

## Women's Involvement in Ministry: A Legacy for Contextual Mission Work in Africa

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**Abstract:** *The Church needs to work together in love taking various cultures as one amid temptation. For division caused by tribal differences can only make the Church to become ineffective. The Church can only be efficient if women and men are considered as one indivisible entity to bring God's glory on earth. The message of the Bible is addressed to all men and women. One can note that God's revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. This study reveals that God can use everyone who avails him or herself for God's service, and women can also be efficient in their Mandate involvement in the mission of God in the Cultural Context of Africa.*

**Keywords:** *Women, Involvement, Mission, Legacy, Contextual and Africa.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Women's involvement in mission in Africa is an endeavor whose greater effectiveness depends on some critical factors, that will make them succeed. One of such factors is cultural orientation in Africa to give the freedom to do a wholistic mission work. The cultural relevance of the missionary life and message is the bedrock of success in the mission enterprise. Thus, efficiency is the core mandate of women's ministry in Africa. The cultural orientations in Africa defined some peculiar conditions for the ministry of women, since they are regarded as second-class citizens. It poses some barriers to women's ministry effectiveness, but it also affords important bridges to it. Thus, this article argues that as important as the role of women is in ministry in Africa, its success depends on their ability to avoid the barriers posed by the culture of Africa as well as their aptitude in accessing the bridges provided by the same culture and to also be involved doing the right things.

This articles also helps in explaining the nature of Mandate mission, showing the cultural dynamics involvement and the value of the efficiency of the Mandate in the participation of women in mission in Africa as one also considers the work of Susanna Samuel Wesley single handily raised her children strictly. (Encyclopedia 2015:8)“At the age of one year, they were instructed to cry softly when they had to cry. She took responsibility for their early education, and her daughters were treated as the educational equals of her sons. She regimented her spiritual activities and expected her children to do accordingly. She assigned a day of the week when she would take time to provide personalized scriptural and moral instruction to her children. Each child was assigned a day; John Wesley's day was number fifteen (15), and his day was Thursday.”

The significance of women in Christian ministry, particularly in mission, cannot be overemphasized. Women have played tremendous roles in the expansion of the gospel.

In biblical accounts, especially the New Testament, women such as Martha and Mary her sister (Luke 10:38-42), Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna (Luke 8:2-3) all contributed to the ministry of Jesus. Also, women like Mary the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16:11-15), Priscilla (Acts 18:1-4, 18-28), and the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8-9) became known in the early Church. Likewise, in the history of mission, women are not left out. This trend has continued in contemporary times where women have continued to show great zeal in their involvement in mission everywhere globally, including Africa. They are involved in different aspects of mission, including Mandate mission.

## 2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

Some Church denominations in Africa don't accept women ordination into priesthood order in the church minister. For instance, Anglican Church, Evangelical Church of Winning All (ECWA) and Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) to mention just a few don't, allowed women to be ordain in the Church in Nigeria. They are restricted to preaching, teaching and some leadership roles in the Church, but not to be ordained and officiate service of holy communion to the congregation.

## 3. CLARIFICATIONS ON CHRISTIAN WOMEN IN MINISTRY IN THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF AFRICA

Christian mission is following Christ's example and calling to share the gospel with the lost world through God's wisdom and strength. A woman in the other hand is a female gender made in the image of God from creation to glorify God on earth. A Christian mission is an organized effort to spread Christianity to new converts. Mission involves sending individuals and groups, called missionaries, across boundaries of the world internally within specific geographical setting or externally outside one's residential boundary or catchment are to carry on evangelism or other activities, such as educational or hospital works which are geared towards spreading the gospel to bring the lost souls to the Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If a group of individuals are being sent to reach the lost, they are called mission team and they do mission trips. Christian mission has a few different kinds of mission trips: short-term, long-term, relational and those that simply help people in need. Be it as the case may be, the aim is to raise credible men and women for God for his service. Encyclopedia (2013:8) "We have people who have chosen to dedicate their whole lives to mission. Missionaries have the authority to preach the Christian faith and depending on situation they can sometimes administer sacraments."

