to identify conditions under which gender differences are most pronounced, as well as factors that give rise to gender differences' (Zell et al. 2015:18).

In a short critique of the above-mentioned article of Zell et al. (2015), Zuriff (2015:664) observes that some of its data is like comparing humans and bonobos (dwarf chimpanzees).

Hoogerheide, Loyens and Van Gog (2016:69), in a study regarding online learning, find that learning from a male model required less effort and was more enjoyable 'for male students than for female students' and that 'a male model was perceived as more competent'.

Hyde (2005:590), in investigating gender, find that similarities rather than differences dominate, but that 'aggression shows a gender difference that is moderate in magnitude'.

### Methodology: Canonical approach & literary tools

A canonical approach accepts the following principles for the Old and New Testament:

- Looks at the text in its final form.
- Acknowledges the work of editors and councils.
- Honours the historical and theological aspects inherent in the text.
- Recognises that the approach itself is not an exact science.

- Offers a paradigm shift in interpretation, reading, study, hearing and writing about the Bible.
- Recognises that the Bible's final form took generations to complete.
- Reads biblical texts in association with each other and honours the selections as the Word of the Lord.
- Recognises the final form as authoritative (cf. Gignilliat 2012:158–167).

The field of canonical criticism, started by B.S. Childs, regards the biblical books as the authoritative writings of both the Jewish and Christian faiths. Theological meaning comes from analysing the books in their present form (Klein, Bloomberg & Hubbard 2004:61). A literary methodology employs standard literary tools: the central idea, character, conflict, point of view, setting, language and tone (Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:1–60).

Narrative criticism, a subset of literary criticism, analyses 'plot, theme, motifs, characterisation, style, figures of speech, symbolism, foreshadowing, repetition, speed of time in the narrative ... and the like' (Klein et al. 2004:65).

This two-article survey does not investigate the intent of the authors of the passages selected from the 66 books considered the canon in the Reformed tradition, but it does look at the grammar or diction in selected passages and does compare Scripture with Scripture (cf. Coetsee & Goede 2022:22, 24, 25). The articles acknowledge the gifts of other forms of biblical interpretation such as patristics, rabbinic, text and form criticism, dogmatics, Reformation studies, and Near Eastern history (cf. Childs 1974:ix–x).

These articles assert that gender balance has a niche as well as a voice; they go beyond Childs in declaring that gender balance can be a blessing to those who practice it in reading and writing and those who hear it via teaching, preaching, and lecturing. Childs' footsteps (1974:ix), in knowing that the 'health and discipline of the church' necessitates 'a continuous wrestling with the history of interpretation and theology', is followed. I join Childs (1974:ix) in being 'unabashedly' theological and joyful about my work.

This two-article survey joins Childs in having a different format. His Exodus commentary curtailed textual criticism and made no effort to pursue the critical problems associated with a text's recension history (Childs 1974:x). Similarly, this two-article survey lacks an extensive exegesis or textual criticism of the gender balance as mentioned. Childs and I respect form criticism (the study of different and preliterary communication) and the historical critical method (the attempt to trace the text's historical origins, development and meaning) (cf. ed. Gorman 2005:270–271) but offer new approaches.

## Technical aspects

A reviewer asked me to detail my methodology. The methodology for these two articles is personal and developed

slowly. Gender balance is the name I gave to a new idea. The idea started with sadness.

I have spent my lifetime in church. One Advent, I realised that I had never heard a sermon about Elizabeth, surely one of the season's key characters. Therefore, I wrote a monologue in which she re-tells Luke 1 from her perspective (Branch 2013). It has been performed worldwide.

Although recognising that there are more stories about and references to men in the Bible than to women, I began to read stories in the Old and New Testament with this dictum: If there is a story about a man, look for a complementary one about a woman, and vice versa. If there is a passage or theme about a man, look for similar ones about a woman, and vice versa.

I began making lists about each story I studied. The lists followed standard literary elements like plot, characters, setting, the narrator's viewpoint (Longman 1993:71) and other elements such as theme, tone, repetition, dialogue, time, and diction. I then thumbed my Bible and scanned my memory for 'matches' with the opposite gender.

The matches made me see the stories in new ways. When a new insight occurred to me, I had solitary, serendipity, and joyful moments in my office. As one who teaches the Bible, I made a point of briefly mentioning a complementary story or theme or emotion about the opposite gender in my lectures. I saw faces relax and shoulders straighten as a result of these casual but consistent mentions. All students felt included.

Presentation and publication came slowly. In 2020, I gave a guest lecture to my research faculty on gender balance – feedback agreed that it was a new idea. I submitted a story on gender balance in a contest sponsored by the blog branch of an academic journal – it shared the top award (Branch 2021). I submitted one article to this journal on gender balance and a reviewer suggested that a second article must be considered – hence the two-article submission.

The methodology for gender balance is simple: keep reading; when you find a passage or story about a woman, look for a similar one about a man, and vice versa. If a woman expresses an emotion like joy or revenge, look for a similar expression by a man, and vice versa. Use standard literary tools.

Results can include new ways of looking at passages and more insights on the Bible's great central character, God. Gender balance can mitigate the two extremes of misogyny (hatred of women) and misandry (hatred of men). For me, there's been this added blessing: A humble thankfulness of exploring something new, wholesome and life changing.

## Lens: A literary tool

These two articles use the words *way* and *lens* interchangeably. In literary circles, the latter is often called

*critical lens*. A *lens* is a particular choice or set of choices for studying something – in this case a piece of literature.

I offer in these two articles the lens of gender balance for studying the Scriptures. I define the Scriptures as the accepted canon of the Old and New Testament books as defined by the Westminster Confession of Faith (1:2).

Other biblical scholars likewise employ *lens*.

Moore (2020) uses the lens of ancient colonisation in reading Acts. Tanner (2001) views Psalms through the lens of intertextuality. According to promotional material on a new Wisdom Series Commentary, Murray (2023) sees Tobit through ‘a specifically feminist lens’. Johnston (2011) studies Ecclesiastes through the lens of contemporary film. Coleman (2020) concentrates on the Lukan lens of wealth and possessions.

