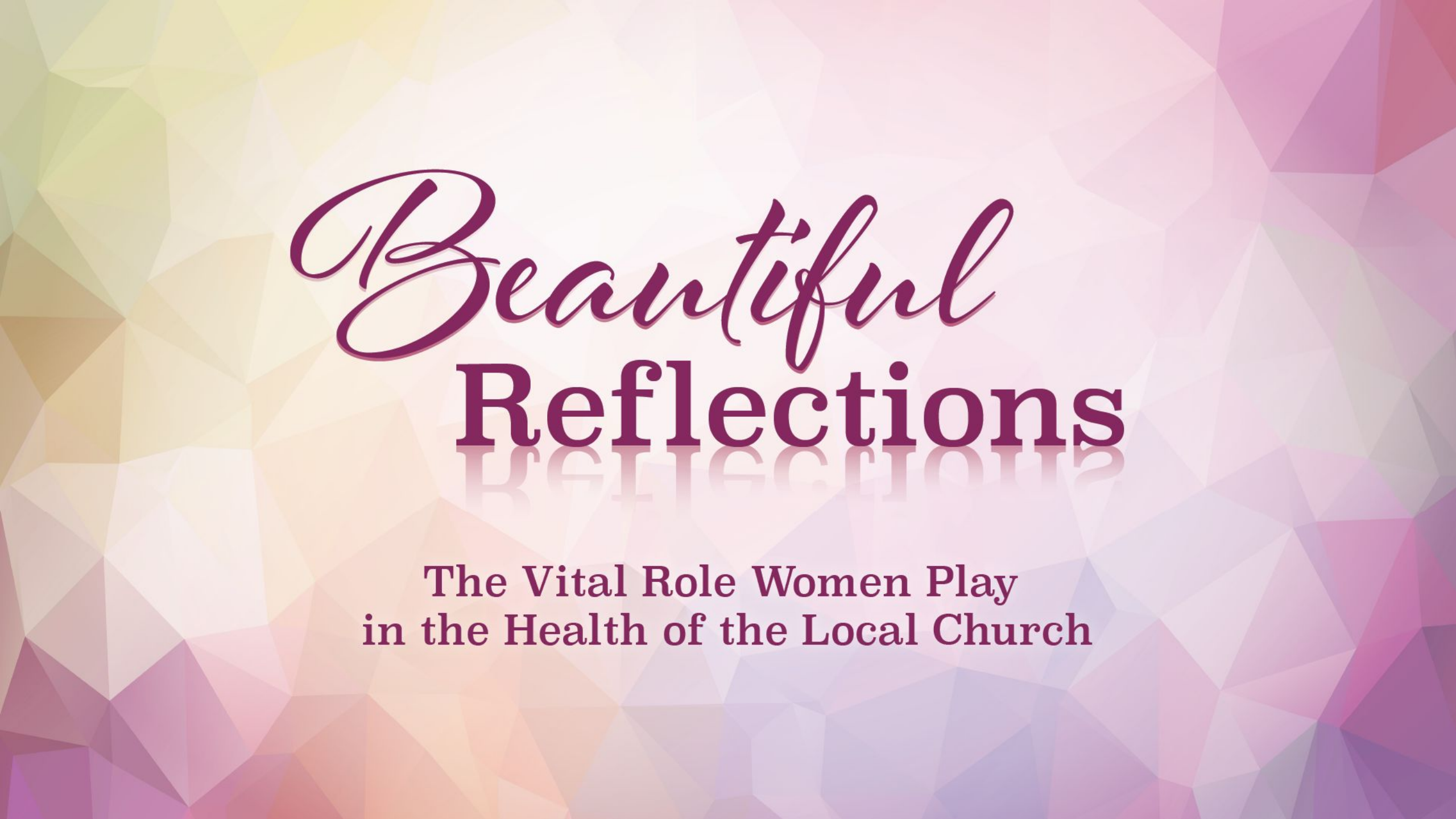




Beautiful Reflections

The Vital Role Women Play
in the Health of the Local Church



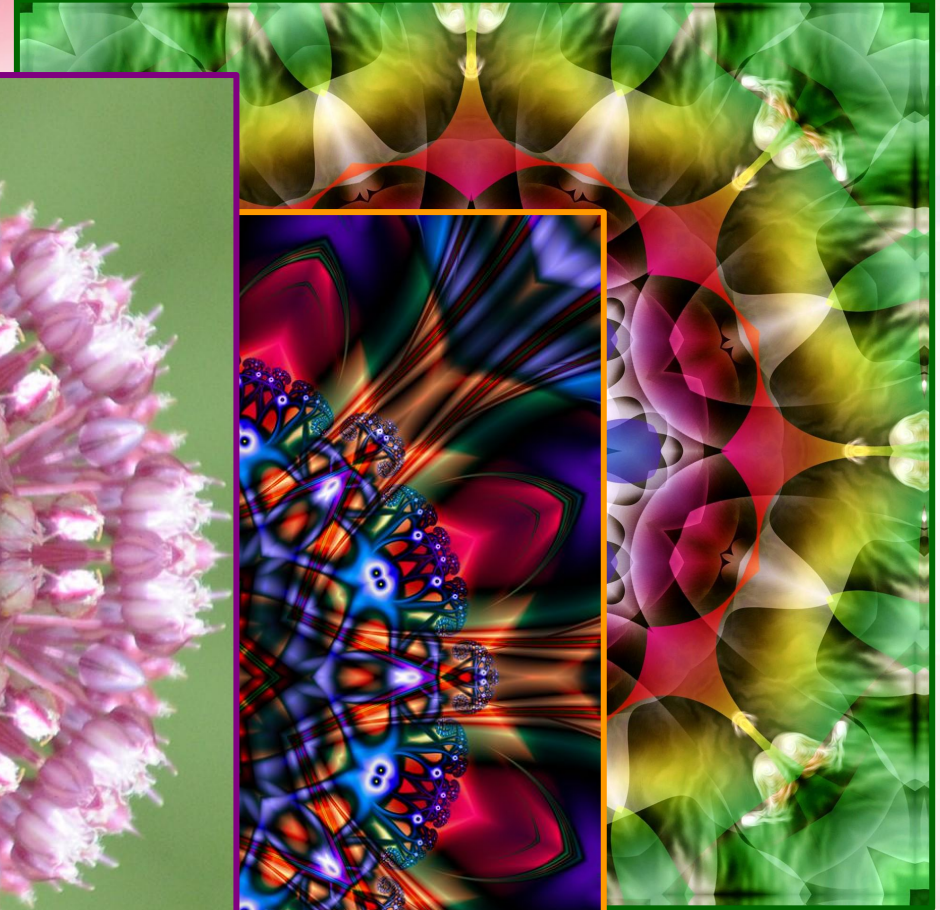
By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.