Mission work is a special task given by God. The Lord Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is significant to all Christian mission. If the gospel of Jesus Christ will be preached, it has to be preached in the atmosphere of love as the Lord commanded the disciples to share the gospel, the message of His redemption. He said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

**In Christian mission all efforts are geared towards regularizing men to accept and reach others to accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ.** Our mission is proclaiming Christ as the only Savior from sin and the only way to abundant, eternal life. Whom do we tell? Jesus told Christians to reach out to "all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Jesus sends us to all people groups, to every ethnic culture without a gospel witness.

## 4. INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The concept of mission can be traceable from the Old Testament of the Bible. Beginning from the lost of Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter 3, when God said "Adam where are you". God brought hope to Adam but Adam refuses to accept this call of hope. The almighty God himself seeks for Adam when Adam got lost in the Garden of Eden. Adam knew that he was necked but have no other means of helping himself only to still partake in the provision of God using the leaves God created in the Garden to cover himself to show clearly here that Adam cannot do anything without God even if he rebelled against God. Today, people who stand against God and do not want to receive the gospel message of the great salvation still use God's resources to keep themselves going and God is in his mercy been providing for them by supplying their needs in His abounding riches in glory.

The Old Testament is full of story of God practically seeking for the lost. In various cases God sent deliverers such as judges, kings, prophets, and priests specifically to the people of Israel to redeem them but not all are willing to accept the liberation some even prefer to stay in darkness that they are used to it. In Africa today, our worldview is ancestral in nature in the sense that pragmatic development and scientific innovation is not much our problem since we only love to be hardworking in order to get food, clothing and shelter among other human needs to be sustained.

It is imperative to note that, when God first called Abraham, however, God told him that through his descendants "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). God told Israel in the

wilderness that its obedience to God's laws would be a testimony to the nations of God's greatness (Deut. 4:6-8). David urged, "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!" (1 Chron. 16:24; see Ps. 96:3). Psalm 22:27 looks forward to the day when all the nations turn to God and worship before him.

Mission in the Old Testament is never full of condemnation; it is full of love and concern for the lost. During the days of Isaiah one can see that he does not only see the negative aspect of the people. Isaiah sees Israel becoming "a light for the nations," so that "salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isa. 49:6). Micah foresaw a day when many nations desire to come to Zion to learn God's ways (Mic. 4:2). But the Israelites were not entirely open to the idea of God extending his grace to Gentiles, as the attitude of Jonah shows (Jonah 4). Mission, to them, generally meant just serving their own fellow Israelites.

## **5. INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The New Testament is the practical fulfillment of God's mission that has been exemplified in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the blessing of God truly floods out to the nations through the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself. The New Testament focuses on mission consistently includes all the world rather than only the community of God's people. Jesus has come to the earth and shown the practical example of how Christian mission should look like, He dedicated his life expressing or demonstrated practical example to the world to live for God. After He was done with His ministry on earth, He sent his disciples into the world just as he had been sent by God (John 17:18; 20:21). Thereafter, mission became associated primarily with those who are outside the church. Believers are the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16).

God is not only looking for special quarts of believers to do mission. In fact, he uses the mere things of this world to glorify Himself. God can use the uneducated persons to do Christian mission not doubt. After all, the disciples of Jesus were considered as uneducated people. It needs to quickly sound in human ears that, mission is now not primarily done by specialists, such as prophets and priests. While some are specially trained (Eph. 4:11-12), it is the joyful responsibility of all believers. As representatives of the Servant Lord, believers are called to a life of humble service (Mark 10:42-45; 2 Cor. 4:5; Phil. 2:5-11). Vocation is one of the key arenas in which Christians can be salt and light to the world (Matt. 5:13-16).

After the resurrection, the heart of Jesus' teaching on mission has been called the Great Commission, which in various forms appears at least four times in the Gospels (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:45-49; John 17:18; 20:21) and twice in Acts (1:8; 10:42). Here the focus is on proclaiming the gospel of salvation through Christ to the nations. Basically, the New Testament Mission is the task of evangelisms. It is imperative to understand that the word "evangelism" derives from the Greek word *euangelizō*, which means "to announce good news." Looking closely, one can see that the verb and the noun form of this word (usually translated "gospel") appear 125 times in the New Testament. Another word for evangelism, *kērussō* (translated "proclaim" or "preach"), appears 59 times.