Boase and Frechette (eds. 2016) edit essays that see the Bible through the lens of trauma. Liew and Segovia (eds. 2022) edit essays that look at biblical texts through the lens of minority criticism. Segovia (2022:3) states that a unit on this topic has been present at the Society of Biblical Literature since 2011.

The gender balance lens clearly follows a present-day trend in biblical studies.

## Old Testament examples of gender balance

The eight examples below provide an introductory survey of the concept of gender balance in the Old Testament. They show how it works and its variety. Some examples contain tables for easier reference. The last example serves as a bridge to the New Testament article.

### Gender balance: Journeys: Abram (Gn 12) and Ruth (Rt 1–4)

The biblical stories of Abram and Ruth involved journeys. The two accounts appear in what are traditionally called the Pentateuch and Historical Books. However, the journey theme links the two characters and the two genres. Francis Andersen (1976:36) reinforces my grouping by citing epic history and putting in it not only the book of Job but also ‘the patriarchal stories, the saga of the Exodus, the career of David (and) the tale of Ruth’.

Their journeys began differently. God commanded Abram specifically: ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you’ (Gn 12:1). In contrast, Ruth, a Moabitess and recently widowed, just went – on her own and without direct, divine command. In words beloved for generations, Ruth offered a description of active love for her mother-in-law, Naomi, also widowed, that explained her decision, dedication, and resolve (Rt 1:15–18). Both women faced destitution. Ruth knew her journey’s destination; Abram did not.

Because journeys involve many literary elements – character, conflict, plot, dialogue, tone, point of view, setting, and time (cf. Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008) – they provide a fine way to tell a story. Fokkelman (1999:82) wryly adds that narrative art is very flexible; few rigid laws govern it.

Adventures prevailed for both characters. Abram arrived in Canaan, found it already occupied (Gn 12:7), and soon left, because it was ‘far from being a homeland that can nourish his household’ (Bechmann 2016). The Genesis chapters show Abram’s slow change from a wandering lifestyle to a more settled one with wells, shrines, and a burial ground at Mamre (Miller & Miller 1996:124). Along the way, God changed his name to Abraham (Gn 17:5).

However, silence – a literary tool – surrounded Ruth and Naomi’s journey from Moab; readers can assume it was uneventful. The duos’ adventures started in Bethlehem and began with the barley harvest (cf. Schwab 2012:1319; Rt 1:22). While Ruth accepted her new life with a determination to work, Naomi grieved. In this season of loss, transition and uncertainty, Naomi – bitter and mad – directed both emotions God-ward. In contrast throughout the narrative, ‘Ruth is proactive and not placid in her struggle to provide for herself and her mother-in-law’ (Branch 2012).

The Hebrew word *hayil* describes both Boaz, the hero, and Ruth, the heroine (Rt 2:1; 3:11). It denotes fine character, might, virtue, prosperity, ability, wealth, and strength (cf. Weber 1980:I:271). Mathews (2017:58, 57) believes the two ‘were made to stand together as a team of equals’; she praises Ruth for choosing to help a destitute older woman, Naomi.

The two widows experienced the concept of journey in multiple ways: from poverty to provision; hopelessness to hope; loss to stability; barrenness to fertility; and aloneness to community standing.

Journeys become a major theme in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. God’s active presence (although usually silent) and watchful care (although seemingly unseen) need to be remembered as issues such as sibling rivalry, inheritance, famines, deceit, infertility, sins, and wars beset many lives (cf. Westermann 1992:215). Ruth’s adventuresome journey occurred because she decided to leave all she knew for a new life under the watchful care of Naomi’s God, the God of Israel. Abram’s beginning with obedience.

### Gender balance: Outstanding leaders: Deborah and Moses

God blessed Israel with exemplary leaders. Two were Moses and Deborah. Moses, the more prominent, receives the most textual space. However, while their leadership tenure is roughly the same (approximately 40 years), the Book of Judges indicates Deborah may have been Israel’s major judge for an additional 20 years.

**TABLE 1:** An outline depicting the leadership of Deborah and Moses.

Variables	Deborah	Moses
Texts	Judges 4–5.	Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
Aides	Barak, Jael (4:14–22; 5:1, 12, 24–27).	Joshua (Jos 1:1).
Family	Lappidoth – husband (4:4).	Miriam, Aaron – siblings (Mi 6:4).
Enemies, armies, and arms	Jabin, king of Canaan, and Sisera, commander of his army, and 900 iron chariots (4:2–3).	Pharaoh and the army of Egypt with its chariots, horses, and chariot drivers (Ex 14:22).
Conflict	Canaanite oppression and control of the roads (4:3; 5:6).	430 years of slavery in Egypt (Ex 12:40–41)
Songs	With Barak (5:1–31).	Deuteronomy 32 With Miriam (Ex 15:1–21)
Titles	Prophetess, one judging Israel (4:4).	Prophet (Dt 18:15). Man of God (Ps 90 superscription).
Appositives	Mother in Israel (5:7).	Servant of the Lord (Jos 1:1–2).
Tenure	After the Israelite victory in the battle with Sisera, the land had peace for 40 years (5:31). Deborah earlier had led and judged the Israelites for 20 years (4:3). The span of her judgeship seems to be 60 years.	Moses' life is in 40-year segments. Moses was 40 when he killed an Egyptian and fled, and 40 years later was called of God to return to Egypt and lead the Hebrews out (cf. Ac 7:23, 30). He died in Moab at age 120 (Dt 34:7).
God's Activities	Giving Sisera into Barak's hand (4:7). The earth trembled, clouds poured water, mountains quaked, many kings were defeated, and stars fought (5:4–5, 19–20). Deborah's prophetic word to Barak that the Lord would hand Sisera over to a woman was fulfilled (4:9, 22, 5:24–27).	Plagues in Egypt, parting of the Sea of Reeds, provision and protection in the wilderness (Ex 7–12, 14, 16–17), etc.
Possible Humour	Deborah sat under a palm tree while she judged (4:5). A palm tree has only top branches; it is open and cannot conceal clandestine activities like bribes behind branches.	Moses gave the excuse that he stammered and was not good at communicating, especially to one like Pharaoh (Ex 4:10). However, there must have been a change in 40 years, for by Deuteronomy, a set of his sermons, he talks non-stop!