Prov 24:3-4

What is a
kaleidoscope?



What does a kaleidoscope image look like?



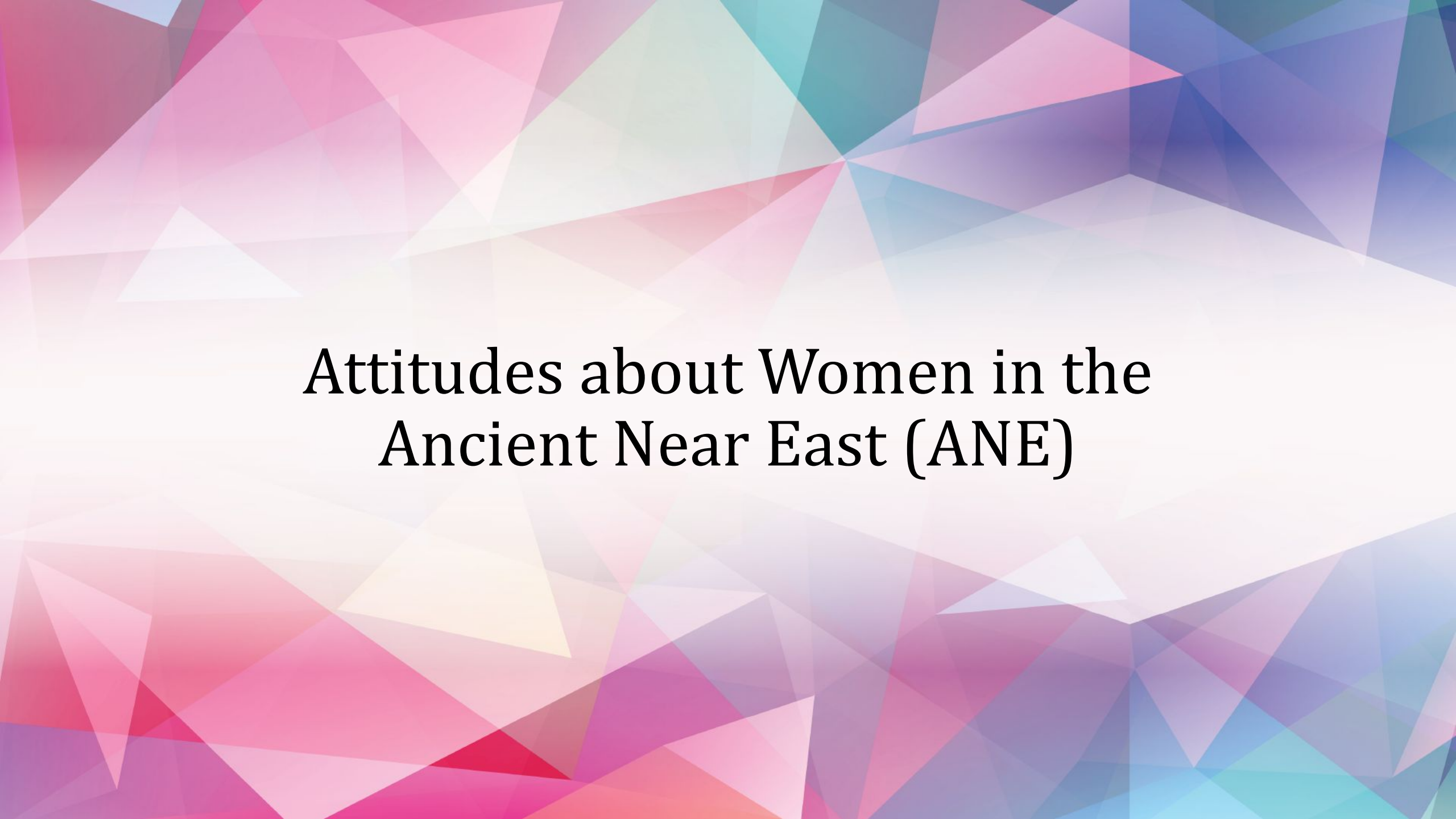


Every image a kaleidoscope creates
will never be re-created.

And each one is beautiful and singularly
special.