So, mission and evangelism are not a new task in the Bible era till date. In all, one can assert that mission and evangelism involve verbal proclamation of the good news. While one may include other forms of service such as social concern under mission, one cannot equate such acts of service with evangelism. Social concern may aid in evangelism by cultivating receptivity to the gospel, but it is not itself evangelism.

In the New Testament, the Lord ended the Great Commission with the promise, ". . . and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." This promise is striking in its implications, for the eleven Apostles have for many centuries been in their graves. Yet the Lord promised His presence with those carrying out this commission on earth until the present order came to an end with His return. Clearly, He intended that His church on earth with her leaders continue to carry out these marching orders until the present age had ended. The Great Commission was not limited to just the Apostles, but was initially given to them as the highest leaders of the church of Christ which was to be established, and as the instruments through which divine revelation would come to the church.

In the New Testament, the following issues can be summarized as applied that the missionaries tended to go to nearer regions first, where possible, that the missionaries tended to go to places where there was most opportunity for their Gospel labors, often temporarily exiting places where there was strong

opposition, unless the Lord made it clear that they should stay (first missionary journey, contrast Corinth (Acts 18:9-11), that the missionaries generally went to the major metropolitan areas first. This is the general pattern seen in the Apostle Paul's labors, not that small towns and rural areas were not important (Acts 16:10-12; 19:1a; 8-10; 20), that, the missionaries generally went to and ministered to the people of God who were already in a given location first.

Although there were unique redemptive historical events taking place, and unique commands being obeyed, there are still general principles to be derived from the fact that Paul in his missionary labors went to the synagogues first and sought to minister to God's Old Covenant people, numbers of whom were probably true believers and simply needed to be better taught the New Covenant truths which they had not yet heard. In this activity we see the outworking of the command of Galatians 6:10.

## **6. EFFECTS OF CULTURE ON WOMEN MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA**

Mandate mission are a form of missionary endeavor characterized by a long-term commitment to serve God in a residential manner among a people group different from their native group. The nature of culture in Mandate mission involves residing and working in a cross-cultural context. One of the personal qualifications of a Mandate missionary is the readiness to commit to long-term ministry (Personal Qualifications of a Mandate Missionary). Mandate mission thus require a long-term commitment to global mission and cross-cultural ministry and may need to be engaging in various mission frontiers as well as global evangelism.

Women should be distinguished from other forms of ministry involvement such as short-term mission; mission support through the giving of financial and material resources, mission' mobilization, and prayer support for mission. Mandate mission, in contrast to the aforementioned forms of participation in mission, necessitate an extended stay on the mission field. Such is not the case, for example, short-term mission defined as "trips with a mission focus that range from one week to one or two years".

One typical and important feature of women ministry is that it brings the female Christians into severe intercultural relationships without any form of discrimination. As a matter of necessity, all Christians, men and women are equal before God.

This is because the Mandate missionary has to live and minister in the new context for an extended period of time. This intercultural encounter of Mandate missionaries requires them to acquire intercultural competency, which, according to Sherwood Lingenter, leads to "sufficient understanding of broad range of required cultural Behaviour, so that one is sensitized to intercultural tensions, aware of cultural expectations and practices and continually learning the finer points of communication in each area of cultural practice" (Lingenfelter 2002:494).

A minister should have the ability to communicate effectively across cultures. As an intercultural communicator, the Mandate missionary must be sensitive to the cultural hints of their host community. This is so because culture has been shown to have impact on communication (Moreau, Campbell, & Greener, 2014:52).

Whenever, one is communicating across culture, effectiveness depends on how well the speaker is able to adapt their message to the culture of the hearer, because the hearer interprets the message within the framework of their culture. Concerning women, it refers to the set of behavior expected of a woman in an African society. Unless one respects the social structure and behavioral pattern of women within a society, one's message will be misconstrued and one will not be able to communicate effectively.

