

# SCM's Feminist Devotional

*draw*

*feminist*

*doodle*

*here*

# **Feminist Devotional**

An excerpt from Omega Bula's article "Threats to Womens Rights and Dignity" (2014):

Doing gender justice and theology is engaging in anti-oppression work. The goal of anti-oppression work is the transformation of self, systems and society in ending oppression.

It starts with the development of an anti-oppression consciousness and justice living, which includes a.) naming our own complicity in the oppression of others, b.) naming privilege and power and how this benefits or dis-empowers, c.) naming contradictions between our own faith and convictions and how we live these out in reality, and d.) working to build bridges and allies as part of the agenda to end oppression.

It also begins with self-awareness of one's own history, sources of power and privilege, and how these things are used to benefit self or groups of people and move into new understanding of self and society locally and globally.

It requires critical analysis that enables the understanding of systemic injustice in the world; how it is constructed, who benefits, who is oppressed by it and why, and what mechanisms or ideas keep it in place.

Anti-oppression work requires concrete actions to change unjust systems. It becomes critical, then, that theologies that support anti-oppression work be lifted in support of work for gender justice [...].

## How to Use this Devotional

This is a suggestion. Parts of it, or all of it may work for you. Or it may not. We're ok with that. Follow your intuition.

### **Step One: Hearing the Story**

- Set a simple altar or designate a space. Light a candle.
- If in a group, pass out copies of the story.
- Listen as the storyteller reads the passage, or read it to yourself. Try alternating reading silently and aloud.

### **Step Two: Experience Near**

- Acknowledge/share feelings, memories, and associations.

- Acknowledge/share points where you identify with the passage.
- Note key images, themes, symbols.

### **Step Three: Experience Distant**

- What is the meaning of this passage?
- Tease out theological themes, biblical stories, Christian practices, or echoes of other religious traditions. Tease out social and personal themes.
- Where is God in this? What title would you give this day's overall theme?

### **Step Four: Going Forth**

- How does what you have learned change the way you practice your faith?
- How does what you have learned change how you relate to yourself and the world?
- Reinforce any "aha" moments.
- Remain open to different meanings.

"Doing Girlfriend Theology" by Dori Grinenko Baker (2005, p.188)

## Monday // All About Love

To truly love we must learn to mix various ingredients—care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication. [...] When we understand love as the will to nurture our own and another's spiritual growth, it becomes clear that we cannot claim to love if we are hurtful and abusive. Love and abuse cannot coexist. (bell hooks, *All About Love*, p. 5-6)

If I am still alive, show me the faithful love of the Lord; but if I die, never cut off your faithful love from my house, even if the Lord were to cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." (1 Samuel 20:14-15, NRSV)

*In the second quote, Jonathan is demanding that David not just love him, but live out the love of God, unconditionally. How do you see all of the aspects of love in your life? Do any forms of love (of yourself, between you and others) resemble what bell hooks describes?*

## Tuesday // Wisdom

The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth—when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world's first bits of soil. When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race. (Proverbs 8:22-31, NRSV)

*Wisdom, shown as a feminine force of co-creation, gives us a glimpse of the fundamental creativity which resides in all people. In a history where women were*

*considered possessions, not equal partners, passages such as this affirm womanhood in the Christian scriptures. The feminine creative force is a “master worker”, a knowledgeable, skilled and capable partner in God’s creative action. She stands beside God, delighting God and being delighted by the world they are creating.*

*The Christian tradition has too often rendered women as passive figures, denying them personhood and authority in faith communities. Strong female characters in the scriptures have been ‘skipped-over’, or left as secondary characters in our Biblical teachings. This passage speaks to the divine-narrative deeply-rooted in womanhood. Where femininity and womanhood are so often connected to negative ideas, such as hyper-sensitivity, sexual temptation, manipulation, and physical weakness, the character of Wisdom speaks of a special partnership with God—a place standing right beside God.*

# Wednesday // Happy Hump Day!

Brought to you by Alice Walker. from *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983):

## **WOMANIST**

1. From *womanish*. (Opp. of "girlish," i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "you acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. *Serious*.

2. *Also*: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire



people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally a universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige and black?" Ans. "Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time."

3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless.*

4. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.

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## Thursday // Capitalism

I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by

his poverty you might become rich. and in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you to do something but even to desire to do something—now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. as it is written, “The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.” (2 Cor. 8:8-15, NRSV)

*Capitalism has been such a damaging structure for women. Taking back economic and social systems, and creating systems that are healthy with equal access for all peoples is a central tenant of the Social Gospel.*

*What would the alternative system be? The passage speaks about balance, but what does balance look like in our different spaces? Home. Work. The civic square.*

*The global market. Who in your life is working to reclaim their economic community?*

*Yenny Yolasco, in El Salvador, is teaching local youth traditional Mayan agricultural practices so they can separate themselves from dependence on the government for subsidized food programs.*

*What is your story?*

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## Friday // Sexism

[... ]women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in

faith and love and holiness, with modesty.  
(Timothy 2:9-15, NRSV)

*Where do you experience sexism and harm in your own faith communities and in your own theology?*

*In order to heal ourselves and our communities we must both name and challenge the hurtful, the gross, the negative, and often unnamed, experiences of all people in our communities.*

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## Saturday // Journey

We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty. (Maya Angelou)

In trans women's eyes, I see a wisdom that can only come from having to fight for your right to be recognized as female, a raw strength that only comes from unabashedly asserting your right to be feminine in an inhospitable world. (Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*)

You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 23:9)

*Butterflies are not flouncy and delicate and “pretty”. Monarch butterflies migrate from Canada to Mexico every year. It takes three generations of monarchs to make the full migration. New monarchs are born with the innate ability to continue the journey their parents were making.*

*We don't have a literature source from the Maya Angelou quote. Our best guess is this quote is a product of her time working as a Hallmark card writer. We call it living our inconsistencies. Many of us live in a complex space of working in and disrupting the system, compromising some values and refusing to compromise others, being hurt and hurting others, all in the process of growing as the amazing humans we are. How do you honour the journey you are on?*

## Sunday // Self-Care

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm 139:14-16)

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. (Eleanor Roosevelt, No Fat Chicks: How Women are Brainwashed to Hate Their Bodies and Spend Their Money by Terry Poulton, 1996)

*Consent is an incredibly important part of this quote, and is one of the hardest concepts to learn. How do we unknowingly give authority to others, allowing them to hurt us? By giving others that power we open ourselves up to their criticism, their judgements and emotional blows. How do we, in love for ourself and in*

*loving relationships with others, create healthy boundaries to live within?*

*Self care is care provided for you, by you. What do you need to feel nurtured at your core?*

## **What is SCM?**

Founded in 1921, the Student Christian Movement is a national youth-led movement passionate about justice, community & spirituality. We engage the prophetic teachings of the revolutionary Jesus of Nazareth. As an ecumenical movement, we include people of many beliefs and faiths seeking to explore and challenge the Christian tradition.

**Compiled/created by SCM Ottawa, 2015**

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