

THE
SILENT
QUEEN
STUDY GUIDE

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The Silent Queen: Study Guide¹

The Silent Queen: Why the Church Needs Women to find their Voice can be used for individual or group study using the questions listed below. In a group setting, a time frame of 6–15 weeks would permit one week to review and discuss each chapter in Part A and selected chapters from Part B. A good way to proceed would be to have the group read a chapter prior to meeting. Then when you come together (or meet online) use the questions as launch pads for discussion.

A word of warning: the role of women in the church is a serious subject to which people attach strong opinions. It is important to remember that we all come to the table from different starting points. Be ready to disagree respectfully and have grace for those who see things differently.

Sexual discrimination is a sensitive subject that may be better discussed in small groups than large groups. Some people have been badly hurt by the issues addressed in this book. To have a healthy discussion, it is essential that participants know they are in a safe and loving environment.

It is also important that discussion times don't degenerate into witch hunts. Being healed and made whole is more important than nursing our wounds and playing the blame game. It may be that some participants feel the need to repent and ask forgiveness from those they have hurt, while others will need to forgive those who have mistreated them. In either case it will be the Holy Spirit's responsibility to lead them. Resist the temptation to focus on sins; keep the focus on Jesus. Only his grace can bring lasting change and heal our hurts.

The questions below are starting points for discussion; nothing more. There is no test at the end and no marks will be recorded. If the discussion veers off into unexpected directions, be open to the possibility that this is where the Spirit wants to take you. Give him space. Encourage people to talk, especially the quiet ones. Take time to listen and pray for one another.

Our aim is to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. For this reason it may be a good idea to conclude each study session with a prayer of thanksgiving and praise for Jesus and what he has done. If you wish to have a moment of reflection, some suggestions have been provided for that as well.

¹ This guide is free to share. Version 1.1 (January 2021). For updates, visit www.thesilentqueen.com

The Roar of the Lord

1. Before looking at some of the ways the church has held women back, it is important to acknowledge that for 2,000 years the church has done more for women than any other institution. Some of the ways in which the church has championed women are listed on p.12. In your view, what is the best thing the church has done for women and girls?
2. Women have been told some strange things in church. How many of the odd statements listed on pages 9 and 14 have you heard?
3. Women have also been silenced by tradition. How many of the traditions listed on the bottom of page 13 have you encountered?
4. Have you personally experienced sexual discrimination in the workplace? What about in the church? Have you ever been tempted to quit a job or church on account of discrimination? Why did you stay/leave?
5. On p.17, Paul Ellis says equality is desirable because it “protects us from the abuses of hierarchy and the misuse of authority.” But then he says equality is not the ultimate goal and that the “dogged pursuit of equality can hinder authentic relationships.” What do you think about these statements?
6. Reflection: Three perspectives or biases about women are listed on p.16. They are the traditional or hierarchical perspective, as well as the complementarian and egalitarian perspectives. Which viewpoint were you raised with? How has your upbringing shaped your current views on the relationship between men and women?

Chapter 1: Your royal invitation

1. Why did God make men and women? Why did God make you (see p.23)?
2. Women were the last thing God created, and for hundreds of years, theologians have interpreted this as God giving priority to men. Do you agree? Paul Ellis argues that women were the climax of creation. Did God save his best for last?
3. The first chapter of the first book of the Bible introduces God’s plan (be fruitful and multiply) and his means for accomplishing that plan (in partnership). The theme of partnership is echoed throughout scripture, and it is one of the things that distinguishes Christianity from every manmade religion. List some of the great partnerships in the Bible. Which partnership inspires you most?
4. What are some of the great accomplishments of recent history that have been achieved through partnership?
5. Reflection: Some of the first words spoken by the Creator to humanity are recorded in Genesis 1:28. Read and meditate upon these words. What is God inviting you to do? What dreams has he written into your members? In this world we are often reminded of our limits. What limits does your heavenly Father place upon you?