### **Women Mandate Involvement Gender Stratification in African Culture**

A discussion of women in African culture, or in any other culture, derives from the idea of gender, which is an essential concept in cultural anthropology. Gender has to do with sex categorizations and all its implications within a society. It also has to do with the importance that a company attaches to being male or female. Gender can be distinguished from sex in that sex has to do with visible sex features that help to categorize people into male or female. In contrast, gender has to do with the connotation attached to such classifications. Thus, gender has been appropriately described as a key dimension of social identity.

What it means to be a man or a woman and the status and roles attributed to each gender is not necessarily because who you are or what you can do, rather it is based on what that culture perceives you should do and what you should not do. When and how you should do it as roles of men and women.

The status of women in Africa can be approached from two perspectives. First it can be viewed as a description of the position of women in relation to men. In this sense, it refers to the placement of women relative to men in African society; the position of women in society's hierarchy. This description can also be referred to as gender stratification. On the other hand, the status of women in Africa can be understood in terms of the responsibilities and privileges of women in Africa. This can also be referred to as their roles in the society.

Most writers will agree that women in Africa are placed at a disadvantaged position in relation to men. Being a patriarchal society, Africa places women below men. This superiority of men over women is manifested in different ways. Familusi (2019:300) sees the manifestation of this, for example, in the "preference for a male child over a female one. One of the respondents observes among the Wamba people in Nasarawa State of Nigeria that a greater joy accompanies the birth of a Girl than a Boy. A mother is scolded as being lazy when she gives birth to a male child, whereas she is showered with praise when the child is Female, what a contradiction".

Male dominance is also manifested in customs that are related to inheritance. Inheritance practices are not favorable to women in other cultures. Married women have no right to inherit their father's property, though the single female may share in it, but in Wamba it was vice versa. In most cases they are also deprived of their husband's inheritance but a respondent responded with proverbs as "thus, as children of God we must continually remind ourselves that the grass is not greener in the devil's kingdom though it may often appear to be" ... Besides, widowed women are treated as part of the property of their deceased husbands and thus they can be inherited through levirate marriage.

Also, in Africa, women are expected to submit to men. They are supposed not to speak in the presence of men. Africans generally believe that a proper woman is one who should be quiet when men speak. Women are not expected to challenge the authority of men in Africa, otherwise it can be regarded as stubbornness or disrespect for the men. A woman dares not challenge any man in the typical African Society. Men who are regarded as first-class citizens are regarded as superior to women who are regarded as inferior second-class citizens. The implication of this is that women cannot be leaders in a group that comprises men. And when some women eventually by divine providence, succeed to such leadership positions, they do not receive support from men. Women are important only when the men need them for sexual intercourse.

Furthermore, the dominance of males over females in the African context is expressed in the inferior manner in which women are treated. They are treated as second-class citizens, as though as they are, they are far less critical than men. Some African proverbs reveal this treatment of women with inferiority complex. Unfortunately, some women have conditioned themselves to passively accept this as normal and to view themselves as inferior to men.

In Church activities women are found in forefront even in Africa where women are relegated to the background. There are great commendations to the women throughout the Bible particularly when it comes to God's work on earth. Women are contributing variously to the preaching of the gospel to reach the unreached people all over the world. One can easily believe that men and women are equal as God's image-bearers (Gen. 1:27). Mission is at the heart of the message of the Bible in which men and women are all expected to do in order to reach the unreached people of the world with the gospel of Christ. It is imperative to note that the actual word "mission" occurs sparingly in English Bibles. The word comes from the Latin verb *mitto* (noun *missio*), which parallels the Greek word *apostellō*, meaning "to send." Basically, Christian mission refers to God sending His people to announce His work of judgment and redemption on earth. Even though in most various instances we see God sometimes intervening in reaching those He wants to be saved at a particular time directly, His usual method of working in the world is to use people He has chosen to carry out His will which every believer should key to this noble task or responsibility.

Yet we also see in Scripture that God designed us to play different, complementary roles in the home and church. (Eph. 5:21-33). However, when it comes to mission frontiers women seem to take

leading roles but to distinguish gender roles is half of the battle. We must also champion the vital contributions of women in ministry and mission. Here are three reasons why.