From a literary standpoint, both are round characters; they grow, change, develop and face difficulties (Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:12). The Table 1 puts them side by side.

Mathews (2017:232) articulates an experience many Christian woman share, namely that gender often triumphs over gifting; for instance, a male candidate gets a position because of gender when a female candidate is the more gifted. The Deborah chapters prove an exception and an encouragement to such women. The Bible justifiably honours Moses and Deborah, although several hundred years apart and facing different problems, for leading Israel well. Deborah honours Jael as 'the most blessed of women' (5:24) for her action of putting a tent peg through Sisera's temple (4:21).

Moses, however, during his tenure's closing years, received an unusual gift from the Lord: a radiant face (cf. Ex 34:29–35). When the people were afraid to come near him because of it, Moses wore a veil. His radiance was a visible sign that Moses indeed was the Lord's prophet (cf. Bruckner 2008:311).

The Lord's call of Deborah and her overall assessment of the Israelites are absent from the Judges account. As for Moses, both are provided. A divine call often includes a divine appearance, commission, objection from the one called, reassurance from the deity and a miraculous sign. Moses evaluates his charges as stiff-necked (Fretheim 1991:51, 304; Ex 3:1–7, 34:9).

Although her service as judge is recorded with much brevity in comparison to Moses' leadership, Deborah's designation as prophet carried great weight. This 'spiritual gifting allowed her to shatter social mores', settle disputes and dispense justice throughout Ephraim (Boda 2012:1114).

### Gender balance: Prophets disciplined because of sin: Miriam (Nm 12) and Jonah (Jnh 1–4)

Plot in a story is generally considered a sequence of events; conflict, a related concept, appears when two or more forces meet, collide or become entangled (Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:19). The selected stories of Miriam and Jonah show a collision, if you will, between two characters and God.

A narrator's editorial comment sets the tone for Miriam's 'collision' by saying that she and Aaron spoke against their younger brother, Moses, because of his Cushite wife (Nm 12:1; cf. Fokkelman 1999:66–67). The older siblings at first seemed displeased with Moses, but their hostility toward him was soon exposed as quite deep.

After all, didn't God also speak to them? God took Moses' side, struck Miriam (apparently the primary instigator) with leprosy, and ordered her week-long banishment from camp. The Numbers 12 account abounds with irony, for didn't this quick-thinking older sister saved Moses' life decades earlier (cf. Branch 2018:24–27; Bruckner 2008:27)?

God clearly holds prophets to a higher standard than he does others. They have had more revelation and contact with him than regular congregants. God expects them to reflect his character in their dealings. The sins of pride and rebellion mark both prophets. Jonah, through mistaken zeal, thought God erred in an outreach to Nineveh (cf. Banks 1966:106); Miriam and Aaron, arguably through hubris, sought equal recognition with Moses and found out that the Lord honours him by speaking to him 'face to face' (Nm 12:8). In short, Moses enjoyed 'an unprecedented intimacy' with God (Allen 2012:204).

When teaching these passages, the kindergarten phrase, 'Time Out', comes up – to my students' great amusement. Miriam's exile qualifies as 'The Big Time Out'. Scripture remains silent on any communication she had with the Lord during that week, but she returned to camp – apparently healed.

The Lord also creatively disciplined Jonah. First, a great fish swallowed the runaway prophet. Jonah's 'Time Out', three days, was probably more intense than Miriam's. He was in darkness and being digested! Seaweed wrapped around his head (Jnh 2:5)! After Jonah repented, the fish vomited the prophet on dry land.

The book bearing his name shows at least two sins. The first was going west to Tarshish and not northeast to Nineveh. That choice led to his second sin: refusing to preach to the

Ninevites (Jnh 1:1–3, 17). Banks (1966:109) sees a significant warning from Jonah's story: Yes, Jonah was sincere – but sincerely wrong.

Both 'Time Outs' demonstrate God's punishment and redemption to his equally ranked servants. Each prophet disobeyed God by action and attitude; each faced public, custom-designed consequences. No doubt their separate communities learned by their examples!

Yet, Numbers 12 is not the last word on the three remarkable, gifted siblings. The Lord, through the prophet Micah, honours the trio as gifts to Israel (cf. Allen 2012:198). Reminding the people of their deliverance from Egypt, the Lord says, 'I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam' (Mi 6:4).

### **Gender balance: The emotions of bitterness and anger: Naomi (Rt 1:13b, 20–21) and Jonah (Jnh 4)**

Human emotions such as bitterness and anger are not isolated; they affect others (cf. Powlison 2016:10, 48); they span the genres of poetry and narration. Stated emotions by a story's character often influence its tone (Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:58). Furthermore, strong emotions illustrate *preparation*, a dramatic term foreshadowing a future action (Bonazza & Roy 1968:5).

Naomi expressed bitterness toward God because of her losses – the deaths of her husband and sons (Rt 1:13, 20–21). She felt empty and abandoned by God; her name, meaning 'sweetness', no longer fit her (Schwab 2012:1291, 1319). She meditated on her bitterness (Rt 1:1, 13, 20–21). In what seems to be an intentional slight (or maybe a narrational silence), Naomi failed to introduce Ruth to her neighbours upon their Bethlehem arrival (Rt 1:21–22).

Jonah fumed because of God's command that he go to the Ninevites, Israel's hated enemies, and preach repentance! Jonah eventually went – but most reluctantly! Yet, he preached one of the Bible's shortest and most effective sermons: 'Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' (Jnh 3:4). When the Ninevites from the king down repented, Jonah pouted; he petulantly accused God of being true to character – gracious and abounding in steadfast love (Jnh 4:2).