Chapter 2: The silent queen

1. Tradition teaches that Eve, the mother of the human race, was a temptress who led Adam into sin. However, Paul Ellis paints a portrait of a partnership that failed to refute the serpent's lies. How did the first partnership fail? What were some of the consequences of that failure? What lessons from that failure can we apply in our marriages?
2. Have you ever heard that "a silent wife is a gift from the Lord"? Where does that line originate from (see p.28)?
3. After the Fall, Eve says virtually nothing that is recorded in scripture. Indeed, no woman speaks until Sarai in Genesis 16. Why do you think there is an absence of women's voices in the Old Testament?
4. Genesis 3:16 is often used to support the traditional or hierarchical view that men are meant to lead or rule women. What do you think about this interpretation? How is this Genesis 3 passage sometimes reflected in patterns of church leadership?
5. Patriarchy is one of the most enduring forms of gender discrimination and is contrary to God's plan for partnership. How does the inherent imbalance of patriarchy hurt women? How does it hurt men?
6. Ancient Israel operated under a patriarchal system. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are known as the Patriarchs of Israel, and during the time of Moses the nation was governed by male elders. Yet scattered throughout the Old Testament, we see hints of God's desire for partnership (e.g., in the Ten Commandments and the story of Zelophehad's daughters on p.34). Can you think of other Old Testament examples where God's plan for partnership is revealed?
7. Reflection: Have there been times when you felt your voice was not heard? Has God given you a song or story or message to share? What stops you from speaking out?

Chapters 3 and 6: Athenian Supermen and the Church Fathers

1. The Bible teaches that God made women as an expression of his love, but the ancient Greeks believed that women were created to punish men. What are some of the other ways the Greek view of women differed from the Biblical view?
2. Many people are unfamiliar with the Athenian foundations of western thought. What are some of the surprising things you learned from reading about Aristotle, et al. in Chapter 3?
3. Many Christians are also unfamiliar with the influence the Church Fathers have had on our view of women. What are some of the surprising things you learned from reading about Tertullian, et al. in Chapter 6?
4. Some of the Greek teachings about women that have been regurgitated by the Church Fathers are listed on p.73. What would Jesus say in response to these teachings?

5. Reflection: On one side we have Jesus and the Apostles treating women with respect and dignity; on the other we have the Church Fathers saying women are inferior to men and incapable of leading. Which group has spoken the loudest in your life?

Chapter 4: God's gift to women

1. In our modern society, it can be difficult to appreciate how radical was Jesus' treatment of women. If you lived in Judea, what would shock you about his behavior around women? Would you have been offended by Jesus?
2. As listed in the chapter, Jesus empowered women at least eight different ways. Which of these impressed you the most? Which surprised you?
3. Jesus' first recorded miracle was done in response to a woman (see p.43), and many of Christ's most important teachings were revealed exclusively to women (p.55). Do you think this was intentional? What is the significance of this?
4. Marriage and divorce in a Jewish context differs from traditional western practices. Imagine you were an *agunah* or "dumped wife" living in the first century (see p.49). With no education and limited employment prospects, what are your options for survival? How does Jesus help you?
5. Mary of Bethany left the kitchen and entered the front part of the house to sit at the feet of Jesus like a disciple (p.53). Paul Ellis argues that Mary's actions ought to be recognized as a seminal moment in the history of women's liberation. Do you agree?
6. The Bible says many women followed Jesus, yet paintings of Jesus rarely show him with women disciples. Why do you think that is? What are some other ways that our art portrays a biased picture of Christ's ministry?
7. Reflection: Imagine you are an artist about to paint a picture or a director preparing to make a movie. If you were to illustrate one of the ways Jesus elevated women, what would you show?

Chapter 5: What did the Apostles think about women in ministry?

1. Read Acts 2:17-18 where Peter gives his account of Pentecost. Now put yourself in the crowd that witnessed these events. What would you think of the Holy Spirit being poured out on women? Such a thing has never been seen before. How would you react to women prophesying? Would you accept it or dismiss it?
2. Review the list of names in Romans 16 noting those people Paul praises versus those he merely greets. Why do you think Paul praises so many Roman women? What were they doing to merit the apostle's praise? (Hint: see Romans 16:12.)
3. In Galatians 3:28, the Apostle Paul provides one of the clearest descriptions of new creation equality. The world may treat people on the basis of their color and gender, but in Christ, there is no racism and no sexism and no second-class citizens (see p.62). Yet

some use this verse to say women are equal in value, but not role. What do you think the Apostle Paul might say in response to this? (Hint: see 1 Corinthians 12:27.)

4. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John made women prominent in their Gospel accounts. Imagine their Gospels had been written by men unacquainted with Jesus or by men who had a bias against women. What stories about women would have been left out or altered?
5. Reflection: Imagine you are the Pharisee Saul arresting Christian men and women (see Acts 8:3, 9:1–2, 22:4). Such a thing has never been done before. (Prior to Jesus, women were inconspicuous bystanders.) What are these Christian women doing? Why are you arresting them? If you were transported to the 21st century, would you find Christian women doing the same things?

Chapter 6: What did the Church Fathers think about women?

See above under Chapter 3.