**Women are Critical to Church Planting:** Paul's ministry highlights the priority of pioneer church planting (Rom. 15:18-23). But we also need long-term workers who immerse themselves in a culture to ensure long-term discipleship. Titus 2:4-5 depicts mature women instructing younger women in every part of life, including marriage and home life. For Paul, a healthy church plant demands women discipline and training women and children. The vital roles women play in church planting discipline, evangelizing, organizing can't be underestimated. Church planting demands teamwork, and those teams need women.

**Women Are Uniquely Wired Towards Compassion:** Throughout the un-evangelized world, physical and spiritual poverty are intertwined from India's "untouchable" Dalits to the Rohingya fleeing Myanmar. Meanwhile, ministry is physically and emotionally taxing, and missionaries need encouragement. That's why God gifted Christ's body with an army of caring, empathic women serving overseas. Jennifer DeKryger, ABWE missionary and widow of Todd, who died in 2016 from Lassa fever contracted in Togo (Reported in Abwe International 2018), said, "Our world is telling us that we're supposed to be just like a man. But that's not what God intended. We have been designed, by Him, to do things that men can't do." (Hear more from Jenn DeKryger in her interview on The Mission Podcast.) The harvest is plentiful but the laborers few (Luke 10:2). Let us champion the countless women who witness, work, and win souls for the Lord in hard parts of the world.

**Women Can Thrive in Creative Access Contexts:** Non-western governments tend to suspect Christian missionaries as colonizers, infiltrators, or spies. Female missionaries can often subvert these expectations, raising less suspicion. They also reach segments of cultures men can't especially in Islamic cultures where men and women congregate separately. While male missionaries reach other men, women reach women and children, while influencing men too.

Similarly, the patriarchal nature of African society assigns no place for the woman in the public sphere. Women in Africa have been brought up to believe that their place is in the home not in public. Olademo (2013:32-35) submits that "the African woman is trained to accept domesticity and motherhood as their reasons for living."

In the same way, Ebila (2015:146) acquiesces "that African society projects marriage as the end goal of women". In other words, when it comes to leadership in the society, they have no say. They are placed under the authority of men; they are to listen and not lead. She is expected to follow while men lead; she is being discriminated against in terms of position in society Famonure( 2003:49).

The placement of women at the bottom of the ladder of society in Africa, coupled with the expectation that they should be limited to the home, is affecting the participation of women in public life. Men tend to be dominant in almost all spheres of public life. In public service in Nigeria for example, Okeke(2017:8) observes that "there is an imbalance in the proportion of men to women. He notes that there are generally more men than women and the few women are discriminated against in the area of receiving support from management".

In politics, Ebila (2015:146) notes that "The disdain with which women who venture into the game are treated. According to her, they are not considered proper African women, who should be quiet where men are". Religious life is not spared in this. In Theological Education, Adesanya (2013:61-63) reveals "The disproportionality of male-female participation by showing that as at 2012 the ratio of women to men on the faculty of the ECWA Theological Seminary, Jos was encouraging to this date".

In church life, women are sidelined from pastoral work in the Deeper Life Bible Church, a Pentecostal church in Nigeria. In the same vein, Smith (2010:15) reveals that "Roman Catholic tradition favors gender discrimination in ministry. Male dominance results in the unjust treatment of women in Africa. In some contexts, childless women and those without male children are oppressed. Also, there is a custom among the Igbo people of Nigeria, where a married woman can neither participate in family meetings of her natal family nor that of her matrimonial family. She is thus left as a stranger on both sides because she has no male child".

Men who negate female leadership or withholding their support for such position because of cultural upbringing and an improper interpretation of scripture need to be had a change of focus. Such men must be taught about the benefits they can attain as a result of comradeship and cooperation between them and their female leaders or companions. The issues are that each one, male or female, must be allowed to use the spiritual gifts God gives. The all-male tradition is in direct opposition to God himself because it prevents women from serving God according to their spiritual gifts. Therefore, the church (Deeper Life) is encouraged to change their attitude towards women by using them. The legacy (Women Mirror) of the General Superintendent Wife is still being read by most people in Nigerian society and even in abroad. If she was not given this kind of opportunity, how would she have impacted lives if she had been kept in the background. The women mirror had settled many disputes and spiritual problems in Nigeria and abroad. Not only this, it has influenced so many women positively in their matrimonial homes.

