



Vindicting the Vixens: Revisiting Sexualized, Vilified, and Marginalized Women of the Bible

Sandra L. Glahn (Editor)

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Gain a greater understanding of gender in the Bible through the eyes of a diverse group of evangelical scholars who assert that Christians have missed the point of some scriptural stories by assuming the women in them were "bad girls."

Did the Samaritan woman really divorce five husbands in a world where women rarely divorced even one? Did Bathsheba seduce King David by bathing in the nude? Was Mary Magdalene really a reformed prostitute?

While many have written studies of the women in the Bible, this is a new kind of book--one in which an international team of male and female scholars look afresh at vilified and neglected women in the Bible. The result is a new glimpse into God's heart for anyone, male or female, who has limited social power.

Vindicting the Vixens: Revisiting Sexualized, Vilified, and Marginalized Women of the Bible Details

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From Reader Review Vindicating the Vixens: Revisiting Sexualized, Vilified, and Marginalized Women of the Bible for online ebook

Josiah says

Real mixed bag. Some essays were quite good. Some were quite terrible. Overall, though, I wasn't persuaded by the book's thesis: that women in the Bible are often unfairly sexualized, vilified, and marginalized. Many of the articles were about women that no one really views in a negative light: women like Ruth and Rahab. The book's argument that many people see them as "vixens" really seemed to be cherrypicking the few people who criticize these women. On the other hand, with the women who are often critiqued more (such as Tamar & the Samaritan woman at the well pre-encounter with Christ), I wasn't really persuaded that such critique was unjustified. Especially when the essayist makes the ridiculous argument that it was righteous for Tamar to commit incest(!).

There were some essays that were particularly well done and some that did shift my opinion. The essays on Hagar & Bathsheba were both written really well and brought up a number of good points to consider, and the book persuaded me that Mary Magdalene wasn't a prostitute pre-encounter with Christ. I tend to enjoy narrative biblical analysis, so I appreciated reading through this book. All that being said, the book's title is rather misleading (very few of these women are really considered vixens), and it would be much better if it stopped trying to prove that all of these women were marginalized in some way, and simply focused on exploring what Scriptures say about the lives of these women.

Rating: 2.5-3 Stars (Okay).

Jan says

This is a most unusual book. It is compiled by 15 very thorough learned scholars of Biblical women and their particular views of the stories behind each one of them. 16 pages of Bibliography show the absolute depth of their research and why this is an important contribution to Biblical women's study.

It may be too specialized for the casual Bible study, it is an Academic treatise but as interesting as any I have seen. The first section is on the Women in Jesus's Genealogy; more than the redeemed sinners, as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and the Virgin Mary. If that section doesn't open your eyes, then we study Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Deborah, Huldah and Vashti. The final chapter studies the Woman at the Well, Mary Magdalene, and Joanna. The motivation of the editor is to handle faithfully the biblical text and give us a fresh look at women labeled as "bad girls" for whatever reasons. The tendency to blame women for sexual offenses has affected how we read about them. Dorothy Sayers, made an address in 1940 and said she never wanted to make "women's issues" her topic of focus. This book vindicates our women in the Bible through the eyes of the team of 15 male and female contributors. This is not an angry book but a very thoughtful reexamination, they don't all agree on each point, but it will challenge your thinking. Sandra hopes to have the readers see more clearly, love more dearly and follow more nearly until his kingdom comes and his will is done on earth as it is in heaven, these are the ending words of Sandra Glahn, the editor in her introduction. Borrow interlibrary loan if you are interested, it is unlikely local church will own this important book.

Laura says

This book was a delight to read. It was scholarly, yes, but not anything like the stuffy-and-snooty scholarship in the literary criticism of my graduate school days.

First of all, let me say that this is not a book aimed only at women. Men, particularly men in church leadership, should read this book. You don't have to agree with everything; the authors themselves don't agree all the time. (More on that later.) But the ideas and information are worth considering.

The premise is simple: many of the women in the Bible have a bad girl reputation ("vixens") and in many cases, those reputations are undeserved. We all read the Bible through a particular lens, one that combines traditional, often skewed, interpretations and our own contemporary sensibilities regarding these ancient events. But reading the text and considering it within the context of its times, both of the events and of the actual writing, shows that our views are often far from Biblical.

For example, there's no textual evidence that Mary Magdalene was a former prostitute and Jesus' lover (or wife), but many people believe this. Even many churchgoers and devout, Bible-loving Christians believe certain incorrect ideas because they've failed to consider the context and text. (For example, the belief that Deborah was a judge only because "a good man was hard to find.") Some Biblical women are vilified because of their sexual activities. Others are ignored.

