

The
Power of
Being
a
Woman

michelle mckinney hammond



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To my mother,
Norma McKinney,
who taught me, by example, to rejoice in being a woman.
Not only did you fill my life with all the wonders of
femininity, but you gave me the precious gift
of sharing my life with many mothers.

The women in my family are
each extraordinary in their own right.
They have reflected the beauty, the grace,
and the triumph of the feminine spirit to me,
a little girl who watched them all in wonder.
I pray that I have become
a composite of the best parts of them all.

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I love you all.

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You are such a great sister. I'm so proud of the wife and mother you are.
I love you so much!

Sheila—keep me straight, girl.
Sophia—keep fussing. Ha ha!
Stacey—keep telling me the truth.
Nana—keep me focused.
Amanda—keep being a calming force.
Charlotte, Karen, Michelle, Brenda, Theresa—
keep supporting me and asking the hard questions.
Keep the laughter coming.
What women!
You make me celebrate sisterhood all the more!

Jeff Morrow, Bill Trammell, Derek Tripplett, Kevin Whalum, Dwayne Bryant, and Pastor Ghandi—
my precious buds, protectors and confidants.
What can I say? Thanks for affirming that being a for-real woman is a good thing!

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A Note from the Author

Relationships between men and women—both platonic and romantic—are in trouble. It is as if all the actors in the play of love have forgotten their lines and staging directions. What was supposed to be a classic romance has turned into a tragedy with all of the players doing nothing more than stepping on one another's toes and limping offstage to their respective dressing rooms. The audience is left confused, while the actors themselves are befuddled as to what really happened.

The popular theater line, “There are no small parts, only small actors,” seems appropriate here. Men and women are different and were created so deliberately by God. Yet present-day moral issues and the fight for equal rights have left most men and women confused about who they are, where they fit, and what they mean to one another. Women have felt devalued and powerless. This causes them to embrace the modern-day opinion that they must operate by male standards in order to gain respect in the world. But the real tragedy is that the transition back to being a soft woman after leaving the hardness of the boardroom becomes

more and more difficult. It is safe to say many have lost their way back to femininity.

Oh, the backlash this creates in male/female relationships! The anxiety it causes in the spirits of women who can't quite put their finger on what is wrong! It's truly overwhelming. *The Power of Being a Woman* is a journey back to the basics to reclaim the pieces of self that countless women have lost in the struggle to validate their own sense of worth.

Through biblical insights in light of modern-day illustrations, God's original design for woman will be explored, thus supplying a map "back to the garden," so to speak. It is my prayer that this book will liberate, heal, and release women to celebrate who they were created to be and discover the true source of their value and power.

ONE

Woman to Woman

Somewhere between her home
and a placard demanding equal rights
she got lost
wandering past the garden
following where the serpent pointed
she turned left instead of right
and got off track...
and though the scenery looked vaguely familiar
a frown of consternation
began to crease her brow
as she realized
it was taking her
far too long
to reach her desired destination
still she determined to go
yet another mile
before turning off her chosen path
perhaps she was being too anxious...
and as she wandered
looking for a marker
to get her bearings
man wondered where she'd gone
as she ventured too far to hear
his need for her
or her children crying
and they too lost their way
trying to follow her
misled by traces of her perfume in the air
the memory of a gentle touch
an encouraging word...
a piece of fabric soft to the skin

and sage advice
 were found along the path
now littered with confusion
 and distrust...
and as man's shoulders began to slope in resignation
 weakening his arms
 causing him to abdicate his seat as protector
and her children began to find their own way
 allowing new friends of rebellion
 to fill the space she left behind
 a cry rang out...
it filled the earth
 it reached the skies
 and rang throughout the heavens
"Woman, where art thou?"
 "Woman, where art thou?"
"Woman, where art thou?"
it echoed off the mountaintops
and stretched across the plains
 it descended throughout the valleys
 this plaintive cry
 mourning the absence
 of this precious lost treasure
and she hearing the cry
 came to a halt
 not quite sure of where she stood
unable to give her location
 she turned looking for her own
 footprints in the sand
 only to find shallow remembrances
 of where she had been

and somewhere between her struggle to recall her true identity
and the place of her restoration
she saw visions of a man with sad eyes
longing for her love
praying for her return
and children
with their arms outstretched
crying for her wisdom to save them
but she had grown weary from the journey...
sadness rooting her to the spot
depression bowing her
into herself
she succumbed to her fatigue
sinking into a deep and fitful sleep...
and in the distance
the ring of hammers
began hesitantly
building
and building again
until it reverberated
through the land...
its sharp rhythm piercing the hearts of men
awakening sleeping women
and frustrated children
as wanted signs were posted
by determined hands
in search of the vanishing woman...