Women Bring Something Special to the Church

- Like a kaleidoscope image, each woman can beautifully reflect the glory of God as she joyfully serves in her local church.
- God has designed women to bring special gifts to the church for its proper health and function.
- Women are organized, nurturing, aesthetics-conscious, skilled hostesses, attentive, thoughtful, perceptive and on and on...
- God raised up women to minister to their Lord in the gospels, and He has been raising up women to serve in vital ways in His church since Acts 2.



Attitudes about Women in the Ancient Near East (ANE)

Women in the ANE*

Regarded as inferior to men by nature

Wife is property of husband

Child's mother is property of father

Used as slaves and cult prostitutes

Veiled and silent in public square

No land ownership

Husbands manage households

Polygamy in perpetuity

Publicly dishonored and devalued

Measured by beauty, wealth, social class

Minimal education

Judeo-Christian Women

Equal to men by nature (Gal 3:28)

Wife is joint heir with husband (I Pet 1:5)

Mother is partner in parenting (Eph 6:1)

Women's virtues must be protected (Eph 5:3, 4, 25-27)

Full and free participants in public square (Acts 16:14)

Land ownership (Prov 31:16)

Wives co-manage households (I Tim 5:9-10, 14)

Monogamy replaces polygamy (Gen 2:24, Titus 1:6)

Publicly honored and valued (I Pet 3:3-4, Prov 31:28)

Measured by character, virtue, good works (I Tim 2:9-10)

Mandated to educate women in Scriptures (I Tim 2:11)

**Twelve Extraordinary Women*, by John MacArthur, xi-xvii.



Are there roles in the church that are
unbiblical for women to hold?

According to the Word of God, women are not to teach or have authority over men in the church.

- **I Tim 2:11-12** Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. (ESV)
- **I Cor 14:33-35** For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

Men are tasked with leading the church, not only in preaching but also in governance.

- **Titus 1: 6-9** (Regarding qualifications for church elders and overseers)...if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (*Emphasis mine*)
- **I Tim 3:1-13** (*Parallel passage*)

Egalitarians claim the previous verses are nullified by Galatians 3:28.

- **Gal 3:23-29** Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.
- The context of the passage is that men, women, Jews, Greeks, slaves and free who are justified by faith in Christ are *spiritual equals in their standing before God*. Paul is not abolishing all *ethnic, social and sexual distinctions* among Christian believers.

Where is a woman's place in the church?

- There are no further limitations for how women can exercise their gifts and strengthen the church.
- Older women are to teach the younger women. (Titus 2:3-4)
- May we never insert pride into our places of service in the church.
- “No fancy titles...”
- Christ washed the feet of his disciples and then commanded his disciples to do likewise for one another. (Luke 22:19-27)
- *“The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”* (Matt 23:11-12)