Unfortunately, the disparity in power between men and women is to a large extent, considered normal. In a patriarchal society such as Africa, many still believe that it is acceptable that men should be more powerful than women. This goes to establish the fact that African societies are high power distance societies. Power distance has to do with a society's level of endorsement of power and status difference. John (1997:53), argues that gender issues are not dealt with in most African theological institutions.

Most of the trained clergy come out of theological college with an outdated western perspective on gender issues. It is no wonder then that the clergy are sometimes in the forefront of opposing the inclusion of women in leadership positions". Even here in JET community called men for a meeting without women even when they are all students.

Patriarchy in Africa, which has relegated women to the background, is a negative trend that has persisted in spite of call for change. Niara (1986:92), having carried out research in several African societies concludes that this notion of sexual stratification is the unfortunate aspect of the description of the relationship between female and male Africa. Naira's research is old, yet the situation has not changed significantly, for Ssenyonjo (1997:53 writing more recently raises serious concern on the human right implications of patriarchy in Africa. She submits "that though there is a profession of equality of gender in Africa, a close look at the society shows that adverse patriarchal attitude persists. This leaves much to be desired in the treatment of women in Africa.

However, it may not be right to view the position as a yardstick to view women's status in African culture. The place of women in Africa can also be assessed from the perspective of the rights and duties assigned to them. Although men are given prominence in Africa, women cannot be waived aside. In the first place, women are considered as indispensable complements to men. They create a balance that is needed in that without them the men are not complete. Equality in status among God's people is also emphasized by Paul in Galatians: "For as many of us were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:27-28)" Paul also regards every Christian as a valuable member of (1 Corinth 12:11). Traditionally, in Africa, the gender difference is not seen as competition but as complementarity. It is obvious in this research that, traditional, pre-colonial Yoruba societies, maleness and femaleness are not seen as being opposed to each other but as being complementary. Each gender is thus considered to be indispensable to the other. The principle of complementarity is further revealed in the fact that not only male-like qualities are desired in society but also female-like qualities. For instance, the female related quality of fruitfulness is not only desired but also requested in Yoruba culture.

Another manifestation of the principle of complementarity is seen in the expectation from both genders to cooperate for the good of all. For instance, in the Yoruba tradition both men and women must work together to achieve societal goals, not only in procreating but also in providing the values that complement the qualities inherent in men and women". She substantiates her view by borrowing from Yoruba traditional religion where the ifa corpus *emphasizes* the necessity of drawing from the wisdom aptitudes of both sexes. Apart from being complement to a man, a woman in Africa is also seen as an indirect influencer of the society. She is known to wield great power through her husband.

The woman contributes to the community through her private and wise sway on her husband. Ukpolo attests to this indirect but valuable contribution of women to the African society when she notes that the woman as the king's wife is "the power behind the throne, surreptitiously contributing to the king. In other words, the man may be the one who rules publicly but he is himself being influenced secretly by his wife. Thus, the African woman wields great social, economic and political power in the home sphere as wife.

Furthermore, the woman is considered a mother in African culture. As such, she is viewed as the sustainer of life. It is obvious in this study that, a woman in Africa is seen as the nurturer and the caregiver who sustains life until maturity. Thus, although African culture is generally unfair to women, it is not altogether opposed to them. On the contrary there are important roles and responsibilities reserved for women from which the society benefits greatly. Cultural inefficiency in Women's Involvement in Mandate Mission in Africa. One of the correspondents defines Culture as the arts, customs, lifestyles, background and habits that characterize a particular society tribe or nation. A piece of knowledge passed from one generation to the next, not necessary with respect to human being. The discussion on the status of women culture in Africa shows that women are underprivileged in comparison to men.