This anthology serves as a correction to this. But it also serves as a catalyst for personal change and re-examination of our theological assumptions about gender, the gospel, and the nature of God.

The authors are diverse: female and male, white and minority, various denominational backgrounds, all well-educated. (All the authors have a MA, PhD, or ThM degrees from respected seminaries.) They are united by a common desire to take the text seriously, a desire to portray the cultural context as accurately as possible, and a passion for God and his word, which they strive to interpret the way he intends us to interpret it, as a revelation of his character. They differ on the issue of women preaching yet always show respect for those who disagree with their conclusions.

They are also united in this conclusion: God is concerned for the outsider. The powerless. The marginalized, feared, stereotyped. These women's stories vividly show how deeply God cares for those whom the world has deemed unimportant. To miss this aspect of the stories is to misunderstand God's nature.

In the excellent introduction, Henry Rouse discusses hermeneutics and how to responsibly interpret Scripture.

Each subsequent chapter discusses a particular woman.

Section 1: the women in Christ's genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary.

Section 2: women from Israel's history: Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Deborah, Huldah, and Vashti.

Section 3: New Testament women: the woman at the well (the one with five husbands), Mary Magdalene, and a woman named Junia/Joanna, who may have been an apostle.

Some of the subject matter overlaps. (For example, the Sarah and Hagar chapters.) Because of the authors'

differing emphases, the assertions contrast and sometimes contradict. This might be disconcerting to some readers. One of the benefits, though, is that the different interpretations drive the reader back to the Bible. Rather than reading the book and passively accepting the conclusions without considering the logic and implications, I had to think harder. This is a book that demands interaction with the contents. (Much like the Bible does.) Time and again, I found myself discussing the ideas and interpretations with my husband and then in my own mind (when my husband wasn't around).

All the authors stress the importance of the context. I was particularly touched and impressed by Carolyn Custis James' handling of the patriarchal context in her chapter on Tamar. And Sarah Bowler's discussion of Bathsheba was timely, considering how many women have become vocal about being sexually victimized. But it was also helpful in two ways.

One, she points out that ancient understanding of rape emphasized physical force and violence, while moderns understand rape as also involving coercion and non-consent; thus, while the Bible does not explicitly call David's sexual encounter with Bathsheba "rape" (given the writer's cultural understanding of it), there's textual evidence that his treatment of her would fit our modern ideas about rape. (See that chapter for details.)

Two, she helps us to consider how we, as Christians—individually and corporately—treat the powerless and victimized, and how we can and must do better.

I've highlighted two chapters as helpful, but all of the chapters could be described this way.

The only times I felt confused were when the authors were discussing traditional views I was unfamiliar with. For example, I felt a little confused in the chapter about Mary as Timothy Ralston wrote about certain traditional ideas, such as her perpetual virginity or her bodily assumption. But I grew up in Reformed/Calvinistic circles and though I'd heard some references to these theological ideas, it was always given a disdainful treatment, almost a "can you believe these people are so stupid!?" attitude, and never treated with respect or with a desire to truly understand the origins of these concepts or the people who believe them. Hence my confusion. I slowed down and re-read those sections multiple times. (Is that a bad thing?) But my ignorance isn't the author's fault, nor is it a fault of the book.

This brings up something, though. I don't think those who are Biblically illiterate would find the book helpful. The text assumes a baseline knowledge of Scripture, that the reader will know the gist of Israel's history and Jesus' ministry, and can find her/his way around the Bible. That's the target demographic.

Note: The Christian reader who doesn't know anything about the Bible (a new convert from an unchurched background, for example) could benefit from the book, though, if given guidance from mature Christian(s) and the tools to study the Bible, coupled with a fervent desire to spend time learning and praying.

There's plenty of material for discussion in this book. Each chapter has a few questions at the end to serve as a springboard, but there's much, much more that could be discussed in a group. It would be best if the group included women and men, as gender dynamics is discussed so much, and the group would benefit from having both male and female listening to God and each other.

Highly recommended.

I received a review copy from Kregel (through the editor, Sandra Glahn, whom I follow on Twitter) in exchange for an honest review.