Jonah's anger reflected irritability; he was easily ticked off (Powlison 2016:37). His anger toward God made him not only try to flee from God's presence, but also wish for death (Perry 2006:85, 72). Perhaps because anger takes so much physical energy and concentration, it narrows one's perspective.

Naomi's self-diagnosis of bitterness reflected old hurts and long-term anger (Powlison 2016:37). Naomi greeted her Bethlehem neighbours saying she went away full and had now returned empty and bitter. Her attitude and words revealed her vulnerability (cf. Warren 2021:60). However, while she may be bitter and had lost her sons and husband,

she was not empty. She had Ruth, her daughter-in-law and companion, standing silently beside her (Rt 1:19–23; Levine 1992:80).

Studies show that men slightly surpass women in terms of expressing anger (Myers 2007:527). However, women tend to experience emotional events with more intensity than do men and to remember them with more accuracy (Myers 2007:526).

Perhaps emotional intensity was the reason Naomi did not respond to her neighbours' joy months later when Ruth has a son, Obed, after her marriage to Boaz (Rt 4). Yet, over many months, the loss or death cycle (that began this beloved story of two women) has been reversed; Naomi now tended a son, a 'restorer', and has standing in the community (cf. Schwab 2012:1344–1346). The baby's squeals and gurgles arguably silenced her anger and poured balm on her bitterness.

Jonah 4 emphasised the prophet's deep displeasure and anger over Nineveh's repentance and God's reversal of destruction (Limburg 1988:155). After all, Jonah's God was territorial and only for Israel! As Limburg (1988) states:

'If the Assyrians were in on the love of God, then Jonah wanted out.' God reasons with Jonah via questions; Jonah responds rudely and walks out. The chapter ends, as does Jesus' story of the prodigal brothers (Lk 15:11–32), with lingering questions. Does Jonah cool off? Repent? (p. 156)

Clearly the Lord's gentleness toward anger and bitterness directed at him are themes in the books of Ruth and Jonah. A verse from a hymn by Williams (1950) might apply (after reflection and repentance) to Jonah and Naomi:

'Because I was impatient, would not wait,  
And thrust my wilful hand across Thy threads,  
And marred the pattern drawn out for my life,  
O Lord, I do repent'. (p. 274)

### **Gender balance: Children's resolute faith statements: David (1 Sm 17:45–48) and the Israelite slave girl (2 Ki 5:3)**

David, Jesse's eighth and therefore least important son, and an unnamed Israelite slave girl gave two of the Bible's sweetest, boldest, and most profound statements of faith. God magnificently honoured their confident declarations. Their stories compare nicely.

Firstly, David carried supplies to his brothers in Saul's army and heard Goliath, the Philistine giant, challenge and terrify the Israelite soldiers. His taunts incensed David. Secondly, an Israelite child, captured by a raiding Aram band, became a slave in the household of Naaman, the famous commander of the army of Aram's king. But Naaman had leprosy. The unnamed child had compassion – and a solution!

David arrived at the battle standoff between the Israelites and Philistines, heard Goliath's taunts, and 'was incredulous

that everyone was cowering before the infidel' (Peterson 1999:98). Hamilton (2001:257–258) believes Goliath, a giant measuring possibly nine feet nine inches, can be seen as either comical or terrifying. The Israelites cowered, but David knew an ill-founded taunt when he heard it.

Goliath defamed Israel's God and army. David called out to the Philistine, rebuked him, and prophesied his fate to all: 'You, Giant, will die because of your irreverent words!' Although but a lad, David is the man for this moment. Peterson (1999:98) describes him as one 'with a God-dominated imagination'. David's confidence convinced King Saul, a seasoned man of war, to allow the confrontation.

David faced Goliath, that fearsome warrior, with prophetic words:

You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you to me, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. (1 Sm 17:45–46a)

David first stunned Goliath with a round stone which he hurled with precision from a sling, and then killed the giant with his own sword!

The narrative tool of empathy surrounds the story of Naaman's healing. Because the Lord had given this Syrian foreigner victory over Israel, the narrator's tone in 2 Kings 5 is pro-Naaman. The Israelite slave girl expressed her concern for him – and the reader sympathises too (Nelson 1987:177).

The Israelite slave girl found a home in Naaman's household. The general and his wife must have been kind to their slaves. The child seems to have loved them and felt their tremendous pain over the general's disease. She gave the couple words that surely rank among Scripture's most cherished: 'If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy' (2 Ki 5:3). She never changed that statement (Branch 2018:140–141). The desperate couple believed her. The child's winsome faith and confidence led to one of Scripture's greatest miracles.

The narrators of each story display a favourable, straightforward point of view toward the children (Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:59). Taking a cue from Brueggemann, both stories directly reflect children who think immediately of Yahweh, and accordingly give shocking speeches, show themselves to be quite amazing, and express a faith their elders and hearers lack. Truly, these two children changed the world (cf. Brueggemann 1990:131).

Verse 3 of 'A Place at the Table' mentions children in a special way (Murray 2001):

For young and for old, a place at the table,  
A voice to be heard, a part in the song,  
In hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled,  
For young and for old, the right to belong. (p. 131)

## Gender balance: Evil monarchs: Jeroboam 1 (1 Ki 11:26–14:20) and Athaliah (2 Ki 11)

Evil lacks gender boundaries, as the reigns of Jeroboam 1 and Athaliah attest. Standard phrases in 1 and 2 Kings for summarising a king's reign are these: He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, or he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord (cf. 1 Ki 15:11; 16:25 respectively). The measuring rod for evil became Jeroboam 1, the first king of the northern kingdom.