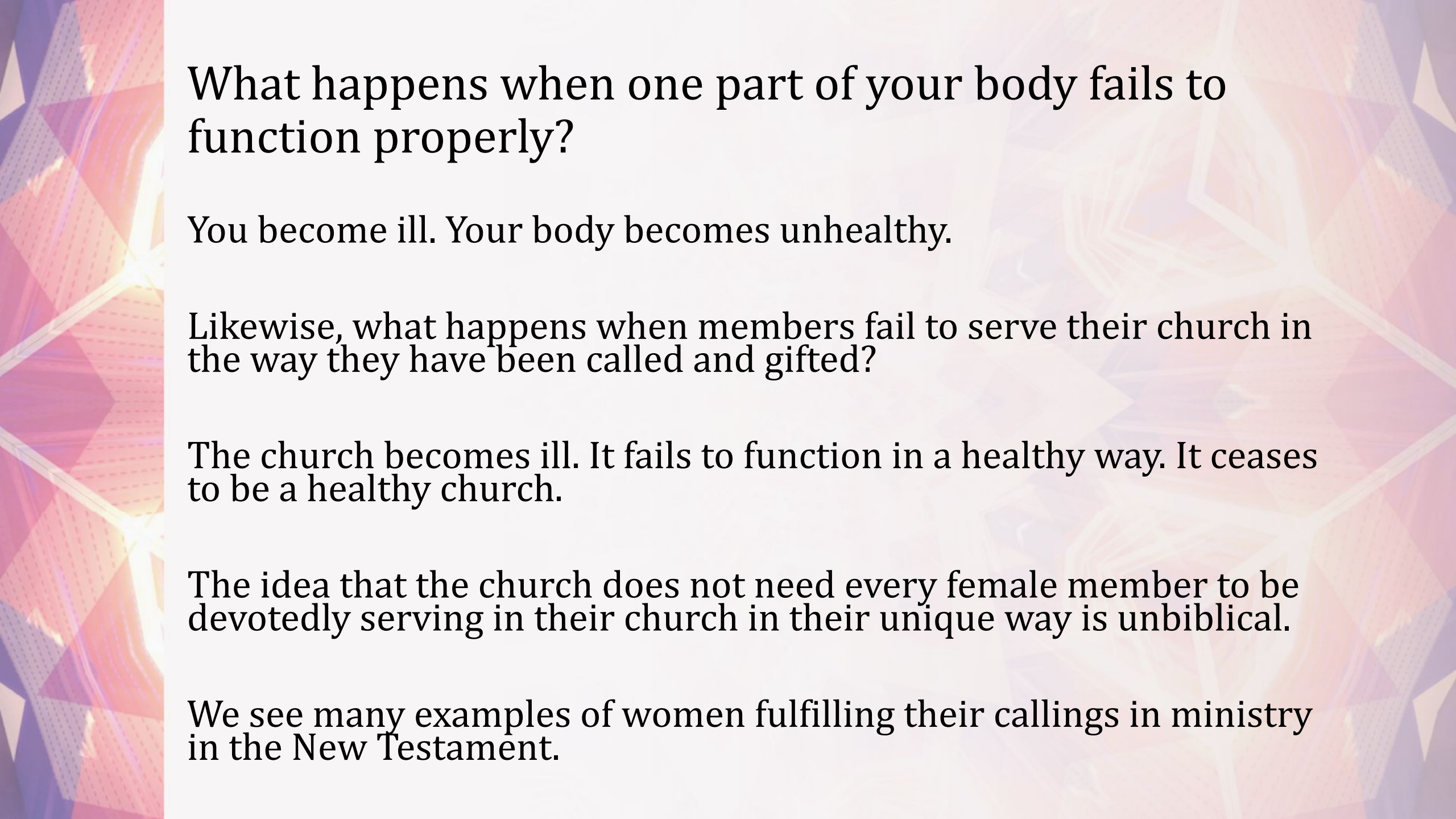


*“Your testimonies are my heritage forever,
for they are the joy of my heart. I incline
my heart to perform your statutes forever,
to the end.”*

Psalm 119:111-112

Each woman plays a critical role in her church.

- Not only are we FREE to serve our local churches in the ways God has gifted us, but we are COMPELLED to serve the church in our own special way according to I Corinthians 12.
- *The church is one body in Christ with many parts. Vs. 12-13*
- *All body parts are critical and equal in importance. V. 15*
- *All body parts are ordained by God Himself. V. 18*
- *The apparent weaker body parts are indispensable, and the parts deemed less honorable receive the greater honor. Vs. 21-23*
- *The equality of value is to eliminate division and to promote shared love and care. Vs. 24-25*
- *When one member suffers, all suffer, and when one member is honored, all rejoice. V. 26*



What happens when one part of your body fails to function properly?

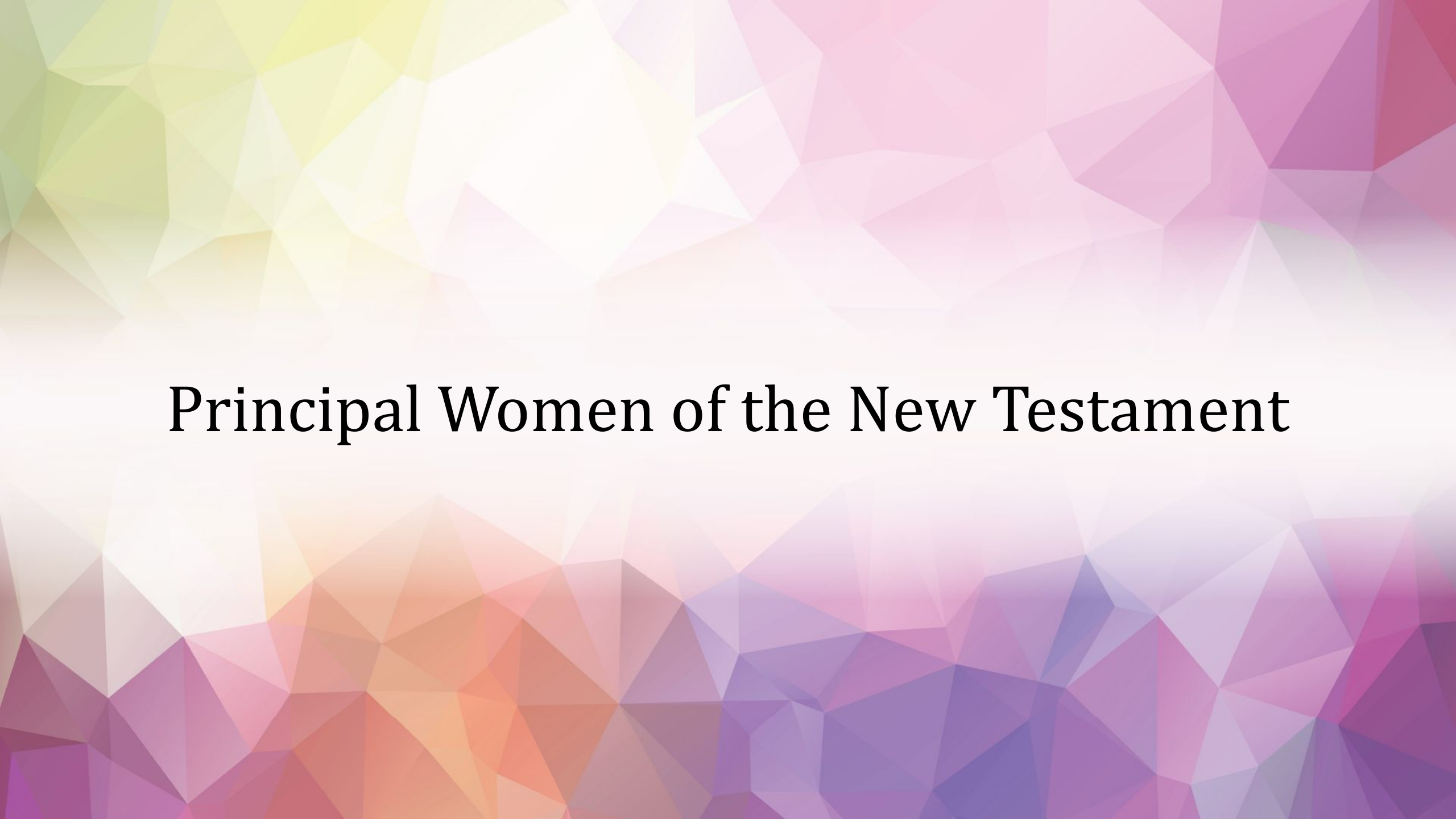
You become ill. Your body becomes unhealthy.

