


The role of women in the Korean church as a reflection of the Gospel of Matthew

**Author:**In-Cheol Shin^{1,2} **Affiliations:**

¹Department of New Testament Studies, Korea Baptist Theological University and Seminary, Dae-Jeon, Republic of Korea

²Department of New Testament and Related Literature, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Description:

Prof. Dr In-Cheol Shin is a research fellow of Prof. Dr Andries G. van Aarde in the research project 'Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics', located in the Department of New Testament and Related Literature, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

Corresponding author:

In-Cheol Shin,
incheolshin@kbtus.ac.kr

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This article aims to shed light on how the Korean church should set the role and status of women in the church, by dealing with the fact that women have contributed to the Korean church despite the gender discrimination and poor treatment they received from society. This article compares the role of women who influenced the revival of the early Korean church, and the story of the Canaanite woman in the Gospel of Matthew, in terms of dedication of faith. It also compares the stories of the roles of the Bible Women who greatly influenced the development of the early Korean church, and the stories of women who followed Jesus from Galilee to the crucifixion, in terms of loyalty of faith.

Contribution: The purpose of this article is to bring acknowledgement and a fresh perspective on the role of Korean women in the modern church through the comparison of the dedication of faith and loyalty of faith of the women of the early Korean church and in the Gospel of Matthew.

Keywords: Korean church; Bible women; Canaanite woman; social status of women; the Gospel of Matthew; Jeon Sam-Deok; gender discrimination; dedication of faith; loyalty of faith.

Introduction

Oduyoye (1995:174) said that just as birds fly in the sky with both wings, God created men and women to each become like one wing of the bird and live-in cooperation with each other. God governs and leads the world through men, but he also governs the world through women. However, cooperation between men and women is not as easy as it seems. From the time of Genesis up until now, the roles of men and women have changed in accordance with the trend of the times, gender conflict however, still occurs throughout modern society (see Kalra & Bhugra 2013:244–249). Over the past thousands of years, repression of women has been a social phenomenon; and while being aware of gender discrimination, women were afraid to address or approach the issue because they were apprehensive of the backlash from men (see Hunt 1975:302–324).

Over the past two centuries, the Korean church has experienced phenomenal growth, but the church discriminated against women by downplaying their role and dedication which played a crucial role in the growth of the Korean church. Fortunately, gender discrimination has lessened in the modern Korean church as a result of the changes in society. Gender equality, since modern society, has been and still is one of the hottest issues in South Korea, and this phenomenon has definitely affected the modern Korean church.¹ The Korean church has recognised the importance of women's internal roles and emphasised the role of women pastors as well as the ordination of women pastors (Pyeonjibbu 2020:29). The fact that women can be appointed in roles in the church means that women's leadership has not only developed significantly, but also the range and role of ministry have expanded. Since the beginning of the 21st century, many churches in Korea started allowing female pastors to be ordained. However, this concession seems to be superficial, because female pastors are still not given the authority of a pastor in charge or a leader who can exercise leadership (Lee 2005:328). This seems to be the epitome of the unsolved gender discrimination within the Korean church.

Recently, the church structure and organisational environment changed through the introduction of a balance between the roles of men and women in Korean churches; the reason may be that

¹The modern Korean church era is from 1866, when the first missionaries came to the Korean church, until now. The history of the Korean church is only 150 years, so the use of the phrase 'modern Korean church' refers to the all the churches from 1866 until today.

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about 60% of Korean church members are women (Bae 1987:134). The change started with the growing number of female believers attending church and the dawning realisation of the importance of the role of women. It cannot be overlooked that the role of women was important in stimulating the growth of the Korean church. In other words, women served God and neighbours by dedication and loyalty based on faith for the revival and development of the Korean church.

In order to compare and confirm the undervalued qualities and role of women in the modern Korean church from a biblical point of view, this article compares the role of heroic women who have contributed to the revival and development of the Korean church over the past 100 years to the role of committed women in the 1st century Matthean community (see Shin 2014:1). To compare and analyse the modern Korean church with the religion community of the New Testament era, the cultural and time difference of the two communities must be overcome. It seems especially difficult to compare the Korean church to the Matthean community because the Matthean community existed during an advanced agricultural society. Nevertheless, this article intends to compare and analyse two communities, each within two different cultures and eras, because these two communities, if seen through the perspective of cultural anthropology, share the same basic human culture with regard to religion and gender (see Craffert 1995:14–37; Van Eck 1995:162–164).