The patriarchal nature of most African societies, where men are dominant, constitutes a challenge to the thriving of women in a different facet of human endeavor. This section takes a look at how patriarchy poses a barrier to the effectiveness of women in Mandate mission in Africa. It also suggests some ways to circumvent the obstacles so as not to hinder the gospel. This writer agrees with Famonure (2003:49)says "A patriarchal attitude will have to change before women can attain their full potential in ministry. He also believes that such a change is quite necessary and hopes that it materializes soon. However, he believes that in anticipation of the transformation, women in Mandate mission will need to learn to race through the hurdles posed by patriarchy".

In the first place, patriarchy challenges the acceptability and relevance of the gospel message that is preached by women. This can be especially true where the influence of Christianity is minimal and traditional religion and Islam are dominant. Thus, among the Bissa people of Burkina Faso, traditionally, authentic news is transmitted by men, and women's information is not taken very seriously. To date, men in that society prefer to hold important conversation with fellow men. So, when a woman leads or organizes a program, she is not taken very seriously by men. At best, she can attract some women if she is married herself. But if she is single, she may find it even more difficult.

Secondly, patriarchy limits the scope of women's ministry in mission. For example, it undermines women's leadership ability in churches or other organizations that comprise men. The fact that women are not expected to lead in public life poses a challenge to women's leadership. This writer observed this at play as a missionary in Burkina Faso. A church located in a village called Soumagou had a leadership challenge when the leader traveled. The Church was then constituted of women, teenagers and children. One of the women assumed leadership of the Church. Though she was very vibrant and zealous, her gender made the villagers look down on the Church. Once, a man came to join the Church, he did not last because the other men in the village told him that it is not a serious place since it was led by a woman.

Because of these realities, this writer suggests that women should not assume frontline leadership, at least, not at the pioneering stage of a mission work. This is important because the community's impression about the work is very important at this stage. It is imperative in this study that, it is preferable and somewhat more conducive that the leader of mission outreach be a man, mostly when the audience is made up of men. This will give greater weight to the message. Moreover, in church life, it is better to have a man as leader. As the Church takes root in the context, women can gradually gain prominence in their leadership involvement Evelyn asserts that, (1971:1) "Significant bridges to Women's Involvement Mandate Mission in Africa African culture does not present only barriers to women's involvement in Mandate mission, it also affords significant bridges. One must not be weighed down by the challenges; rather one must identify opportunities within the culture. There are elements in African culture that favour the success of women in Mandate ministry in Africa. The mother image of women is one bridge the African culture provides. As a mother, a woman in Africa is expected to nurture the younger ones prayerfully in the place of prayers according to Evelyn Christenson taking her text from James 5:16 says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous(person) availeth much."



In view of the important role assigned to women in child upbringing in African societies, women in Mandate mission in Africa can be very effective in ministry to children. In doing this, they must do it with the whole of their heart, knowing that they are building a strong foundation for Christianity in such a society. Also, as a mother, a woman has the opportunity to bring a more holistic touch to the mission work. It has been observed that women, by their maternal nature, have the tendency to take a more holistic approach to mission, emphasizing evangelism and the meeting of human needs.

Moreover, in mission, women have often been the ones to initiate reform programs for social good and gospel awareness. Leane (2010:150) states that "Thus women in Mandate ministry need to take advantage of the mother role accorded them by African culture to evangelize and nurture children for Christ and to also initiate moves that will bring holistic transformation to their host communities. In this study one can see that, the complementary role of women in Africa is another important bridge to women's success in Mandate mission in Africa. A woman is viewed as bringing completeness to man in African culture. For women in Mandate mission, especially those serving along with their spouses, their presence balances their missionary endeavor as a couple. To the host community, the woman gives credibility to the ministry of the man. They perceive the couple's church as a credible one.

They see it as a serious ministry that has come to stay. Missionaries' wives should rejoice greatly in this, for without them, their husbands would hardly be accepted. In another vein, as complements, they can make a great impact on the field by exerting godly influence on their husbands. They can conceive great ideas for the missionary ministry and encourage their husbands to pursue same.