Chapter 7 and 8: Helpmates or Servants

1. God knew men would need women to fulfill his plan. So why didn't he make the first woman at the same time he made the first man? Why have a gap between one and the other, particularly since God said it was not good for man to be alone (see pp.78–79)?
2. Can you think of some times in your life when God has helped you? What form did that help take? Has God's help come through people?
3. Some say women were made to serve men because the first woman came from a man. How does the Apostle Paul respond to that (hint: see 1 Corinthians 11:11–12)?
4. Have you ever compared yourself (or your spouse) with the noble woman of Proverbs 31? Was it a helpful comparison?
5. Do you expect your spouse, or potential spouse, to support your dreams? Why? Why not? Do you support their dreams? Why? Why not?
6. Reflection: God asked Adam to do an impossible thing, and then he helped Adam do it (see p.78). Has God asked you to do something impossible? Do you have a Big Hairy Audacious Goal that seems too big to accomplish on your own? Are you looking for Help or are you trying to do it all on your own? Read and meditate on these scriptures that talk about God being our helper: Deuteronomy 33:26, 29; Psalm 115:9–11, 121:1–2, 124:8; 146:5–6.

Chapter 9: Infidelity, abuse, and divorce

1. In your experience, has the church treated divorced people fairly? What about those who have been the victims of domestic abuse?

2. If you experienced domestic abuse, would you seek support from your church? Why? Why not?
3. If Joseph was merely betrothed to Mary, why did he have to divorce her? (See Box 9.2 on p.93.) Is it possible that our ignorance of Jewish customs for marriage and divorce have affected the way we treat divorced people?
4. Some churches teach that it is a sin for a divorced person to remarry anyone other than their former spouse. This is based on a misunderstanding of Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount. What issue was Jesus really addressing in Matthew 5:31-32?
5. Reflection: Does your church or ministry have a position statement on domestic abuse? If not, could you write one? What would it say? (Hint: see the example provided by the Salvation Army in Box 9.1 on p.89.)

Chapter 10: Should women stay silent in church?

1. Can women speak publicly in church? (Hint: see Acts 1:14, 2:4, 17-18, 4:31, 21:9, Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11, 27, 14:5, 26, 27, 29, 31, 39, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 1 Peter 2:9.)
2. Since the scriptures emphatically encourage women to speak, why do some churches say otherwise? In your experience, do you feel women are given the same opportunities to speak or prophesy as men? If not, what form has any discrimination taken?
3. Both the Jews and the Greeks had rules about women staying silent in public assemblies. When the Corinthians asked Paul whether he thought such rules should apply to the church, he replied with an astonished *What?!* However, some English Bibles omit his exclamation. Reach for the nearest Bible and look up 1 Corinthians 14:36. Does it begin with the exclamatory "What"? If not, write it in.
4. Reflection: In church, do you ever testify or bring a word of revelation (as per 1 Corinthians 14:26)? Do you encourage your sisters to speak in church? Why? Why not?

Chapter 11: Can women teach and preach?

1. Can women teach in church? (Hint: see Matthew 28:10, 19-20, Luke 6:40, John 4:39, Acts 18:26, Romans 12:7, Romans 16:1, 3-5a, 12, 1 Corinthians 14:26, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 1:5, Hebrews 5:12, 1 Peter 3:15, 4:10-11.)
2. In your experience, do you feel women are given the same opportunities to teach and preach as men? If not, what form has any discrimination taken?
3. Read Acts 4:31 where the Holy Spirit empowered the believers to "speak the word of God boldly." Imagine you are a first-century believer. How would you react to women speaking publicly in church for the first time? How might those around you react?
4. "By this time you ought to be teachers" (Hebrews 5:12). You may not have the gift of teaching, but all of us have a story to tell. Do you tell yours? How? Who gets to hear of the good things God has done and is doing in your life?

5. Homework project: In your state or country, what was the first school or institution of higher learning to open its doors to women (see Box 11.2 on p.108)? What role, if any, did followers of Jesus play in making this happen?
6. Reflection: How do you react when a woman stands up to preach? When Phoebe stood up to read Paul's letter, the apostle told the Romans to receive her "in the Lord" (see pp.103-104). Are you able to receive women preachers "in the Lord"? The Apostle Peter said that "if anyone speaks, they should do so as one speaking the very words of God" (1 Peter 4:11). Do you receive women preachers as though they were speaking the very words of God? Can you name any women who have spoken to you in this manner?

Chapters 12 and 13: Can women pastor and lead men?