Therefore, while acknowledging and rethinking about the great achievements of women's ministry, I would also like to analyse two major qualities of the women of the Korean church through cross-cultural interpretation. This article compares the 'dedication of faith' and 'loyalty of faith' of the women in Korean church and women in the Gospel of Matthew, who both experienced gender discrimination within a vastly different cultural phenomenon from each other, to contribute to not only the further emancipation of the women in Korean church from gender discrimination, but also the expansion and elevation of the role of women for the development of Korean church. I have chosen to analyse the women of the Gospel of Matthew because unlike the other gospels, such as Luke and John, in which women are depicted in a more positive light, the Gospel of Matthew depicts the negative sides of being a woman during that era. This will reveal that if the Korean church gives more acknowledgement and emphasis on the dedication and loyalty of women in the church, it will pave a brighter future for the growth and revival of the Korean church.

The Korean church and the Matthean community with reference to the social status of women

The Korean church is still partially patriarchal, as is the social and historical background of the Gospel of Matthew

(Hangug-yeoseong-gaebal-won 2003:20; Shin 2007:411; Van Aarde 2020:98–99), which makes it possible to examine the gender discrimination and social status and role of men and women by comparing and analysing the male-centred Korean church and the Matthean community.

The social status of Korean women and their role in the Korean church

Confucianism, which started from the Chosun Dynasty and is deeply rooted in Korean society and culture, has prevented women from being able to use their abilities to participate in society (Bae 1987:142; Park 1992:187–233, 2011:177–185). The Korean society has evolved to become modern, but it is still unable to escape Confucian culture and ideology, forming a culture that continuously discriminates against women (Seo 2017:361). Until the second half of the 20th century, the Korean family culture considered the husband as the sky symbolising infinite authority, and the wife was considered the earth that cannot reach the authority and heights of the sky, and the relationship between husband and wife was recognised as a norm that cannot be crossed (Park 2011:179; Son 1971:24–37). The two examples presented above served as bywords for the social status of Korean women until the beginning of modern society; the remnants of these ideas however, still exist at the corner of our society under the guise of native culture. Also, the idea that women's positions should be confined to households, not society, dominated the Korean society (Yun 1980:95–96).

Just as the ideological structure that dominates an era influences the consciousness of perception and the organisational structure related to its history, culture, and religion, the male-centred Korean social structure manifested its influence and character on Christianity and the religious lives of Christians in South Korea (Jang 1985:225). In fact, the efforts and access needed to obtain religious resources and authority in Korean society were male-dominated, thereby discriminating against women, and male-centred leadership continued to be reproduced in the church because it was difficult for women to establish their position as religious leaders (Woo 2009:5–6).

Let us analyse the reasons and the consequences of this discrimination. As already noted, gender discrimination within the church seems to be because of socio-cultural factors, but its internal background reveals errors in interpretation of the Bible and discriminatory sermons. The church education, which should have focused on how the Bible encourages gender equality, instead interpreted the Bible in a way that limits the role of women to merely becoming assistants to the ministry and activities of men. The church education basically had an inclination to discriminate against women and perpetuate the unfairly fixed roles of men and women (Lee 2002:42). As the Korean society has continued to change rapidly, discrimination against women's human rights and social status has diminished, and the Korean society has established itself as an equal world. However, the idea of a male-dominated society, rooted in the

gender stereotypes of pre-modern pastors and Christians, is still prevalent. Therefore, the role and status of women in the church are struggling to escape from the limits of meal preparation, cleaning, worship guidance, and supporting the needs of male ministers. In fact, the idea of gender equality and anti-gender discrimination, which came from outside the church, was delivered to church members through education, but they still failed to overcome gender discrimination in real life. In effect, women in the church perpetuated the discrimination in use of space, type of work, and to produce a culture in which women came to discriminate against women (Seo 2017:359–385).

Women's failure to fulfil their potential in the church has also damaged their authority in church life, where men have traditional and legal authority in the church and women have a superficial authority of charisma (Weber 1978:242). Charismatic authority is based on individual abilities or characteristics, so it is difficult to establish a socially conventional authority system through it (Weber 1978:241). While there have been negative reviews that women's faith lives are superstitious, irrational, and emotional as they have established themselves as charismatic types, Korean church women have played a proactive role as pillars for church development and growth over the past 140 years with the specialisation of faith based on faith confession and supernatural miracles. As a result, the external power and authority of the Korean church were influenced by men, but the religious example has been led by women.

The social status and role of the women in the Gospel of Matthew

Gender roles is not the main theological focus in the Gospel of Matthew. However, the teachings, values and principles in the Gospel of Matthew does give us a hint of what type of stance the gospel has on gender roles (Anderson 1983:6–7). I would like to shed light on the life of women in the Palestinian region during the era of Jesus through the Gospel of Matthew. Because the Greco-Roman world forms the basis of the Gospel of Matthew, it reflects the images of women who lived discriminated lives in Jewish society.