Jeroboam's story chronicles one of Scripture's most amazing character changes. He fell from one recognised for his fine abilities (1 Ki 11:28) to one known for idolatry (cf. Pratt 1995:318). Jeroboam progressively showed increasing levels of disobedience during his reign of 22 years (1 Ki 14:6–11, 20). Instead of letting Jeroboam's line carry on, the Lord decreed his punishment: the total extermination of every male in his household whether in the city or in the country (1 Ki 14:10–16; Auld 1986:99). The prophet, Ahijah, decreed these deaths would start as soon as Jeroboam's wife re-entered the city (1 Ki 14:12).

However, the death of their son, Abijah, would really be a blessing because, evidently, he was a darling child, beloved by the populace. The honour that 'all Israel buried him and mourned for him' (1 Ki 14:18) [*author's italics*] was granted to him. Significantly, all Israel also mourned for Moses and Samuel, the historic greats (Dt 34:8; 1 Sm 25:1; Branch 2018:91–92, 212 n29).

One subsequent monarch, the woman Athaliah, also is associated with evil. Born in the house of Omri, Athaliah served the Canaanite god, Baal. As a political bride, she brought her religion with her to her arranged marriage to King Jehoram (Branch 2018:151). When their son, Azariah, died after one year of reign, Athaliah killed all in the royal family and placed herself on the throne. By accident, she missed one, Joash, the infant son of Azariah and therefore Athaliah's grandson. Joash and his nurse were hidden in the house of the Lord for six years while Athaliah reigned (Branch 2018:151–153).

A well-planned coup led by Jehoiada, the Yahwist priest, toppled Athaliah. Her only recorded speech – 'Treason! Treason!' (2 Ki 11:14) – displayed self-deception and irony. It was she, by her murders and unlawful ascent to the throne, who committed treason!

Park and Pilarski (2019:146, 158) note two aspects of Athaliah: She became a monster who killed her family without justification but also faced no wars or major difficulties in her six-year reign. Auld (1986:194), however, sees Athaliah as trying to establish a heritage of Baal worship, 'for after all, she came from the house of Omri'. Jehoiada, the coup's mastermind, completes the destruction of Ahab's line with Athaliah's death (Leithart 2006:228). Furthermore, her death

re-installs political legitimacy to Judah and restores the worship of Yahweh (Leithart 2006:229).

### Gender balance: The Lord's anger against false prophets – Male and female (Ezk 13:1–16, 17–23)

Ezekiel 13 presents a fine illustration of gender balance in one chapter. It contains virtually an equal split of the Lord's wrath against false male prophets and false female prophets. The groups 'promised a false sense of security' (Deen 1955:367–368). Unlike these Ezekiel 13 prophets, a true prophet reflects God's character. A godly prophet cares for God's people, faithfully presents God's covenant, acknowledges forgiveness when there is repentance, and realises that God takes 'no pleasure in the death of anyone' (Van der Walt 2021:142).

However, the false male prophets, unlike their contemporary, Ezekiel, prophesied from their imagination and not from a vision; therefore, a punishment for them would be that their names would not be listed in the records of Israel – which meant that they would be excluded from the community (Duguid 1999:171).

The book's false male prophets prophesied peace that would not come true, and false female prophets sewed attachments as bands on their wrists. The men said, 'The Lord said', but the Lord countered that he had not sent them (Ezk 13:6). They practiced self-deception (Blenkinsopp 1990:70).

The female prophets acted like predators, for they hunted for human lives (Ezk 13:18). The Lord strongly chided them: 'You have profaned me among my people' (13:19). The women's 'nefarious activities' greatly affected the people's 'moral and spiritual order', because 'the righteous were disheartened and the wicked were encouraged' (Taylor 2002:404). The Lord's response indicated the women may have been influenced by Mesopotamian anti-witchcraft rituals (cf. Bowen 1999:420, 433).

The false prophecies of the women and men spread confusion, particularly 'distress to the righteous and false confidence to the wicked' (Duguid 1999:175). Significantly, the Lord's reprimand is gender-neutral, for the Lord decreed that both the male and female prophets shall know 'I am the Lord' (Ezk 13:14, 23; cf. Blenkinsopp 1990:68).

### Gender balance: Double names

The category of double names provides a good transition between the Old Testament and New Testament. Naming indicates special attention. Doubling a name can prelude a rebuke, an upcoming designation as a prophet, or a self-declaration (cf. Table 2; Branch 2021) [Branch 2021]. Repetition (in this case name doubling) focuses a reader or hearer on the intensity and importance of the moment (cf. Alter 1981:88–113).

TABLE 2: Examples of doubling a name in Scripture.

Person/Deity	Text	Scripture (NRSV)
The Lord	Exodus 34:6	And the Lord passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ' <b>The Lord, the Lord</b> ', the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love, and faithfulness.
Abraham	Genesis 22:11	But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, ' <b>Abraham, Abraham!</b> ' And he said, 'Here I am.'
Moses	Exodus 3:4	When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ' <b>Moses, Moses!</b> ' and he said, 'Here I am.'
Samuel	1 Samuel 3:4, 8, 10	The Lord came and stood there, calling as before, ' <b>Samuel! Samuel!</b> ' And Samuel said, 'Speak, Lord ...'
Martha	Luke 10:41	But the Lord answered her, ' <b>Martha, Martha</b> , you are worried and distracted by many things ...'
Simon (Peter)	Luke 22:31	' <b>Simon, Simon</b> , listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat ...'
Saul (Paul)	Acts 9:4	He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ' <b>Saul, Saul</b> , why do you persecute me?'

NRSV, New Revised Standard Version.

Like the word *Behold!*, a doubling alerts all – reader, hearer, participant. It prevented Abraham's hand from sacrificing his son, commissioned Moses, and summoned the youngster, Samuel.

The Lord's amazing self-declaration (Ex 34:6–7) provides Scripture's most wonderful doubling. The passage functions as a fuller revelation of God's character and attributes 'and as a confession of faith in God and God's redeeming work' (Bruckner 2008:391). Fretheim (1991:302) adds that this new emphasis on divine mercy, steadfast love, and patience stresses 'the unconditionality of divine love to Israel'. Indeed, instead of starting with military might, the Lord identifies himself by pity, good manners, so much love and faithfulness that they tumble over each other, and the guarantee that it takes a lot to make him mad. James 3:17 records a similar, eightfold description – this time describing the gift of wisdom from on high.