Ladies, can we talk? Talk about why women are frustrated and men are confused? Talk about where we lost our way and what that really means? Talk about where all the good men have gone and why so many are wandering? Let's talk about the fine print we've neglected to read and how much that oversight has cost us. About the power that we've thrown to the wind. About what's happening to our relationships. Our children. Our hearts. Our bodies. Our souls. Let's talk about how the art of being a woman has become a near-extinct and priceless treasure. And how those who stumble across it treat it as an antique they don't know the value of—tossing it aside, preferring the newer, more streamlined, cheaper model of so-called liberation. Funny how we never realize the value of Grandma's brass bed until we get older and find out how much others were willing to pay for what we so easily discarded.

As creation longs for the original plan of peaceful coexistence, the groans of weary women have come before the throne of God. The vicious cycle of men abdicating, women rising up, men fleeing, and women becoming embittered, hardened, and hopeless has tainted society and caused wonderment in the heavens. The lines are invisibly drawn, silently proclaiming war.

Romance lies trampled underfoot and understanding lies shattered beneath hurled insults and accusations.

Ladies, can we talk? I mean talk without pretense, posturing, or qualifying. After all, real life is not a talk show. I often wonder if anyone is really tuned in to real life. I wonder if anyone is really seeing what we're doing to one another. How we're robbing one another. Hurting one another. Killing one another. The golden rule of "love your neighbor as you love yourself" has been broken, snapped over the knees of those determined to seize what they want in blind frustration with total disregard for the whole picture. Can we talk about getting off the merry-go-round? Can we talk woman-to-woman about how we've "lost it" and how to get "it" back?

Can we talk about calling a truce with one another—with our men—and finding ourselves again? Let's talk about acknowledging and learning to celebrate this simple fact—men and women are different. I long for all women to sink back into the glorious place of truly being women in the same way I long for a hot bath when all of my muscles are screaming. The warmth of the water closes over my limbs like a liquid blanket, wrapping itself around me, becoming intimate with every part of me. I do not recoil from this. Rather, I embrace it because it sets me free from pain, free from the struggle I've endured all day long. It defies my further efforts to stay afloat all by myself in the world. It gently invites me to let go. Let go of all I think I should be. Let go of the demands of others. Let go and just be. Just be a woman. Naked and unashamed. Warm and soft. Content in my liquid cocoon. Relaxed and unthreatened. Just a woman—lost in the oasis of being me. Ladies, can we talk—I mean *really* talk—about where we went wrong? Can we talk without shouting?

“I am woman, hear me roar...” Well, I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to roar or go to war! I believe I can speak in a normal tone and still be heard. That I can stand perfectly still and manage to get things done. That I can influence rather than provoke, inspire rather than challenge. That I can affect a nation from my home. That I can move mountains with my faith. Why? Because God said so! Yes, girlfriend, it’s time to get this thing right, not just for the sake of your own joy level but also for the peaceful state of that which emanates from your personal kingdom, your home, your job, your church, your community, your city, your state, your nation. Your stake in eternity. Your investment in God’s economy. You see, for every action you can expect a reaction, like a pebble tossed in a pond that causes ripples far beyond you. So pull up a chair and sit down, honeychile. It’s time to talk—woman-to-woman.



Dear Heavenly Father, there are so many voices with various expectations filling my world. Sometimes I find myself confused and even frustrated in my search to establish who I really am. Help me to remember that You hold the key to my true identity. You created me to be a valuable addition to mankind and a living expression and example of Your heart. Blot out the lies the enemy tries to plant in my soul to devalue me. As I cling to the truth from Your Word that tells me I am “fearfully and wonderfully made,” a woman on purpose, let the revelation of what that truly means saturate my being, releasing me to celebrate my womanhood and to rejoice in the gift I am to the world. Help me to resonate with

a sense of divine purpose. Grant me the confidence to walk in Your original design for my life. Restore to me the gift of my femininity and help me to harbor it as a treasure in my heart. As I release it like a heady perfume from the inner sanctum of my spirit, use it to heal others around me as I touch them with my special brand of softness. And I will always be mindful to give the glory back to You as You exhibit Your love through my arms to liberate others to be all You created them to be. In Jesus' name. Amen.