During the time of Jesus, Jewish society was patriarchal (Anderson 1983:7). Women were neither allowed to participate in public social life, nor to go out and interact with men face-to-face (Jeremias 1982:359–360; see Shin 2007:407; Van Aarde 2020:100). Therefore, women were not respected in Jewish communities in the 1st century, and the scholar of the law advised not to talk to women too much and not to talk to other women outside (b. Qid. 70ab). Young girls were under the absolute authority of their fathers until they were adults (12.5 years old), and the father was the daughter's legal representative (Jeremias 1982:363). When a woman got married, she was freed from her father's control to be under that of her husband (N^e dh. X⁵; Jeremias 1982:365). The teachings of Torah were applied differently to Jewish husbands and wives, and women were excluded from studying the Torah (Jeremias 1982:373–374). As a

result, Jewish society created and controlled strong regulations regarding women's lives and men scorned women because of their social status, making it impossible for women to comfortably live and play their roles.

This view of the role of women is also reflected in the Gospel of Matthew (Shin 2007:411). To be exact, God was portrayed as loving and working through both men and women, but the Gospel of Matthew, which is a Jewish gospel, clearly shows that society was patriarchal at the time (Van Aarde 2020:98). For example, there are four women in Jesus' genealogy, but the rest of the characters are all men, and the one who forms the essence of Jesus' birth narrative is Joseph (Mt 1:1–16). When referring to marriage, it was expressed on the basis of patriarchy, and the inheritance of property was based on patriarchy (Mt 1:18–25; 5:31–32; 19:1–12; 21:33–43). 'Women were not counted in public society during the time of Jesus' (Mt 14:21; 15:38) (Shin 2007:407). The narrative of the Gospel of Matthew is composed based on the male characters, male disciples, and Jewish religious leaders (Anderson 1983:7). The Gospel of Matthew does contain references to the women present in Jesus' following; however, women are not described as being on the same level as male disciples (Shin 2007:409).

Yet, the Gospel of Matthew still describes how women played an important role (Anderson 1983:21; Botha 2003:506). Women followed Jesus and indirectly joined the ministry, and it is undeniable that their dedication had a significant impact on the formation of early Christian communities (Botha 2003:507; Shin 2007:408–413). Many women appear in the Gospel of Matthew, and their roles are valuable and prominent (Mt 1:1–17; 9:20–22; 15:21–28; 26:6–13; 27:55–56; 27:61; 28:1–10) (see Shin 2014:1–9). It shows that when Jesus was carrying out his ministry in the most difficult and devastating environments, women were always supporting him with dedication. For example, the narrative of women watching the death of Jesus on the Golgotha Hill where his crucifixion took place, is a story of loyalty of faith (Mt 27:55). At the centre of Jesus' core ministry that proclaimed the kingdom of God, there were always the 12 disciples. They were present at important moments and sites where they would be respected and acknowledged, but when Jesus was suffering on the cross, the disciples were absent; only the loyal women who had followed Jesus from Galilee were with Jesus when he was suffering on the cross (see Corley 1998:191). The model of true faith life was not the 12 disciples, but the women who followed Jesus to his place of crucifixion as guardians (Love 1994:57). Women's faith and the role they played are prominent, but their social status and role as described in the Gospel of Matthew were very much downplayed: 'male followers are called to be disciples; female followers are called to serve' (Shin 2007:407; Van Aarde 2020:100). Matthew described how the 12 disciples' role eclipsed that of the women. The women mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew were always silent in the faith community, but qualitatively these women were the ones who did the most deeds of virtue.

A comparison of the roles and ministries of the women of the Korean church and the women of the Matthean community

This section aims to compare the roles of women who have practiced dedication of faith and loyalty of faith in the Gospel of Matthew with the roles of Korean women who have shown dedication of faith and loyalty of faith to the revival and growth of the Korean church. Firstly, we will study and compare the role and dedication of Jeon Sam-Deok, who overcame gender discrimination by faith, with the role and dedication of the Canaanite women. Secondly, we will examine and compare the role and loyalty of the evangelists of the Korean church, called 'Bible Women', with the role and loyalty women who watched the death of Jesus (Matthew 26:55).