Likewise, what happens when members fail to serve their church in the way they have been called and gifted?

The church becomes ill. It fails to function in a healthy way. It ceases to be a healthy church.

The idea that the church does not need every female member to be devotedly serving in their church in their unique way is unbiblical.

We see many examples of women fulfilling their callings in ministry in the New Testament.

The background is an abstract geometric pattern composed of numerous overlapping triangles. The colors transition from a bright yellow in the top-left corner, through a pale pink in the center, to a deep purple in the bottom-right corner. The text is centered horizontally and vertically over this pattern.

Principal Women of the New Testament

Anna of Jerusalem, the Praying Prophetess



Herod's Temple Mount (model)

Anna of Jerusalem, the Praying Prophetess

- *And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Luke 2:36-38*
- 84-year-old widow, likely living in a modest chamber on temple grounds in a state of continual ministry, prayer and fasting for over 60 years
- Knew the prophecies of the coming Messiah, knew the timing was at hand, was waiting for Him by faith
- Knew the Messiah would deliver mankind from sin
- Devoted entire life to watching for her Messiah, believing, trusting, proclaiming biblical truth to those who were also awaiting the Messiah
- Her ministry involved PRAYING, PROCLAIMING and SERVING

Mary of Bethany, the Wise Worshiper



Mary of Bethany, the Wise Worshiper

- *Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. John 12:3*
- A young lady, likely middle child with older sister and younger brother
- They lived together, in Bethany; all apparently unmarried
- Jesus made regular stops to these three – His beloved friends and believers
- Appears three times in the gospel storyline: Luke 10 (Martha's frustration), John 11 (resurrection of Lazarus), and John 12 (Mary anoints Jesus' feet)
- Always listening, learning, and adoring her Savior
- Cherished every minute with Jesus, perceived that Jesus was going to be killed, exhibited greater perceptiveness and understanding than all 12 disciples
- *"One thing that stood out about Mary of Bethany was her keen ability to observe and understand the heart of Christ." --John MacArthur*
- Her ministry involved WORSHIPING and DISCERNING

Mary of Magdala, the Faithful Follower

Mary of Magdala's Ministry Area



Magdala Visitors Center, Conference Center and Active Archeological Research Site

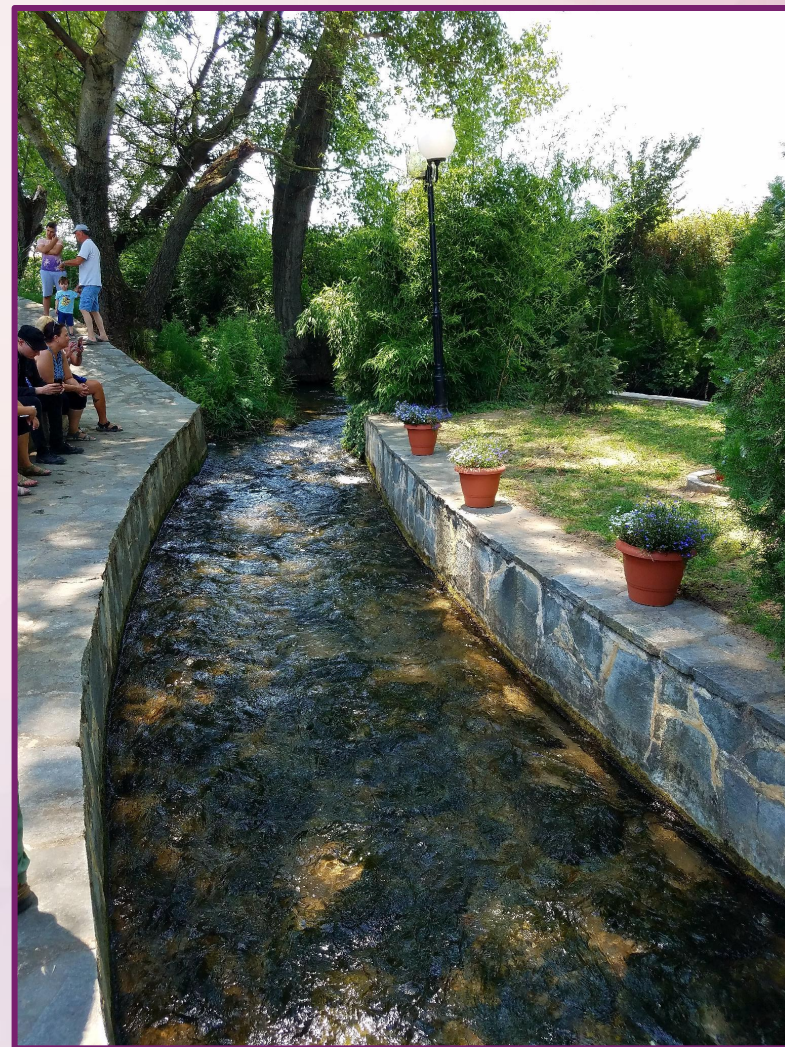
Mary of Magdala, the Faithful Follower

- *Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her. John 20: 16-18*
- Regarded by many as most famous woman in NT -- mentioned 14 times by name in the gospels
- Likely unmarried or widowed -- no indication that she was a prostitute
- Life as a demon-possessed, insane woman would have been terrifyingly dark and lonely
- Joined Jesus' followers and provided for Him from her means after He delivered her from 7 evil spirits and infirmities (Luke 8, Mark 16)

