

Warrior of Eden

*How Curiosity and Questions
Lead to Understanding God's
Call for Women*

Beth Guckenberger



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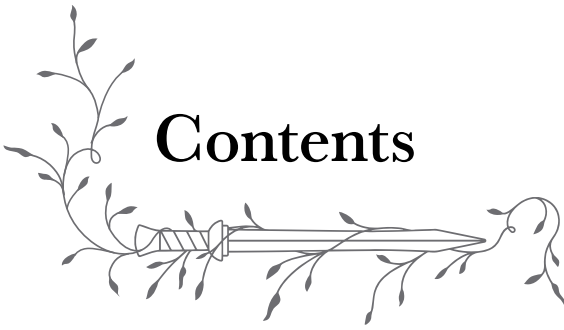
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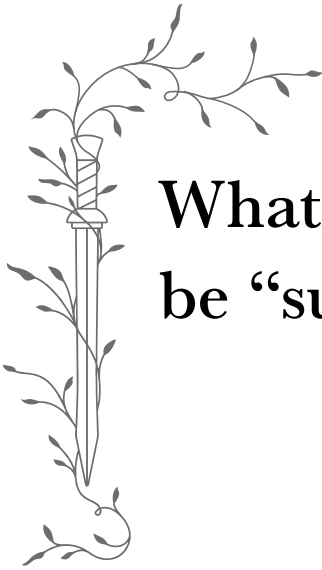
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What does it mean to be “suitable” anyway?

“Are you ready?” my dad whispered, squeezing my hand tucked under his arm. Dressed in white, I waited anxiously alongside him on the other side of the double-closed doors. The song that had accompanied the bridesmaids as they walked down the aisle stopped, and I heard the booming voice of our pastor.

“It is not good for man to be alone, so God created a helper suitable for him.”

At that pronouncement, the doors swung open and there I stood. The *helper*. The bridal song played, and Dad and I marched toward my groom. While I had no idea what a helper was, I was absolutely in favor of a God who understood we were meant to be together.



I’ll be honest with you: writing this project was a struggle. I knew what I wanted to say, I knew how I wanted it to sound, but it wasn’t *flowing*. Ninety days before the manuscript was due, I was in a retreat setting with prayer teams made available for specific requests or just for listening. I approached two women and said rather directly, “I am working on a book about women, and I want it to pour out of me. I want to ask for an overflowing cup of creativity and clarity ...” I then promptly closed my eyes, put out my hands, and as efficiently as I could,

prepared to “hurry up and receive.” I felt like I had just invited Jesus to join one of the to-do lists that my colleague and I regularly share on a productivity app. Here’s the task, and I want Him to help me do it with ease and excellence.

The women started to pray, and it was meaningful and sincere. They prayed over my mind, relationships, and research. I was encouraged and hopeful, and then, *bam*. The Holy Spirit matched my directness. *I am not your employer, your colleague, or your genie. I am your Father. You don’t work for Me, you abide in Me. This isn’t something to accomplish but rather a testimony to share. Let’s have a conversation about creation and women, and you share with others where you’ve grown and been wrong and what you’ve learned.*

Right from the start, I want to be clear about what this is not. It is not a manifesto on how women are better than men. It’s not an attempt to be controversial, or relevant. This work is the opposite of relevant, meaning recent; it’s actually closer to ancient.

I am hoping to appeal not to your intellect, or your political persuasions, but to your intuition. Regardless of your gender, I have a feeling what I will share you’ve kind of always known, even if you didn’t have words for it. During my experience these last couple of years working on this manuscript, when people asked what I was writing and I told them the thesis, they nodded with understanding. I didn’t so much have to teach them anything as give words to, or reveal, what they already suspected. I hope it feels like I am handing you a shoe that fits perfectly and once you put it on, you’ll never want to take it off.