Jeon Sam-Deok and the Canaanite woman who overcame gender discrimination through dedication based on faith

Jeon Sam-Deok is the first Methodist of the Korean church and is recognised as a woman who overcame gender discrimination through faith. She was born a daughter of a noble family and followed her husband who was a government official to live in various regions. After her husband finished his official duties, Jeon Sam-Deok returned to her hometown with her husband to enjoy peace for a while, but soon she had to face the greatest hardship of her life as her husband took in a young woman as a concubine (Park 2011:182). Jeon Sam-Deok lived a lonely and hard life because of her husband's abandonment (Lee 1986:82). The Korean enlightenment society, which is based on Confucian culture, recognised the vested interests of men only (Jones 1989:391–396). Women's lives were limited and discriminatory in the era of Korean enlightenment. Most women were restricted socially and had to live in the Kyu-bang for most of their lives (Lee 2007:23). Jeon Sam-Deok reported the identity damage she received as a woman, in recalling that even having been economically affluent, her confinement to Kyu-bang was too painful (Lee 2007:25). It was almost impossible for women to go outside because at that time, they had to be borne in a sedan chair and a servant had to lead the way ahead. The laws and customs that differentiate women forced them to live depressed lives (Chang 2008:65). Eventually Jeon Sam-Deok realised that the Korean saying, 'When a son is born, he is to sleep on the bed, and when a daughter is born, she is to sleep on the floor', encapsulates gender discrimination (Jang 1979:110).

The Christian faith is what completely changed the life of Jeon Sam-Deok, who is a prime example of the gender discrimination in the modern Korean society. Jeon Sam-Deok, who lived in Gangseo-gun, Hwanghae-do, began her religious life out of curiosity when she heard that there was a Christian community in Pyongyang. She discovered a new world through faith and she became more aware of how

women were discriminated against just like her. She was attracted by the news that Jesus Church, which was established in Pyongyang, accepted not only men, but also women as members of the church, and learned the new doctrine that there should be no gender discrimination between men and women (Jang 1979:189). The influence of the education of western missionaries and influence of western culture regarding gender started to have a massive impact on Korean women starting with Jeon Sam-Deok. Jeon Sam-Deok broke free from her husband's persecution and the social convention that women should not leave, and walked 32 km over 2 days to arrive at the Jesuit chapel in Pyongyang. She met Hall, a medical missionary, and accepted Jesus as her saviour; then she began her religious life. Jeon Sam-Deok was baptized by missionary W.B. Scranton, who went to her house to baptize her despite strong opposition from her elders.

After the baptism, Jeon Sam-Deok's faith became even stronger and she started to dedicate herself to serve God through a variety of works. Her husband and eldest son, who opposed her religious life, advocated abandoning Christianity, and when she led her daughter-in-law to the church, her husband and son shouted after the two of them, 'Your mother in law is already crazy about Jesus, do you want to be crazy too?' (Jang 1979:190). Soon after, however, her husband, who failed to kill the passion of Jeon Sam-Deok's faith, approved of her Christian faith. The husband and son recognised Jeon Sam-Deok's faith and established a church in Gangseo-eup, near their home, and the family of Jeon Sam-Deok became key members of the church. After the church was established, Jeon Sam-Deok recognised the desperate need for a minister to serve the church and realised that a female worker was also needed. With her husband's permission, she attended Pyongyang Women's Bible School with her daughter-in-law Kim Neelin, where she studied Bible, arithmetic, geography, Korean, hygiene, science, art and music.

After graduating from Pyongyang Women's Bible School, Jeon Sam-Deok established a girls' school in Ham-Jong. She believed that women were weak and inferior solely because they had grown up in poor conditions. She also argued that by being educated and trained, women would also be capable of contributing to society (Jang 1979:191). With the help of missionary I. Jmoor, Jeon Sam-Deok established Soong-Deok School in her hometown and served as vice-principal while also serving the Hak-dong church. Since then, the Hak-dong Church has expanded rapidly and produced many pastors and politicians who have been influenced by her faith. Jeon Sam-Deok is an early female model of the Korean Church who overcame the barriers of discrimination against women by faith. She is a living witness of dedicating herself with faith for the Lord. We should not overlook the importance of the role of dedication of women in modern Korean churches, seeing the performance of a woman of dedication who laid the stepping stone for the pioneering and revival of the Korean church.

The story of the Canaanite woman, who overcame gender discrimination by faith and dedicated herself for the healing of her daughter, appears in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 15: 21–28). The story focuses on the ‘interpretation of a feminist perspective of women’s status, faith, and marginalization within the Jewish system’ (Shin 2014:6). The traditional interpretation of the Canaanite story is that she was a stranger and despised by the Jews (Derrett 1973:164; Shin 2014:6).