Mary of Magdala, the Faithful Follower

- Role at Jesus' crucifixion, burial and resurrection is strongly highlighted in the Scriptures
- Faithfully stayed with Christ when others fell away (Mark 11)
- Bravely followed Him to the cross, and tomb while the disciples fled in fear (Mark 15)
- Last to leave His body in the tomb and the first to return post-sabbath (Mark 16, Luke 23, John 20)
- Three angels appeared and spoke to her (two outside the tomb and one inside) and the resurrected Christ's first appearance was to Mary (John 20)
- Love for Christ far surpassed any threats to her own life -- honored above all the disciples, seen in Mark 16:9, *"When He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene."*
- Her ministry involved SERVING, SUPPORTING, and WORSHIPING

Lydia of Philippi, the Attentive Anchor



Lydia of Philippi, the Attentive Anchor

- *“And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ And she prevailed upon us.” Acts 16:13-15*
- Wealthy, successful businesswoman
- First Christian convert in all of Europe
- Lydia’s home -- the anchor and beachhead for the gospel’s spread
- Obedience in baptism
- Led her household (relatives and servants) to faith in Christ

Lydia of Philippi, the Attentive Anchor

- Hosted Paul and his team
- Financially supported the mission team – room, board and other material ways
- Long-term housing – long enough for the team to establish a church, come under persecution and be thrown in prison
- Risked business, reputation, and freedom by remaining a steadfast anchor for these missionaries and the new church
- Lydia's ministry involved EVANGELIZING, HOSTING, and GIVING

Phoebe, the Sacrificial Servant



- The Greek city of Cenchreae (Senkree-ay) -- Phoebe's hometown
- About 8 miles from Corinth
- Likely a church plant of Corinthian church
- Paul probably walked on this road between the two cities

Phoebe, the Sacrificial Servant

- *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. (Rom 16:1-2)*
- Only mention of her in the Bible
- Held an important position in her church in Cenchreae, whether official or unofficial
- Her roles in the church -- some combination of hospitality, financial giving, assisting widows, orphans, poor, sick, taking in strangers and travelers, and general service to church
- Carried Paul's letter from the Corinth/Cenchreae region to Rome for Paul
- Paul shows her great honor in this letter
- Phoebe's ministry involved SERVING, GIVING and GOING

Priscilla of Ephesus, the Mentoring Missionary



Excavated home in Ephesus, Turkey

Priscilla of Ephesus, the Mentoring Missionary

- *[Apollo] began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. Acts 18:26*
- Partnered in ministry, tentmaking with husband Aquila
- Expelled from Rome by the Emperor Claudius for being Jewish in AD 49 (Acts 18:2)
- Met Paul in Corinth and helped him establish the church there (Acts 18:3)
- Joined Paul's mission team bound for Ephesus and helped him establish the Ephesian church, hosting it in their home (Acts 18:18-19, Rom 16:5)

Priscilla of Ephesus, the Mentoring Missionary

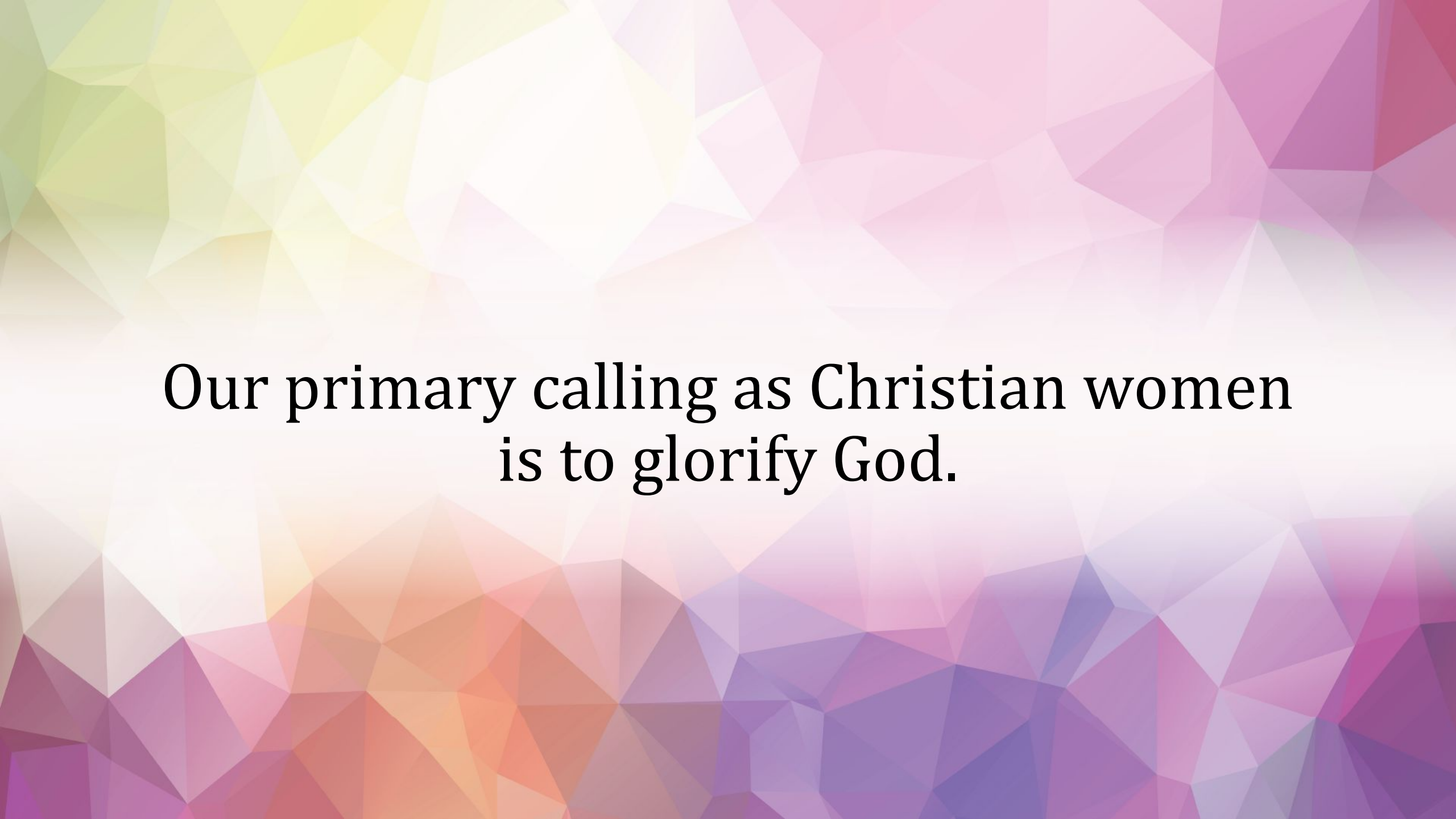
- Priscilla, with husband, took a very gifted preacher (a redeemed believer with OT understanding of God) and taught him NT truths -- Christ's death, resurrection, the giving of the Holy Spirit
- In other words, they equipped, mentored and prepared a powerhouse man of God for a life of ministry (ironically, in the Corinth area)
- The whole Christian world owes them thanks for risking their lives to save Paul's life (Rom 16:4)
- Ministry involved TEACHING, MENTORING, HOSTING, GOING