1. Gender-based discrimination is evidenced in three types of church: (1) those that say women cannot lead, (2) those that say women can lead but only in junior positions, and (3) those that say women can lead but since it would create problems we'd rather they didn't. Which, if any, of these forms of discrimination have you encountered?
2. In his letters to Timothy and Titus, Paul lists sixteen desirable qualities of an elder or pastor. These lists have been used to exclude women from leadership. What might the Apostle Paul say in response (see pp.119-22)?
3. The Athenians, and certain theologians, said that women are incapable of leading men. Some people today say they are incapable of following women. What do you say? Could you follow a gifted female leader?
4. Reflection: In your experience, has the church done a good job recognizing women who lead? How might we do a better job? What are some of the ways we could enlarge the platform for gifted women? What are some of the barriers we could remove?

Chapters 14, 15, and 16: Submission

1. What are different types of submission? What does submission mean to you?
2. Spiritual leadership is servant-leadership. Have you experienced situations where obedience was demanded by those "in charge"? What sort of carrots and sticks were used to compel proper behavior (see pp.131-2)?
3. Paul Ellis argues that the church is a family and not an army (p.132). When it comes to submission, what's the difference? How does individual freedom relate to submission?
4. Like a director in a play, the Apostle Paul speaks to both husbands and wives about submission in Ephesians 5:21-29 and Colossians 3:18-18. The Apostle Peter does something similar in 1 Peter 3:1-9. As a man or woman, how well do you understand your part in the marriage play?
5. What does equality look like in a healthy marriage (p.139)?

6. Have you experienced times when you and your spouse could not agree on something? How did you resolve the issue (or how might you resolve such an issue)? Paul Ellis says that Jesus should take the lead in a marriage (p.141). What might that look like?
7. Research shows that hierarchical marriages tend to be unhappy, yet many Christian marriages tend to be hierarchical (p.140). Why do you think that is?
8. Reflection: We have been sold an Athenian picture of marriage where the man rules the roost and the woman works without complaint. In contrast, the Shulammitte woman offers an alternative picture of marriage (see p.143). Which of these two types of marriage is described in Ephesians 5:21–33, Colossians 3:12–19, and 1 Corinthians 13:4–8? If someone had an Athenian marriage and they wanted to transition to a Shulammitte one, what advice would you give them?

Chapters 17: Headship

1. How have you understood the concept of headship in a marriage?
2. Some theologians have taught that headship implies rulership and that a husband should rule his subordinate wife. But the Apostle Paul said husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. Which of these messages have you heard in church? In your experience, has the emphasis been on husbands laying down their lives or wives submitting?
3. In practical terms, what does it mean for a husband to love his wife as Christ loves the church? (See Eph. 5:25–30.)
4. Reflection: In Ephesians 5:31, Paul echoes God’s original call for a marriage to consist of two people becoming one flesh. Is “one-flesh team,” merely a catchy metaphor for marriage, or is there more to it? What does a one-flesh team look like? How do headship and submission work in a one-flesh team?

Chapters 18, 19, and 20: Deception and prejudice

1. Have you ever heard that women are more gullible and prone to deception?
2. Eve was deceived into sinning, but Adam sinned with his eyes wide open. Why did he do it? Nobody knows, but it’s fun to speculate. Did Adam do it out of love for Eve, as suggested in the book (p.159)? Or might there have been another reason?
3. Have you ever been told that women find their purpose in raising children? Such a message can extinguish a woman’s dreams; how might it also affect men?
4. In a church setting, have you ever heard that women are weaker than men? What are the implications of such a message?
5. Reflection: Many of our prejudices are inherited, but thinking that others are weaker or in some way inferior affects our ability to receive from the Lord (p.166). Have you ever

felt this way towards a particular group? What is Peter's remedy for this sort of discrimination? (Hint: see 1 Peter 3:8.)

A word after

1. What is the number one takeaway you have gleaned from reading *The Silent Queen*? Is there an area where the lights have turned on or the blinders have come off?
2. Of all the men and women mentioned in this book, whose story has inspired you?
3. How has the message of this book affected your emotions? What did you feel when reading this book? (We are to walk by faith, rather than feelings, but our emotions put us in touch with our true selves. They reflect what the Spirit is doing within us.)
4. Change is slow, and you may encounter prejudice and discrimination. What tools, if any, have you acquired for coping with discrimination? When others misuse scripture to limit the call of God on your life or to mistreat others, how will you respond?
5. Reflection: What are some of the things the Lord has been saying to you through this book? What do you believe God wants to do in you and through you at this point? What will you do in response?
6. Have you found your voice?



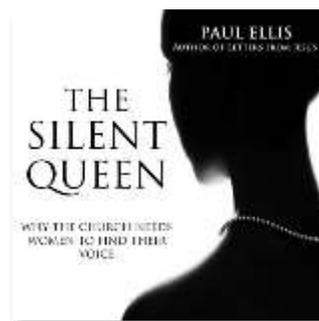
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