Concerning young Samuel, God spoke to him 'repeatedly, patiently', at a time when the prophetic 'word of the Lord was rare' (Largen 2005). Over time, Samuel became Israel's acknowledged prophet and the anointer of two kings, Saul and David (1 Sm 10:1; 16:13).

David's response to learning that his son, Absalom, was dead presents a slight doubling variant. David wails, 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!' (2 Sm 18:33).

Jesus settled a household dispute in Mary's favour but honoured Martha. Doubling Martha's name put her in a special class, indicating something of significance would be associated with her. It was. She is the first woman recorded as saying that Jesus is the Messiah (Jn 11:27; Branch 2021).

Jesus' last words on the cross present another doubling. He cried, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mt 27:46). David voiced the same in Psalm 22:1. The duplication presents two prayers from two men desperate

for immediate help (cf. Miller 2006:750). People throughout the ages have better understood Jesus and the covenant tradition he represented by his use of this Psalm (cf. Mays 1994:105–106).

Jesus loved the home of Martha, and her siblings, Lazarus and Mary. Jesus and his entourage seemed to arrive whenever his itinerant scheduled permitted (cf. Branch 2023). Luke records one of these unexpected visits (Luke 10:38–42). It revealed a sisterly spat. Martha immediately set to work preparing food for many hungry men. But Mary sat at Jesus' feet, raptly listening to him. Increasingly annoyed, Martha demanded that Jesus tell Mary to help her. Her outburst became a teaching moment. Jesus honoured Martha by doubling her name (v. 41); he stated what everybody saw: she was worried and upset over many things; he allowed Mary to stay and listen.

Saul, a Jew 'breathing out murders' threats against the Lord's disciples' (Ac 9:1), was confronted via a light and the voice of the One he accused (v. 3). Saul responded by falling to the ground, listening, and beginning to realise that he – not the followers of the Way whom he zealously pursued and persecuted – was the one mistaken (Lamoreaux 2008).

Peterson (1999:38), writing of God's summons of young Samuel, states that 'personal address, not philosophical discourse or moral commentary or theological reflection, is God's primary form of speech'. Surely that statement extrapolates for generations! How wonderful to see this evidence: God knows our names!

Suggested additional Old Testament topics for gender balance are the following:

- Male wickedness and female wantonness in Proverbs.
- Daniel and Esther: God's already-in-place envoys in high places.
- The woman and the man in Song of Songs.
- A biblical couple: Jezebel and Ahab (1 & 2 Ki).
- Parenting balance in Proverbs.
- Amos rebukes men and women (Am 2:6–8; 4:1–3).
- Israel's political saviours: Judith (Book of Judith) and David (1–2 Sm).
- Micah 6:4: God's three gifts to Israel: Moses, Aaron, Miriam.

## Conclusion

This survey so far has shown that it follows Childs' example (1974: ix) in his Exodus commentary of offering a different format (gender balance) for biblical study. If there is a story about a man, look for one about a woman; if a man expresses an emotion or figures in a theme, look for commonalities in another text about a woman, and vice versa. This article and the New Testament one following it advocate making the lens of gender balance a conscious habit while reading the Bible.

Perhaps the most recurring theme in Childs' work is that the canon is 'the vehicle to encounter God' (Harrisville &

Sundberg 2002:321, 325). So far, these Old Testament examples, diverse as they are, show aspects of God's outreach to individuals and the human need for God's intervention. Similarly, the upcoming article uses literary tools and explores the varied ways in the New Testament that portray God's outreach and intervention. Bartholomew (2023:6) writes that reading Scripture enlarges the heart. Gender balance does that by acknowledging all Scripture's voices.

## Acknowledgements

This article (Old Testament) is Part 1 of a two part series.

## Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

## Author's contributions

R.B. is the sole author of this article.

## Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human participant.

## Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

## Data availability

The author confirms that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article and its supplementary references and materials.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency, or that of the publisher. The author is responsible for this article's results, findings, and content.

## References

- Abdulla Alabbasi, A.M., Thompson, T.L., Runco, M.A., Alansari, L.A. & Ayoub, A.E.A., 2022, 'Gender differences in creative potential: A meta-analysis of mean differences and variability', *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, Online First Publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000506>
- Allen, R.B., 2012, 'Numbers', in T.L. Longman, III & D.E. Garland (eds.), *The expositor's Bible commentary: Numbers to Ruth*, pp. 23–455, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Alter, R., 1981, *The art of biblical narrative*, Basic Books, New York, NY.
- Andersen, F.I., 1976, *Job: An introduction & commentary*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.
- Auld, A.G., 1986, *I & II Kings*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA.
- Banks, W.L., 1966, *Jonah: The reluctant prophet*, Moody Press, Chicago, IL.
- Bartholomew, C., 2023, *Listening to Scripture: An introduction to interpreting the Bible*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.