Danielle Routh says

My wonderful husband bought this book for me without even knowing it was on my to-read list, and I'm so glad he did! I thoroughly, thoroughly enjoyed this book, and everyone who has even passing familiarity with the women discussed should read it, especially the ones like Rahab, Bathsheba, and Mary Magdalene who receive little to no positive recognition. Indeed, the essays on Tamar, Raha, Bathsheba, and Mary Magdalene were especially compelling--if I had to recommend just two essays from this collection for everyone in the church to read, it would definitely be those concerning Bathsheba and Mary Magdalene, perhaps the most famous vixens of all from the Bible who, the reader will find, were anything but. I found the essays on Sarah and Hagar to be rather weak, but overall, I would highly recommend this book.

Shannon says

An excellent collection of essays on women in the Bible whom have been sexualized, vilified, or marginalized. Some essays were better than others. I learned a lot and many of the essays excited me so much I couldn't help but talk about what I had read with others -- always a sign of a good book. This is probably meant for a classroom setting more than light reading. I was grateful for my Latin education for all of the paragraphs on linguistic nuances like a noun being in the dative or accusative case.

Overall, I am a huge fan and I would love to read this book with a group in the future. It was freeing to understand many of these women contextually and truthfully for the first time.

Hope Griffin says

Excellent book. I had never noticed Huldah or the significance of her story until I read this. It was empowering and a wonderful redemption of these stories. Thankful for the authors who told them.

Read the rest of my review here <http://www.hopengriffin.com/vindicati...>

Doug Hibbard says

Well, if *Vindicting the Vixens* doesn't catch your attention as a book title, I'm not sure what would. This volume, edited by Sandra L. Glahn (PhD), provides a look at some of the women of the Bible who are "Sexualized, Vilified, and Marginalized." As is frequently the case, I was sent a copy of this book in exchange for my review.

Let's take this a stage at a time. First stage: book setup. This is primarily an academic Biblical Studies book. Be prepared to see discussions of Greek and Hebrew words, as appropriate. You'll also need a handle on the general flow of Biblical narrative, a willingness to look around at history, and the other tools of someone who is truly studying the text. This is no one-day read. It's a serious study of women in the Bible, specifically those who either faced sexual violence or who have been considered sexually 'wrong' across

years of study.

A quick note: this book is timely, not opportunistic. The length of time to plan, assign, develop, and publish a multi-author academic book means Kregel Academic had this in the works before the current emphasis on sexual assaults. It's a good book to speak on the issue, so it's quite timely.

Second stage of book examination: authors. The contributors are graduate scholars in Biblical Studies with about half having completed doctoral studies and several others in process. All have worked in ministry and Biblical academics, and appear to reflect choices that will take the Biblical text seriously. That is, rather than coming to this subject in the interest of undermining the Bible to prove a point, instead these contributors are seeking to set right the understanding of the Bible.

Third, content. There's nothing actually earth-shattering here, once you read it a second time. The first time, it's all "Wait, that's not what my preacher said..." (or worse, "That's not what I said in a sermon!") so the book must be wrong. But then, as you read through it again, there's the realization that much of our understanding is traditionally informed. That is, we tend to hear from source A, who learned from Source B, and back it goes. And if somewhere up that line, an assumption was made and left unquestioned, it was then passed forward until the sermon you heard last week never questioned the idea.

Vindicating the Vixens questions some of those ideas. Glahn's contributors take a look at women from Eve to Junia, and raise some very good points. Certainly some of the conclusions could be challenged, and it would be an interesting read to see the interplay. But I like the fresh look.

A good example is the examination of Rahab. I have seen previous attempts to make Rahab more righteous by going toward "innkeeper" for her profession. However, here we see her portrayed as the text gives it: she's an outsider, a Canaanite, and likely a woman who rents not only rooms. Yet the redemption that God brings is amazing...and the Israelite spies aren't exactly paragons of virtue. Throughout, Eva Bleeker keeps the reader going back to the text and dealing with the woman, Rahab, and what she means in the story, how she is valuable.

In all, I like this book. It's timely, it stirs up questions that need to be answered, and it challenges some of the assumptions that we've brought through previous eras into our understanding of Scripture.

Andrew Johnson says

This book was so impactful. I wanted to take to digest and then review it. To begin with, I have always been drawn to the women in the Bible. I always found it fascinating that such an old book had women throughout. However, there were some characters and stories that I always struggled with. At the top of that list was the story of Tamar. It always seemed to me to be out of place and I never quite understood it. Well this book drastically changed what I thought about Tamar and left me in tears. I was thankful to see how God used Tamar and why she was one of the few women mentioned in Jesus's genealogy. This was not only a story that was expanded. There were others like Mary Magdalene, the woman at the well, Deborah etc. I learned something from just about every chapter. In the end, I gained a more appreciation for women and how God uses them.