This book records my questions and stories. It contains facts, insights I’ve learned from others, a bunch of experiences, and an honest grappling with this topic. I haven’t wrestled with whether God’s Word is truth, but with how this truth impacts my way of being. For decades I had been questioning *What is the role of a woman?* but God wants to *love* us far more than He wants to *use* us. This isn’t a discussion about roles; it’s a conversation about design. We marvel at His design in creation, how the solar system works, or the ecosystem, or the central nervous system ... He is perfect and does everything with purpose, so what is the purpose of uniquely making a man and a woman who correspond to each other? And my

questions are just getting started. Can I correspond to my friends? Can I “help” my children? My coworkers? My brother? My pastor? Join me in asking good questions and engaging those around you in meaningful conversation. I pray this journey feels gentle, fierce, winsome, and serious.



Before modern-day Christianity, before the many lessons we’ll learn about church history, before patriarchal societies and your premarital counseling, before X (Twitter) and #Metoo and feminism, there was Genesis and the creation account. We will start our conversation there because *He* starts the conversation there.

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said,
“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.
(Genesis 2:18–25)

Genesis 2:18 is the first time we see the word *ezer* used in the Bible. We'll end up reading it another twenty times in the Old Testament, but let's start here. "It's not good for man to be alone, so God made a helper (*ezer*) suitable (*kenegdo*) for him."

English Bibles translate *ezer* as "helper" and *kenegdo* as "suitable" or, in older translations, "meet," which helps us understand where we get *helpmeet* or, eventually, *helpmate*. *Kenegdo* is best understood as "an opposite," "counterpart," or "alongside." It implies that on their own, both men and women were lacking, but together they perfectly complemented each other. *Helpmate* today is seen as a pejorative term, and many modern women cringe at its use, but English doesn't do justice to the idea or picture of *ezer kenegdo*. *Ezer* ("helper") is a term of strength, and we'll read how God uses it to describe Himself when He comes to the rescue of His people.

The translation of the term *helpmate* led to interpretations of the woman's responsibility to assist the man in whatever he undertook—to "help" him on his mission in life—and over time, the belief that God gave the most important roles to men and supporting responsibilities to women. It facilitated a belief system that women were considered second-class citizens in the home and church, even when evidence, history, and calling showed otherwise.

The world—with few exceptions—practiced this idea of male dominance in the cultural construct of patriarchy (more on that next chapter). It meant for thousands of years, women had no rights to own property, speak on their own behalf, or have agency over their lives and choices. It doesn't make sense that the Church would adopt this so completely and not ask itself: Would our good God really condone a practice that considers something made in His own image as unworthy or weak or incomplete?

Kenegdo ("suitable") indicates the *ezer* is the man's match—literally "as in front of him, or corresponding to him." Theologian Victor Hamilton put it: "[*Kenegdo*]

suggests that what God creates for Adam will correspond to him. Thus the new creation will be neither a superior nor an inferior, but an equal. The creation of this helper will form one-half of a polarity and will be to man as the South Pole is to the North Pole."¹ We are matched, corresponding, and need one another to paint a more complete picture of this mysterious and glorious creation.

Many times, Hebrew words paint a word picture, and when explaining this concept, rabbis talk about two planks. Picture them propped up against each other, forming a triangle. If one moves, the other plank falls over because the first plank is opposing it or holding it up. This is the picture of *suitable*. It's an intelligent design, with us each bearing a semblance of our Creator.

The first time my heart wrapped itself around this truth, I felt a profound sense of relief. Not because I was in a male-dominated marriage, or church, or social setting; it actually had nothing to do with the men in my life and how they had or hadn't treated me. (I have some great men around me.) I was relieved because I wanted to believe God liked us as much as it seemed He did men and we had an important, corresponding role to play in this earthly existence, that our plank was essential.

**I was relieved because I wanted
to believe God liked women as
much as it seemed He did men.**

God made us with purpose, and we are not from the leftover. Our very sense of being and calling comes from the word He uses to describe us: *ezer*. So, in my everyday working-mothering-friending-wifeing-living-and-loving life, what does that mean; what are the implications of being made a suitable helper?

If supporting one another was always God's plan, where did it go wrong?

Questions to Consider

Take a moment and pray about *suitable* and *helper*. As separate ideas, what do they mean to you? How about them together?

What did you grow up thinking was the role of women?

Who has influenced how you think about women?

When has God offered you help you couldn't give yourself?

Journal

What do you wish you had understood about *suitable* before now?

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