- Bechmann, U., 2016, 'Genesis 12 and the Abraham-paradigm concerning the Promised Land', *The Ecumenical Review* 68(1), 62–80. <https://doi.org/10.1111/erev.12199>
- Blenkinsopp, J., 1990, *Ezekiel*, John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.
- Boase, E. & Frechette, C.G. (eds.), 2016, *Bible through the lens of trauma*, SBL Press, Atlanta, GA.
- Boda, M.J., 2012, 'Judges', in T. Longman, III & D.E. Garland (eds.), *The expositors Bible commentary revised edition*, pp. 1043–1288, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Bonazza, B.O. & Roy, E., 1968, *Studies in drama*, Harper & Row, New York, NY.
- Boring, M.E. & Craddock, F.B., 2004, *The people's New Testament commentary*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.
- Bowen, N., 1999, 'The daughters of your people: Female prophets in Ezekiel 13: 17–23', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118(3), 417–433. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3268182>
- Branch, R.G., 2012, 'Handling a crisis via a combination of human initiative and godly direction: Insights from Ruth', *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 46(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v46i2.110>
- Branch, R.G., 2013, 'Astonishment and joy: Luke 1 as told from the perspective of Elizabeth', *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 47(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v47i1.77>
- Branch, R.G., 2018, *Jeroboam's wife: The enduring contributions of the Old Testament's least-known women*, Wipf & Stock, Eugene, OR.
- Branch, R.G., 2020, 'Gender balance: A new way of looking at Scripture', Invited lecture to the Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa.
- Branch, R.G., 2021, 'Gender balance: A freeing way to read, hear, and teach the Scriptures', *Mutuality, Christians for Biblical Equality*, viewed 15 March 2023, from <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/gender-balance-freeing-way-read-hear-and-teach-scriptures/>
- Branch, R.G., 2022, 'Making amends: Luke's story of Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector', *Bible History Daily/Biblical Archaeology Review*, viewed 3 January 2024, from <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/people-in-the-bible/making-amends/>
- Brenner, A., 1985, *The Israelite woman: Social role and literary type in biblical narrative*, JSOT Press, Sheffield.
- Bruckner, J.K., 2008, *New International Biblical Commentary: Exodus*, eds. R.L. Hubbard, Jr. & R.K. Johnston, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA.
- Brueggemann, W., 1990, *Interpretation: A Bible commentary for teaching and preaching: First and second Samuel*, ed. J.L. Mays, John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.
- Childs, B.S., 1974, *The Book of Exodus: A critical theological commentary*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA.
- Clouse, B. & Clouse, R.G., 1989, *Women in ministry: Four views*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.
- Coetsee, A.J. & Goede, H., 2022, 'Reformed hermeneutics in South Africa: Its presuppositions, principles, nuances and value', in H. Goede & N. Vorster (eds.), *Christian hermeneutics in South Africa*, Reformed Theology in Africa Series, vol. 8, pp. 13–37, AOSIS Books, Cape Town.
- Coleman, J.Z., 2022, *On purpose: Understanding God's freedom for women through scripture*, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Coleman, R.L., 2020, *The Lukan lens of wealth and possessions: A perspective shaped by the themes of reversal and right response*, Brill, Leiden.
- Crosby, R. & Crosby, P., 2016, *The will of a man and the way of a woman: Balancing and blending better together*, Shiloh Run Press, Colorado Springs, CO.
- Deen, E., 1955, *All the women of the Bible*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, NY.
- Dixon, R., 2021, *Together in ministry: Women and men in flourishing partnerships*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL.
- Duguid, I.M., 1999, *Ezekiel: The NIV application commentary*, ed. T. Muck, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Eastman, N.R.W., 2014, *Women, leadership and the Bible: How do I know what to believe?* Cascade Books, Eugene, OR.
- Fokkeman, J.P., 1999, *Reading biblical narrative: An introductory guide*, transl. I. Smut, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.
- Fretheim, T.E., 1991, *Interpretation: A Bible commentary for teaching and preaching: Exodus*, ed. J.L. Mays, John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.
- Gignilliat, M.S., 2012, *A brief history of Old Testament criticism: From Benedict Spinoza to Brevard Childs*, Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Gorman, M.J. (ed.), 2005, *Scripture: An ecumenical introduction to the Bible and its interpretation*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA.
- Hamilton, V.P., 2001, *Handbook on the historical books*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Harrisville, R.A. & Sundberg, W., 2002, *The Bible in modern culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Hoogerheide, V.S., Loyens, M.M. & Van Gog, T., 2016, 'Learning from video modeling examples: Does gender matter?', *Instructional Science: An International Journal of the Learning Sciences* 44(1), 69–86. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-015-9360-y>
- Hyde, J.S., 2005, 'The gender similarities hypothesis', *American Psychologist* 60(6), 581–592. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.6.581>
- Johnston, R.K., 2011, *Useless beauty: Ecclesiastes through the lens of contemporary film*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Klein, W.W., Bloomberg, C.L. & Hubbard, R.I., Jr., 2004, *Introduction to biblical interpretation*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN.
- Knust, J.W., 2011, *Unprotected texts: The Bible's surprising contradictions about sex and desire*, HarperCollins, New York, NY.
- Kroeger, C. C. & Evans, M. J. (eds.), 2002, *The IVP women's Bible commentary*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.
- Lamoreaux, J.T., 2008, 'Social identity, boundary breaking, and ritual: Saul's recruitment on the road to Damascus', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 38(3), 122–134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461079080380030401>
- Largen, K.J., 2005, 'Second Sunday after the Epiphany: January 15, 2006', *Currents in Theology and Mission* 32(6), viewed 11 November 2022, from [https://go.gale.com/ps/basicSearch.do?inputFieldNames%5B0%5D=OQE&inputFieldValues%5B0%5D=1+Samuel+3&nwf=y&searchType=BasicSearchForm&userGroupName=t\\_el\\_a\\_cbu&prodId=PPRP&spellCheck=true&method=doSearch&dblist=&stw.opton=&ebook=&singleLimiterFieldValues%5BAC%5D=y&\\_singleLimiterFieldValues%5BAC%5D=on&\\_singleLimiterFieldValues%5BRE%5D=on&standAloneLimiters=Ll&\\_singleLimiterFieldValues%5BLI%5D=](https://go.gale.com/ps/basicSearch.do?inputFieldNames%5B0%5D=OQE&inputFieldValues%5B0%5D=1+Samuel+3&nwf=y&searchType=BasicSearchForm&userGroupName=t_el_a_cbu&prodId=PPRP&spellCheck=true&method=doSearch&dblist=&stw.opton=&ebook=&singleLimiterFieldValues%5BAC%5D=y&_singleLimiterFieldValues%5BAC%5D=on&_singleLimiterFieldValues%5BRE%5D=on&standAloneLimiters=Ll&_singleLimiterFieldValues%5BLI%5D=)
- Leithart, P.J., 2006, *Brazos theological commentary of the Bible: 1 and 2 Kings*, ed. R.R. Reno, Brazos Press, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Levine, A.-J., 1992, 'Ruth', in C.A. Newsom & S.H. Ringe (eds.), *The women's Bible commentary*, pp. 78–84, Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.
- Liew, T.-S.B. & Segovia, F.F. (eds.), 2022, *Reading biblical texts together: Pursuing minoritized biblical criticism*, SBL Press, Atlanta, GA.
- Limburg, J., 1988, *Interpretation: A Bible commentary for teaching and preaching: Hosea-Micah*, ed. L. Mays, John Knox Press, Atlanta, GA.
- Longman, T., III, 1993, 'Biblical narrative', in L. Ryken & T. Longman, III (eds.), *The complete literary guide to the Bible*, pp. 69–79, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Lostracco, J. & Wilkerson, G., 2008, *Analyzing short stories, seventh edition revised printing*, Kendal/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, IA.
- Mathews, A., 2017, *Gender roles and the people of God: Rethinking what we were taught about men and women in the church*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Mays, L.M., 1994, *Interpretation: A Bible commentary for teaching and preaching, Psalms*, ed. P.J. Achtemeier, John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.
- Miller, M.S. & Miller, J.L., 1996, *Harper's encyclopedia of Bible life*, Castle Books, Edison, NJ.
- Miller, P.D., 2006, 'The Psalms', in H. Attridge (gen. ed.), *HarperCollins Study Bible*, pp. 732–848, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, NY.
- Mogel, W., 2001, *The blessing of a skinned knee: Using Jewish teaching to raise self-radiant children*, Penguin Compass, New York, NY.
- Moore, E.C., 2020, *Claiming places: Reading acts through the lens of ancient colonization*, Mohr Siebeck, Tubingen.
- Murray, M., 2023, *Wisdom commentary: Tobit*, ed. B.E. Reid, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN.
- Murray, S.E., 2001, '#617: "A place at the table"', in *Worship & rejoice*, Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL.
- Myers, D.G., 2007, *Psychology*, Worth Publishers, New York, NY.
- Nelson, R., 1987, 'First and Second Kings', in L.M. Mays (ed.), *Interpretation: A Bible commentary for teaching and preaching*, John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.
- Newsom, C.A. & Ringe, S.H. (eds.), 1992, *The women's Bible commentary*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.
- Park, S.-M.S. & Pilarski, A.C., 2019, *Wisdom commentary*, vol. 12, ed. B.E. Reid, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN.
- Perry, T.A., 2006, *The honeymoon is over: Jonah's argument with God*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA.
- Peterson, E.H., 1999, *Westminster Bible Companion: First and Second Samuel*, eds. P.D. Miller & D. L. Bartlett, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.
- Powlison, D., 2016, *Good and angry*, New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC.
- Pratt, R., 1995, 'Jeroboam', in P.D. Gardner (ed.), *New international encyclopedia of biblical characters*, pp. 317–318, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Punt, J., 2014, '(Con)figuring gender in Bible translation: Cultural, translational and gender critical intersections', *HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies* 70(1), Art. #2051, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2051>
- Reinhartz, A., 2015, 'Editor's foreword: The Journal of Biblical Literature and the critical investigation of the Bible', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134(3), 457–470. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jbl.2015.0031>
- Schussler Fiorenza, E., 1998, *In memory of her: A feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins*, Crossroad, New York, NY.
- Schwab, G.M., 2012, 'Ruth', in T.L. Longman, III & D.E. Garland (gen. eds.), *The expositor's Bible commentary, revised edition, Numbers to Ruth*, pp. 1289–1348, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Segovia, F.F., 2022, 'Minority biblical criticism: Reading texts together as critical project', in T.-S.B. Liew & F.F. Segovia (eds.), *Reading biblical texts together: Pursuing minoritized biblical criticism*, pp. 30–46, SBL Press, Atlanta, GA.
- Tanner, B.L., 2001, *The Book of Psalms through the lens of intertextuality*, Peter Lang, New York, NY.
- Taylor, M.A., 2002, 'Ezekiel', in C.C. Kroeger & M.T. Evans (eds.), *The women's Bible commentary*, pp. 396–421, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.
- Trible, P., 1984, *Texts of terror: Literary-Feminist readings of biblical narratives*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN.

