

The Strong Power in Every Woman

Reclaiming Eve's place in history means claiming our own



Hot tears splashed down my cheeks as my new husband stared at me in confusion. I had been studying the creation story when I stumbled across the strong Hebrew word God used when creating Eve: the *ezer*. In that moment, God's intentions leapt off of the printed page and started a revolution in my heart. I never would have guessed how highly God thinks of his daughters. I hadn't understood how invaluable we are to his kingdom. I felt a strange combination of exhilaration and anxiety about what it would mean to stand shoulder to shoulder with my Christian brothers, instead of taking my usual safer back row seat.

The tears eventually dried, but the question remained: Would I be willing to follow the blueprint I discovered in God's Word, or would I shrink back in fear? The journey for me would mean reevaluating why I wasn't using some of my spiritual gifts, asking what God meant for my marriage relationship, and reimagining how I and my sister-*ezers* could more effectively join with our brothers in Christ to better serve a world that desperately needs God's love.

A few years have passed since my initial discovery, but since then I've become even more convinced of the necessity of women fulfilling the original purpose God called them to in the garden of Eden. So let's rejoin the place where it all began—the unfolding creation story in Genesis 2. Unlike Genesis 1, God zooms in to give us a more detailed account of the creation of Adam and Eve.

Picture this: Adam lovingly placed in a garden of exquisite beauty; surrounded by animal couples of every form, color, and kind; with plenty of food and drink, and a benevolent Creator to enjoy. But following the animal parade, in which Adam named the creatures God had created, we get the first hint that things are not as they should be, that God himself isn't satisfied.

Although up until this point God had declared all things "good," he now makes a startling statement in Genesis 2:18: "It is *not* good . . ." That is, "It is *not good* for the man to be alone. I will make a helper [*ezer*] suitable for him" (emphasis added).

Let's see. It is not good for man to be alone, so I will make him a servant or a slave. Nope. It is not good for man to be alone, so I'll create someone who will be a slight help to him in the future. Not hardly. "It is not good for the man to be alone, so I will make [an *ezer*] suitable for him." An agent of rescue suitable for him!

Let me be clear:

God could have used a Hebrew word meaning "female slave," but he didn't.

He might have used any of the Hebrew words meaning "wife," but he chose not to.

God offered a strong word used repeatedly in the Bible to describe how he comes through for his people in a time of desperate need.

There are only two options in translating the word *ezer* into English. Either the woman is a "strong helper" as God is a strong helper, or she is a "strong power." The full force of the original meaning of this verse might come out [something like this](#): *to end the loneliness of the single human, I will make another strong power, corresponding to it, facing it, equal to it. And the humans will be both male and female.*

Put that on your next job application or medical form under occupation: *I'm a strong power.* For not only has God identified you as his image-bearer, but he also chose back in the garden of Eden to identify you as a strong power. Nowhere in these two primary keys that unlock your identity do we find a hint of female inferiority or a whiff of male superiority. Instead, we find the beauty of an interdependent relationship formed by a God of relationship. Let that sink in for a moment. One woman I know so embraced her newfound identity as a strong power that it changed her perspective on life's challenges. While experiencing a no-good, very-bad day, she stopped in the middle of the supermarket and began singing: "I am an *ezer*, and I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." And a female college student who heard the *ezer* message raised her hand to say that she had not planned to vote in an election, but the *ezer* message had changed her mind.

As the "strong power" was created from Adam's side, it became clear that Eve was not another animal, but was a perfect ally and companion. The creation account will soon draw to a close, but before it does, we witness the forming of Eve as God's ideal finishing touch.

What the *Ezer* Isn't

After my initial tears and excitement over my discovery of the *ezer*, I began to wonder what it all meant. What made an *ezer* . . . an *ezer*? For just as this one word ties women everywhere together, our stark differences also remain. Only an imaginative God would create a woman such as Mother Teresa, who spent her heart and life on India's poor. He alone was the One who also created the Michele Bachmanns and the Hillary Clintons of the world, the homemakers extraordinaire, female secretaries and business executives, and the many women who serve as prominent and not-so-prominent church

leaders. In this dizzying display of diversity, what exactly does it mean to be an *ezer*?

Here in the creation story, in the primary passages God uses to define and describe who men and women are, we find something totally, noticeably missing: a detailed description of gender roles. Yes, it becomes clear that the woman will carry and give birth to children ([Genesis 3:20](#)), but any other ideas we get about individual duties or responsibilities are absent. That leaves us with a wide range of possibilities for a specific calling on any one woman's life. Rather than limiting us, being an *ezer* (strong helper) sets us free!

Even the short, but significant list of things a strong helper is not unleashes each woman to her full potential in [whatever situation](#) she finds herself. Let's review them:

A domestic servant. Think of it! Adam hardly needed a cook, since they picked the perfect nutrition required off the plants in the garden. There was no cleanup, since they lived in the great outdoors. And as far as clothes, who needs 'em? The Bible says they were "naked, and they felt no shame" ([Genesis 2:25](#)). Adam didn't need a servant at all, but a strong partner. You know as well as I do that women do an amazing amount of homekeeping chores, and that they are often more than capable in this area. It helps me to remember that God has given me the ability to take care of the things he's entrusted to me; he simply hasn't mandated that I must do domestic chores because I'm a woman. It may be part of my weekly responsibilities, but it's not a primary key to my identity.

Defined by marriage or motherhood. Did you notice that Eve was a strong helper before she had sexual relations with Adam? And did you realize that Eve was a complete *ezer*—or strong power—at least nine months before she gave birth to children? This amazing truth, and the fact that God didn't use a word for wife when creating Eve, sets every woman free to be the strong helper and strong power God intended her to be—single or married, mother or not.

If only I had discovered this freeing piece of biblical wisdom in my thirty-five years of singleness! Even now, as I face infertility, I take comfort in knowing I will always be an *ezer*, no matter my social status in life. God has a plan for each of his daughters, and we are defined by his intentions, not by our current circumstances.

Retired. Happily, there is no age limit on being a strong helper. A birth certificate commemorates the entrance of a strong helper into the world, and every woman's funeral reminds us of her ongoing legacy. A woman is a strong helper from birth to death, no matter what her circumstance or station in life, and she will be a strong power in God's kingdom until her final breath and beyond.

After hearing a sermon on the *ezer*, one eighty-plus-year-old woman replied, "Thank you. You helped me to realize I am still worth something." Our calling is not determined by our physical strength or our frailty, but by our Creator.

Any other ideas about Eve's secondary status come from the tragedy that unfolded when sin entered the world. As God grieved at the consequences that would come, he made a sad prediction. Adam would rule over Eve. Eve would have pain when bearing children. (Can I hear an amen?) And Adam and Eve would deal with toil and difficulty in their daily work.

These were tough consequences, for sure. But just as Christ came to restore and redeem us ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)), he also came to put our relationships with him and with others right again. God never gave up on his original dream. And neither should we.

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