JoAnna says

This book examines the stories of women in the Bible and actually unpacks the history, culture, and context of each of the accounts. I found this book to be fascinating, instructive, and deeply encouraging. I've struggled to read the Bible lately, discouraged by the confusing, dark, and despair-ridden stories about women. This book has given me fresh hope that God loves women, he cares about the details of their lives, and patriarchy is not his dream for humanity. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the Bible.

James says

One of the challenges for many readers of the Bible is that it was produced with an Ancient patriarchal culture, so therefore it tends to tell most of it's stories of men or from men's perspectives. And even when the stories of women are told, their stories have often been obscured, and skewed from centuries of androcentric readings. So, we are told: Eve caused the fall, Sarah's use and rejection of Hagar is blamed for the tension in the Middle East, and we wonder just what did Ruth uncover on the threshing room floor?

In *Vindicating the Vixens: Revisiting Sexualized, Vilified and Marginalized Women of the Bible*, Sandra Glahn has compiled essays from seventeen evangelicals from varying church traditions reexamining notable women of the Bible who have oft been maligned by biblical interpretation. Kregel Academic, the publisher tends to be on the conservative end of biblical scholarship. While these essays don't speak in one voice (Glahn notes in her preface that contributors disagree on various issues including women's preaching), they are each committed to hearing the voice of God in the marginalized, and the dialogue is respectful (while there are complementarian's in the mix, these are soft complementarians that accept and value women's scholarship and theological contributions). Proceeds from this book were donated to International Justice Mission.

The book is divided into three sections with an introductory essay on the "Hermeneutics of Her" by Henry Rouse. Rouse sets the table with six interpretative questions which give us a framework for wrestling through difficult biblical texts: (1) what does the text actually say? (2) What do I observe in and about the text? (3) What did the text mean to the original audience? (4) What was the point? (5) What truths in the text are timelessly relevant? (6) How does the parts fit the whole? (23-26). Rouse also notes the value of reexamining our interpretation of women in the text, because though we have a Great Tradition of two thousand years of biblical interpretation, that tradition is fallible. Reexamining passages with new eyes will either confirm of convictions or allow us to see with new eyes. This is a good framing essay, and obviously with far reaching implications beyond the 'women in the Bible.'

Section 1 examines the women in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus. Carolyn Custis James writes an essay on Tamar, Eva Bleeker explores the Rahab story, Marnie Legaspi describes the 'so-called' scandal of Ruth, and Sarah Bowler describes the victimhood of Bathsheba by David (and makes some pretty incisive observations about their significance for the way power dynamics often play out in our own age (see #metoo if you don't know what I'm talking about). Timothy Ralston closes out this section with an impassioned essay for protestant evangelicals to recover the prominence of the Virgin Mary which the Scripture tells us about (the 4th most described figure in the New Testament).

Section II gives a survey of the sexualized and vilified and marginalized women of the Bible. Glenn Krieder defends Eve from the charge of being the ‘Mother of all seducers’ (rather, both men and women share in culpability for human sinfulness). Eugene Merrill and Tony Maalouf explore the characters of Sarah and Hagar, respectfully. Ron Pierce dismantles the charge that Deborah was only called by God because ‘the men wouldn’t stand up (the narrative praises and affirms Deborah, Barak, and Jael). Christa McKirkland holds up the example of the prophet Hulda, and Sharifa Stevens describes how the virtue of courage is manifest in Queen Vashti’s refusal to the King Ahasuerus.

Finally Section III explores some new Testament images of women: The Samaritan Woman at the Well (Lynn Cohick), Mary Magdalene (Karla Zazueta) and Junia (Amy Peeler). Each of the essays in this section explore how the interpretive tradition maligned and distorted the biblical image of these women.

This is a really solid collection of essays, and not overly technical. It engages the Bible, the theological tradition and current scholarship. I appreciated the honest, yet reverent wrestling with difficult passages and the ways each author labored to recover a portrait of women in the Bible and restore it. This is really solid. I give this five stars. ★★★★★

Notice of material connection: I received a copy of this book from Kregel Academic in exchange for my honest review.