- Van der Walt, C., 2021, 'Life in the major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel', in A.J. Coetsee & F.P. Viljoen (eds.), *Biblical theology of life in the Old Testament*, Reformed Theology in Africa Series, vol. 5, pp. 123–154, AOSIS, Cape Town.
- Van Rensburg, F.J., 2002, 'Women in church and society: Report of research done by a research team at the Pu vir CHO', *In die Skriflig* 36(4), 717–752. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v36i4.532>
- Warren, T.H., 2021, *Prayer in the night: For those who work or watch or weep*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.
- Weber, C.P., 1980, 'hayil', in R.L. Harris, G.L. Archer, Jr., & B.K. Waltke, (eds.), *Theological wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, pp. 271–272, Moody Press, Chicago, IL.
- Westermann, C., 1992, *Genesis: An introduction*, transl. J.J. Scullion, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN.
- Westminster Confession of Faith, viewed 01 November 2023, from <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/westminster-confession-faith>.
- Williams, S., 1950, 'Because I knew not when my life was good', in *The hymnbook*, Presbyterian Church in the United States, The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Reformed Church in America, Atlanta, GA.
- Witherington, B., III, 1992, 'Dorcas', in D.N. Freedman (ed.), *The anchor Bible dictionary*, vol. 2, pp. 225–226, Doubleday, New York, NY.
- Zell, E., Krizan, Z. & Teeter, S.R., 2015, 'Evaluating gender similarities and differences using metasynthesis', *American Psychologist* 70(1), 10–20. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038208>
- Zuriff, G.E., 2015, 'The gender similarities hypothesis is untestable as formulated', *American Psychologist* 70(7), 663–664. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039679>