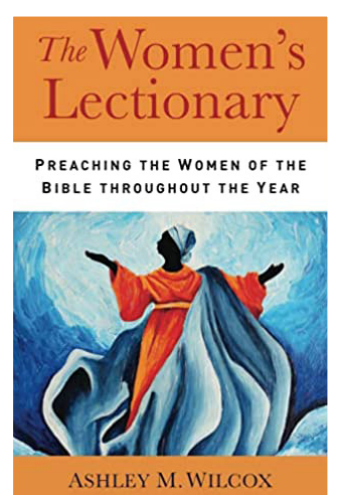




# CBF Book Discussion Guide

by Rev. Christine Powell Kellett



## *The Women's Lectionary: Preaching the Women of the Bible throughout the Year*

By Ashley M. Wilcox

### ***About the Author***

Ashley M. Wilcox is a Quaker minister and a professor of theology at Candler School of Theology. She founded the Church of Mary Magdalene, as well as creating an online class called Preaching with Confidence and serving as a preaching coach. Through her ministry, Ashley has helped others draw closer to their own traditions and experience God through Quaker practices and spirituality. She is a graduate of Candler School of Theology, the School of the Spirit, and Willamette University College of Law. Born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska, she now lives in Greensboro, North Carolina.

### ***About the Book***

This book is one that reimagines the liturgical calendar by focusing on passages about women and the feminine imagery of God in the Bible. The women who are highlighted are daughters, wives and mothers, as well as evil queens, wicked stepmothers, troublemakers and prophetesses.

Throughout the book, Wilcox explores the feminine descriptions of God, which has the reader contemplating how these change their understanding of God. This book is a helpful resource for just about anyone in the church—preachers, teachers and lay leaders. This comprehensive resource features more than 100 commentary essays with an Old Testament and New Testament passage for each Sunday of the year as well as special holy days.

*Rev. Christine Powell Kellett is a Baptist minister and freelance writer based in Greenville, S.C.*



# Book Discussion Questions

## ***God as Mother***

What are some images that you associate with the womb? How does God represent these images in your life? (God Giving Birth, pg. 23)

Midwives have always been an important part of the birthing process. How can a midwife be used as a metaphor for God? How has God been like a midwife in either your personal life or the life of your congregation? (God as a Comforting Mother, pg. 76)

What characteristics of a parent do you think of when you think of God as a parent? How do you feel about the idea of God having no gender? (God as Parent, pg. 63)

## ***Esther***

Esther is a woman who takes action in order to protect her people. Who are other figures, either in history or today, who have taken great measures to save their communities? (Esther's Banquet, pg. 123)

Part of Esther's story is usually left out of the Revised Common Lectionary and preaching in general because it makes people uncomfortable. How can preachers and teachers use Esther's story to highlight topics that are hard to discuss, especially those of sexual violence and abuse? (Esther, pg.127)

## ***The Mothers of Advent***

Who are some of the women figures that are highlighted in the section on Advent that you may not have studied much? How can the church do a better job of celebrating their stories? How can the church support mothers in all stages of motherhood—birth, parenting struggles, death of a child?

What parallels do you see in the stories of Ruth and Tamar? (Tamar, pg. 3; Ruth, pg.11)

What are some specific and significant ways that women are central to the season of Advent-in the Bible and in everyday life?

## ***Evil Queens and Wicked Stepmothers***

The story of Sarah and Hagar is one that is hard to read and understand—one where someone is harmed by the people who should be taking care of them. When have there been other people in history who have harmed others that they should be taking care of? Where has this taken place in the church? (Sarah and Hagar, pg.169)

Deception is prevalent in some of the texts mentioned in this book. One in particular is the one about Potiphar's wife. In this story, who actually has the most power? How has the element of power played out in the church's history? How has this been harmful to the church? (Potiphar's wife, pg.192)

## ***Mary***

Mary is a prominent figure throughout the Bible. What do you think are the main roles that she takes on? How are her relationships and interactions with others in the Bible (Jesus, Elizabeth, the people at the wedding feast) important to her story?

How do you relate to Mary? Are you more like her in the birth story? Or, when she meets the Magi? Or, when she loses Jesus in the temple? (pgs. 20, 31, 38)

Why do you think Mary is talked about and studied more than other women in the Bible?

## ***Jesus and Women***

What are some interpretations you have been taught about Jesus' feelings and interactions with women? In the story of Mary and Martha, how do the actions of Jesus affect how you feel about Jesus and his interactions with women? (pg. 56)

In the story of the Syrophenician woman, Jesus is not portrayed in a good light. What does this tell us about the humanity of Jesus? Do you believe that this is an example where Jesus is being taught by the women instead of Jesus' doing the teaching? (pg. 53)

There has been much controversy over the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Why do you think this has been the case? Why do you think Jesus chose her to be the first to hear the good news? Would you consider her to be a prophetess/preacher? (pg. 112)

### ***Women in the Early Church***

There were a number of women who influenced the early church. In the story of Sapphira, how do you feel about her role in deceiving and lying to the church? What picture does this paint of early congregations and how they acted? Are there any parallels to today's congregations? (Sapphira, pg. 154)

The stories of Lydia and the enslaved girl are two in which the women are treated differently. What can the church learn from these two stories and how we treat people of different social status? How have people on the margins, especially women, been harmed by the church over the years? (Lydia and the enslaved girl, pg. 166)

Priscilla was a church leader, one who led the mission that she and her husband were on, especially with teaching and preaching. For some churches today, this idea of women being preachers/teachers is foreign. How do you feel about this? What can the church learn from this passage? (Priscilla, pg. 170)

### ***Prophetesses***

What are some characteristics of prophetesses? Name some prophetesses who are familiar to you.

When looking at the stories of the prophetesses (Miriam, Deborah, Anna), where do you find the expectations of women having to be perfect? How does this standard harm women in the church?

Where do you see the gift of prophecy in your congregation? What are some stories you can tell about these people? Do you think the church does a good job of celebrating this gift in your community of faith?