Renee Janowski says

Wow! *Vindicting the Vixens* is a much needed academic and theological work on man over-looked and historically vilified women of the Bible. Rather than an overview of the importance of women in the church or their lack of status, Glahn gathered together a diverse team of scholars to write this incredible theology revisiting many of the “vixens” that church history and folk theology have ignored or degraded. I loved the wealth of knowledge and scholarship, as well as all of the different voices. Some of my favorite articles were on Eve, Deborah, and the long-forgotten Huldah. A timely work that should be read by anyone who wants a better understand of God’s love and use of women in the Biblical narrative.

Hannah Reeves says

These essays were fascinating (a few less interesting and harder to understand), scholarly but not too difficult to understand. If you grew up in church this is a great book to read the scripture afresh without your Sunday School teacher’s voice in your head. It was fascinating to realize how many men of the Bible sinned greatly but we often place that sin on the woman involved. It was wonderful learning the history and customs of the time of each story. My favorite essays were Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, Sarah, Hagar, Vashti, and the Woman at the Well.

Lindsay Kennedy says

It’s sadly all too common to see the women of the Bible given a bad rap in sermons and popular Christian books. Often, the women of Jesus’ genealogy are portrayed as “bad girls” who are included as examples of God’s scandalous grace towards sinners. But are these assumptions correct? Do our modern Western

assumptions lead us to misunderstand the Biblical texts? Do we owe these women an apology? VVindicating the Vixens attempts to reexamine the often misunderstood women of the Bible. To achieve this end, Sandra Glahn has gathered a diverse range of female and male scholars from different nationalities, ethnicities, traditions, and even perspectives on women in ministry, who all nonetheless agree we must “revisit what the Scriptures say about some Bible women we have sexualized, vilified, and/or marginalized” (p16).

Read full review here:

<http://mydigitalseminary.com/vindicat...>

Sandra Glahn says

Huh. I somehow stumbled across my very own book here on Goodreads. Well, obviously FIVE STARS, because mine.*

*not even close to being an unbiased or objective review, but it's for a good cause

News

1. I mean that. All 14 of the contributors agreed: All our profits benefit International Justice Mission www.ijm.org
2. It's a finalist in the non-fiction religion category in the Foreword INDIE Awards. We'll find out in June. <https://www.forewordreviews.com/award...>
3. Want to read an interview? <https://www.fathommag.com/stories/vin...>
4. Want to read an excerpt of a chapter? <https://www.fathommag.com/stories/wha...>
5. *Publishers Weekly* review: <https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-...>

Julius McCarter says

Vindicating the Vixens Revisiting sexualized, vilified, and marginalized women of the Bible is a collection of essays, edited by Sandra Glahn, that explores the various ways in which our Western readings of the biblical text have actually forced us into false readings.

For example, the woman Jesus met at the well in Samaria had five husbands, true enough (see John 4). But why do most people assume that means she was faithless and immoral? Women in her time and place did not divorce husbands five times. The man with the most recorded divorces had only three. If a woman did initiate legal proceedings, she had to do so through a male. Women could not simply walk into a court of law and speak on their own behalf. So, it's unlikely that "the Samaritan woman" had divorced five husbands.

Additionally, when we read that this woman's current man was not her own, we assume she was living with some guy. Because that's what it would mean in the West. But in her world, it is far more likely that she had to share a husband in a polygamous relationship in order to eat.

Put these factors together, and you realize this person was probably not a beautiful young woman with loose

morals. More likely, she was an older woman who had endured the death of a husband several times (war was the number one cause of death for men), been dumped a time or two, and consequently having to share a husband in order to survive. Additionally, the text says she was waiting for, looking with hope for, the Jewish Messiah (4.25).

So we have, probably wrongly, assumed this woman was guilty of sexual promiscuity, and that Jesus was confronting her about her sin. More likely, Jesus was bringing up her greatest point of pain before revealing to her that he is the very Messiah for whom she has been waiting. For everyone else in Jesus' world, the Lord seems to subtly veil who he is. But with this broken woman hanging on to hope, he comes right out with it.

This woman is one of many whom the contributors to *Vindicating the Vixens* reconsider in light of what we know about cultural backgrounds, not only from new data but also from having more varied "eyes on the text".

In *Vindicating the Vixens*, a host of biblical scholars and theologians reexamine the narratives of Eve, Hagar, Sarah, Tamar, Rahab, Deborah, Ruth, Huldah, Bathsheba, Vashti, Mary Magdalene, The Samaritan Woman, Junia, and even the Virgin Mary --whom Protestants sadly marginalize.

All that work makes *Vindicating the Vixens* a much-needed guide for reading the Bible with faithfulness. It is a must-have for those who care about what the Bible really says.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for my honest review here.