What did these godly women teach me?

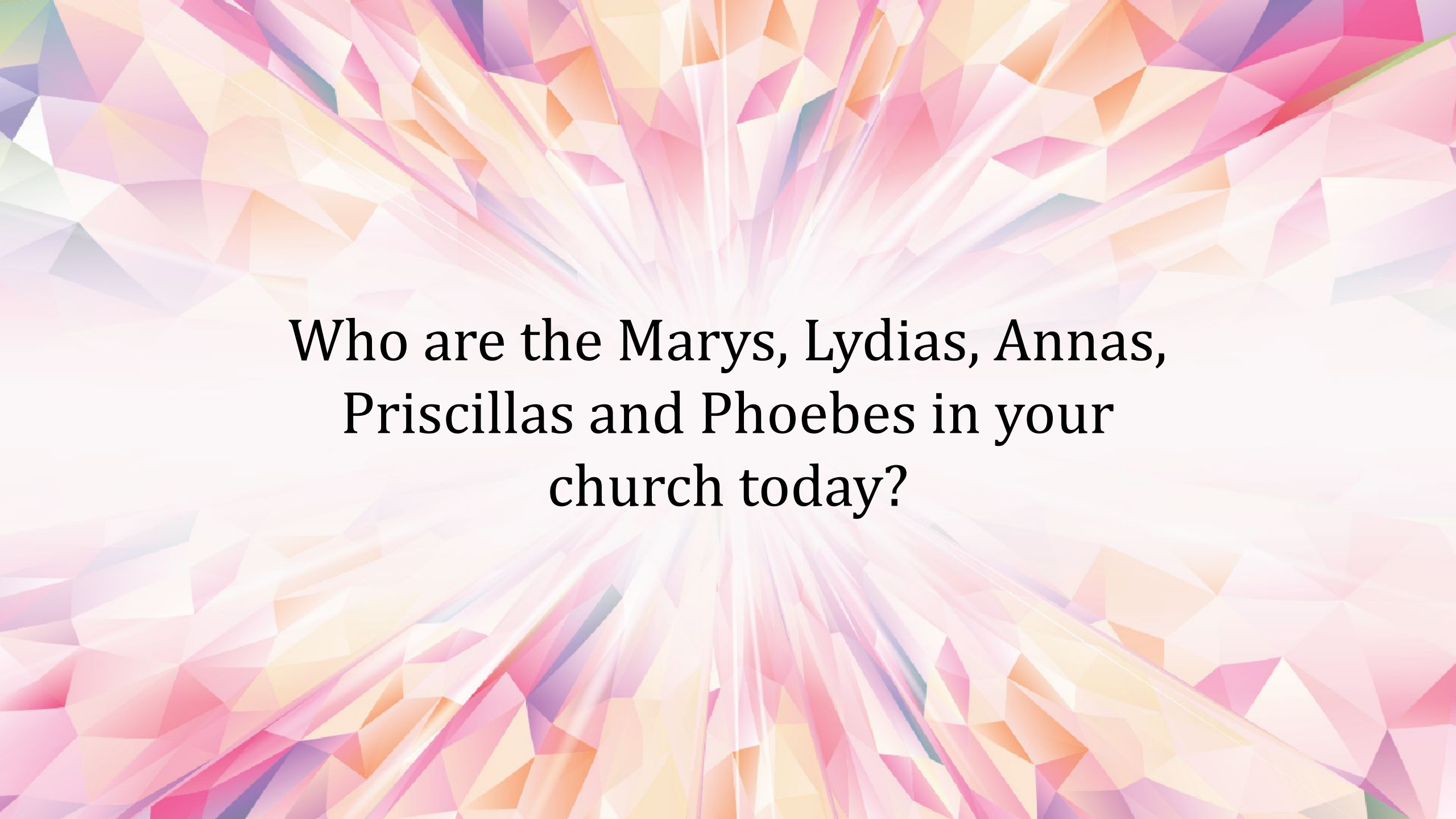
That if we are solely focused on what roles we play in God's church, we are missing God's greater calling for our lives.