The foregoing discussions imply that one of the best ways women can succeed in Mandate mission in Africa is to do their ministry from a family base and to emphasize the areas of their roles in relation to family. Married women missionary will do well if they work more in company of their husbands, while single women will do better if they work in collaboration with missionary couples.

### 7. CONCLUSION

We should not also deny the fact that we are from one and same parents-Adam and Eve and are all related. Indeed, there is only one Judge for us all which is God. This paper examined the barriers and bridges presented by African culture to women who are involved in Mandate mission in Africa. It reveals the critical role that women have played and are still playing in mission in Africa. Furthermore, it reveals that there are both cultural challenges and opportunities for women in Mandate mission in Africa. African culture, characterized by patriarchy poses difficulty to the ministry of such women. But the culture also comprises elements that favor the success of the women. In view of the importance of women in Mandate mission in Africa and the cultural dynamics of that ministry, this writer concludes that the success of women in Mandate mission, mainly wives of missionaries, requires some pre-field training which Jos (ECWA)Theological Seminary (JETS) is already into the training to Glory be to God.

In this study one finds that God is not a respecter of persons. He can use anybody who is available and willing to glorify Him on earth. Jesus spoke to the people of His days on earth that if they cannot worship Him or if they want to prevent people from worshipping Him, God can raise stones that will stand and worship Him. Besides women are created equally to serve God alongside the male gender and God never shows discrimination among men and women. In Africa, there is tradition that keeps the women at the background of mission scene but God never put women aside, He is only looking for women availability. God is seeking for women who will agree today to be completely subsumed into the work of mission in the cultural context of Africa. The following recommendations will be helpful in doing mission work in Africa and beyond. For efficiency of Women's involvement in Mission in the cultural context of Africa is hereby provided with these factors study for implementation.

### 8. FACTORS STUDY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Evangelical Churches should encourage Women who have their willingness to pursue their vision of being involved in mission to do so without prejudice.
2. The Seminaries are hereby encouraged to intensify more efforts in training female students on mission related courses as a way of promoting women involvement in Mission in the cultural context of Africa.

3. The leadership of the Church at all levels should open a provision for believing women to be fully involved in Mission in the cultural context of Africa
4. The Secondary Schools within the country need to give greater attention in employing more women in their various schools to teach as this will encourage women involvement in Africa to strive effectively.
5. Women fellowship leaders in at all administrative status of the Evangelical Churches should encourage their women to give further attention to mission in their attempt to reach the unreached in the African context.
6. All Pastors' wives in the Evangelical Churches should be encouraged to be practically involved in mission as this will also encourage other women to be fully participatory in mission activities in the African context.
7. More women should show interest and be committed in writing things that will encourage women to be practically involved in mission in Africa. When women write to address women, the effect or impact is felt much more than when it is only men writing to address the female of issues regarding evangelism and mission.
8. Christians family need to arise in their God's given responsibilities of training the girl child to be an effective woman who is willing and able to be involved in mission activities in the cultural context of Africa.

The Christian Religion Knowledge in the Primary Schools and Secondary Schools including the tertiary studies should include the curriculum that will encourage women to be involved as missionaries to advance God's Kingdom on earth in the cultural context of Africa. Indeed, every missionary is a human being just like anyone else, we are to reach out to the lost souls and bring them to God this effort has to be sponsored by people and not allowed in the hands of one person. As believers, everyone is an ambassador of Christ representing God in his or her little enclave; God rely on human beings who have receive Christ to reach out to the Lost souls to God's loving arms and this can be achieved only through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:14-21). God could convert every unrepented soul if he chooses to use a blinding light and the voice of Christ as He did with the apostle Paul. Instead, He gives Christians the mission of reconciliation (Acts 1:8-9). He works through us, calling sinners to turn to Christ in repentance and faith. One can say here that, Christian ministry is not only for men but for women to be fully part of the mandate of ministering to the entire world as commended by Christ in Matthew 28:19. In practical terms God does not dish out funds from the sky to missionaries to use in mission activities. The Lord sends missionaries through the support of the church to carry out mission work to the unreached souls all over the World.

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