

# E-QUALITY



A PUBLICATION OF CHRISTIANS FOR BIBLICAL EQUALITY  
ISSN 1551 - 9325

## **A REVIEW OF *GOD IN HER MIDST: PREACHING HEALING TO WOUNDED WOMEN***

By Allison Young

A woman who has been sexually abused feels as though she is impure or sinful. A woman who has experienced domestic abuse is taught that she must return to and submit to her husband. A woman is told that her body has been a source of “stumbling” for men in the church. A woman who struggles with an eating disorder is looked at shamefully because of her “sin.”



### ***God in Her Midst: Preaching Healing to Wounded Women***

By Elaine Flake

Your Price: \$12.00

**Sale Price: \$8.00**

At times, the church, which is supposed to be a place of healing, has been a place of pain. Christians, who are supposed to be a source of love, have been a source of judgment. The Bible, which contains God’s word of hope and healing, has been misused to maintain women in a place of vulnerability. That which was intended for good has been used to bring harm. Elaine Flake, being sympathetic to the situation of those who have experienced pain and wounding, shares in *God in Her Midst* a biblical message that affirms the experiences and dignity of women who have been hurt. The powerful biblical examples she shares reveal the healing and liberating message of the Bible.

### **Affirmation for the African American Woman**

Elaine Flake’s hope for the church is that it would be a source of healing for all people. Flake preaches from a theological perspective that speaks to the concerns of women, particularly African American women. She interprets Scripture to bring healing and affirmation to those who are wounded. *God in Her Midst* begins with a discussion of the theological framework from which she works, while the majority of the pages consist of

Flake’s own sermons intended to bring healing and to uplift African American women and, indeed, any woman who has experienced pain or wounding.

In order to be a source of healing for African American women, the church must affirm their experience, which, Flake notes, is one that involves racism, sexism, and classism, as well as physical and sexual violence. Biblical interpretation and preaching must be sensitive to their circumstances and stories, as well as to the experiences of all people who have lived through or with pain. Flake states that it is necessary to discard understandings that are oppressive or hurtful to already wounded people. Rather, the church must be a place that affirms women and their experiences, while serving as a source of healing, encouragement, empowerment, and liberation. In order to illustrate how Scripture affirms women,

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Flake highlights the stories of many biblical women, often misunderstood by traditional interpretations, in a way that is sensitive and empathetic to their experiences. These biblical women prove to be a source of encouragement for hurting women.

### **Biblical Examples: Stories of Hope and Despair**

One woman in particular with whom African American women can identify, Flake notes, is the woman with the flow of blood (Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48). Besides physical ailments, her infirmity caused her to be considered “unclean” by the standards of Jewish law, which resulted in isolation from society, rejection, and poverty for the twelve years she suffered this condition. She represents those who have been marginalized, excluded, segregated, or degraded. In an act of desperation, she broke the religious law and defied what was considered appropriate female behavior at that time in order to move through the crowd and touch the hem of Jesus’ garment. In so doing, she was healed and received affirmation from Jesus.

Women who have been victimized by abuse, rape, harassment, or other forms of objectification, and those who carry shame, guilt, or suffer in silence from an action committed against them may find solidarity with Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1-20). Tamar was a virgin who was raped by her brother Amnon, who then cast her away after the violation in an attempt to implicate her as the seducer. While deeply grieved, Tamar encountered her brother Absalom, who told her to remain silent about the rape and not take it to heart in order that peace might remain within the family. As Flake notes, this is not an uncommon response given to victims today. Tamar went on to live in Absalom’s house where she remained in her silence, but those who have experienced shame and those who have been victims do not need to remain in that place of silence and unspoken shame. God can heal the wounds of shame, so that women may live in their God-given reality as women who are fearfully and wonderfully made.

**Her story is a reminder not to become prisoner to past hurts and their damaging effects on relationships, but to move forward to the freedom, healing, and new life which God is offering.**

God wills that women be whole and emotionally healthy people. Unhealthy relationships can wound and deter women from reaching their God-given potential. Rather than dwelling in a place of bitterness or woundedness, God has offered healing and abundant life. Lot’s wife, possibly due to anger with Lot who had offered their daughters to be raped by a violent mob in order to protect his guests, hesitated when fleeing the city of Sodom (Genesis 19). Rather than moving forward, she looked back. As a result, she turned into a pillar of salt, permanently separating her from her family. Her story is a reminder not to become prisoner to past hurts and their damaging effects on relationships, but to move forward to the freedom, healing, and new life which God is offering.

### **A “Contradiction of Context”**

In what Flake calls a “contradiction of context,” many women have been wounded in the very places in which they would expect to receive healing, in the church and in the home. Women who have been divinely gifted have been hindered from reaching their full potentials because of woundedness, discouragement, opposition, and fear.

Yet God has provided the strength to overcome. The Daughters of Zephehad challenged the law which did not grant inheritances to women, but to the nearest male relative, by requesting their deserved inheritance of their father’s land: a request which God honored (Numbers 27:1-7). They are women who stood up against opposition and took hold of that to which they were entitled. God has enabled women to

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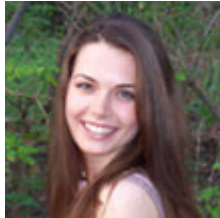
**Women who have been divinely gifted have been hindered from reaching their full potentials because of woundedness, discouragement, opposition, and fear. Yet God has provided the strength to overcome.**

move out of their situations of woundedness to embrace the healing, power, and renewal offered through Jesus Christ, through whom we have been freed to become the women God created us to be.

Women who have been divinely gifted have been hindered from reaching their full potentials because of woundedness, discouragement, opposition, and fear. Yet God has provided the strength to overcome.

#### **A Tool for Transformation and Renewal**

*God in Her Midst* is a powerful and creative book for both women and men, African American and otherwise. Flake raises a needed awareness of the experience of pain and woundedness among women. Her sermons, in a voice of clarity, empathy, and conviction, affirm women's experiences and encourage all of us to take hold of the transformed and renewed life promised through Jesus Christ, our true healer, comforter, and source of strength.



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