We are first and foremost called to worship
our Lord, to seek the Christ of Scripture
through study and prayer, resulting in Christlikeness.

The good deeds we do in our churches and communities
should merely be an outpouring of our love and devotion
to the Lord.



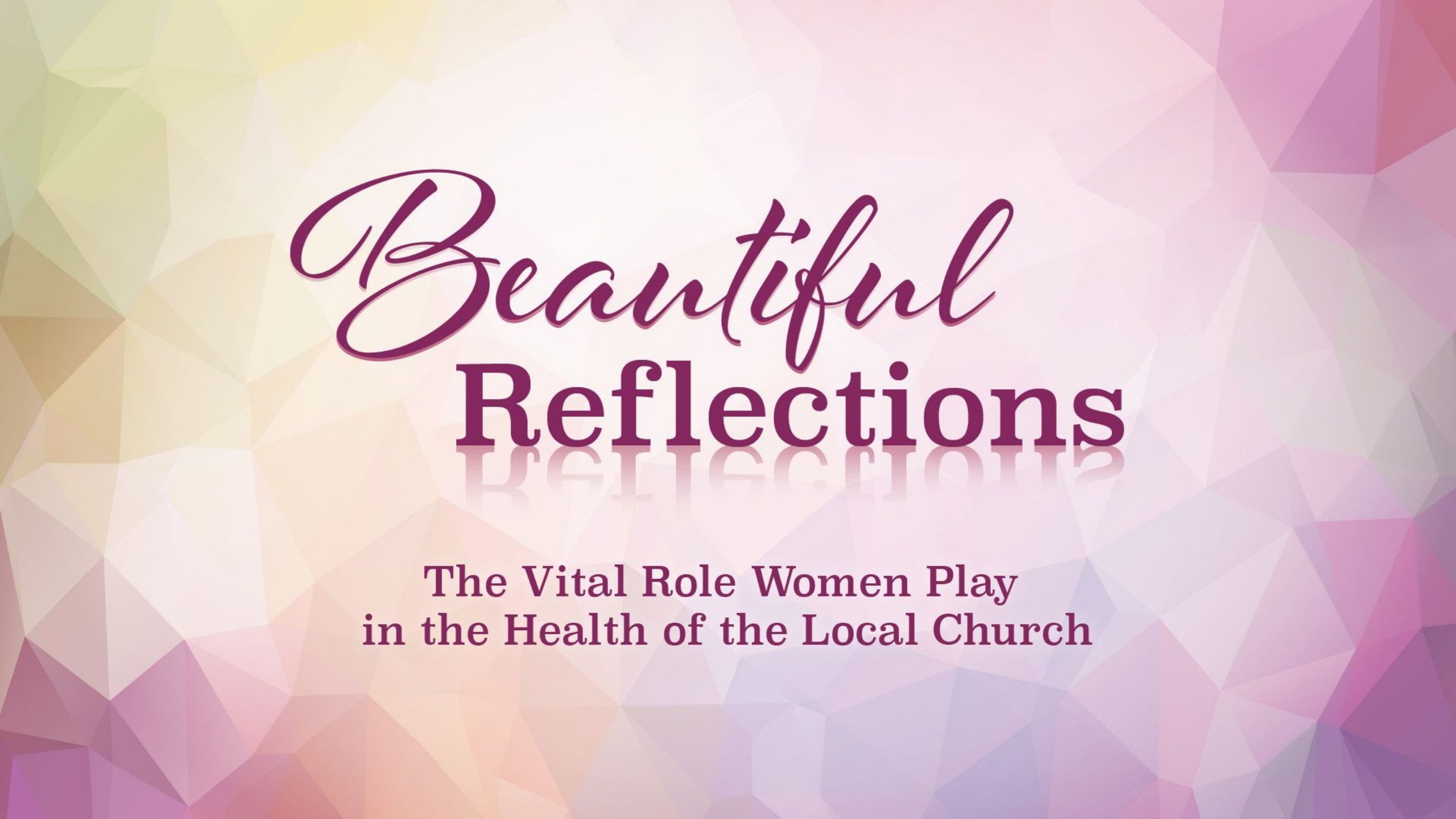
Our primary calling as Christian women
is to glorify God.

The background is an abstract geometric pattern composed of numerous triangles of various sizes and colors, including shades of pink, orange, yellow, and purple. These triangles radiate from a central point, creating a starburst or sunburst effect. The overall color palette is warm and vibrant.

Who are the Marys, Lydias, Annas,
Priscillas and Phoebe in your
church today?

The background is an abstract composition featuring a central white circle. From this circle, numerous thin, translucent rays of light in various colors (pink, orange, yellow, and purple) radiate outwards, creating a starburst or sunburst effect. The rays are set against a background of overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in a palette of soft pinks, oranges, and purples. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and visual complexity.

What about you?



Beautiful Reflections

The Vital Role Women Play
in the Health of the Local Church



Nancy Baber
babernk@ebcbryan.org