In the story of the Canaanite woman, the term ‘woman’ was repeated five times, which was not just a term referring to her being a woman, but a term that implied that she was an outcast in society. At the time of Jesus, women were not respected or acknowledged in society (Shin 2005:157). The Canaanite woman told Jesus that her daughter was possessed and asked him to heal her daughter, but Jesus ignored her cry. It is not that Jesus did not understand the Canaanite woman’s words, but that he did not deal with her because of her low social status (cf. m. ‘Aboth 1.5; Davies & Allison 2012:549; Humphries-Brooks 2001:142). Her appeal to Jesus was dismissed because of her social position as a Canaanite woman. To overcome the gender discrimination in the patriarchal society, she had to fight against the purity laws, which labelled the gentile Canaanite woman as an object of derision in patriarchal Jewish society (O’Day 2001:115). Just as the early Korean church discriminated against women on the legal basis of Confucianism, the Jewish purity laws made the Jews to discriminate against Canaanite women. Thus, even though the story of a Canaanite woman might be about healing a possessed daughter, the miraculous healing is a sub-text and the main theme is the depiction of how a woman, who was discriminated against because she was a woman in society, overcame her gender discrimination and saved her daughter by dedication rooted in faith (O’Day 2001:116, 118).

The healing of the Canaanite woman’s daughter indicates how an unknown gentile woman overcame gender discrimination of the purity laws and poor treatment from society by applying a tool called faith. In this respect, the story reflects how her faith is expressed. The disciples told Jesus to send the Canaanite woman back, but Jesus says he will not be involved with her. Here, we should pay attention to the response of Jesus and his disciples to the Canaanite woman’s request as described by Matthew. The disciples treated the Canaanite woman as a stranger and a negligible woman who could not be with them. As I have already stated, the disciples asked Jesus to ‘send her away’ (Mt 15:23). In order to judge the actions of the disciples positively, the early church, claimed that when the disciples asked Jesus to ‘send her away’, they were actually trying to get Jesus to respond to her. However, it seems that they wanted to scare off the Canaanite woman who was interrupting their ministry (Luz 2001:339). The validity of this view is illustrated well by Jesus’ response where he says he was sent only for the lost sheep of Israel (Mt 15:24). The disciples were also aware that the historical ministry of Jesus was to save Israel’s lost sheep, which made them show their intention to dismiss the Canaanite woman. Therefore, their discrimination was based on her being a gentile and a woman.

Jesus’ answer to the Canaanite woman, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel’, also appears to be racially discriminative (Mt 15:24), as if it excludes other ethnic Canaanites and Israelites. According to the Jewish purity system, the Canaanite woman was a gentile with a marginal social status. Jesus entered the cities of Tyre and Sidon, which were Gentile territory and the people of Tyre and Sidon were enemies of Israel (Isa 23; Ezek 26–28; Joel 3:4) (Shin 2014:24). Thus, the Canaanite woman’s story implies social and racial discrimination against her. From a broader perspective, Matthew’s Jewish-Christian community objected to evangelising gentiles and it seems that this background is implied in this phrase (see Davies & Allison 2012:551).

The Canaanite woman was aware that Jesus’ reply discriminated against her and that it was a common norm for Jews to neglect gentiles (Davies & Allison 2012:551; see Luz 2001:340). Furthermore, Jesus treated the Canaanite woman, who was a gentile, as if she were a ‘dog’. The description of the Canaanite woman as a ‘dog’ expresses contempt for gentiles, and she was gender discriminated against and treated poorly by the Jewish society (Davies & Allison 2012:553; Luz 2001:341). However, she overcame the discriminatory coldness and gender discrimination by sacrificing her dignity and having faith that Jesus will save her daughter. The faith of the Canaanite woman is quite different from the usual prayer of invocation. Generally, those who want to be healed of their diseases confess their faith with desperation. However, even though the Canaanite woman did not confess her faith, Jesus saw the attitude of her faith and approved of it. Her religious attitude was not that of asking for privileges like the people of Israel, but an attitude of expecting a work of faith that would solve her situation. The attitude and action of the Canaanite woman is a display of her dedication of faith. She dedicated herself with faith, despite being discriminated and despised by the disciples, by lowering herself for the healing of her daughter. (Luz 2001:339–340). The foundation of her faith was her passion to save her daughter through dedication. The story of Jeon Sam Deok and the story of the Canaanite woman is common in that both of the women sublimated faith into self-dedication of faith. Jeon Sam-deok, who participated in establishing God’s church and preaching the gospel, overcame gender discrimination and difficulties with dedication of faith, and the Canaan woman is a woman of faith who overcame social coldness and gender discrimination and dedicated herself for her daughter.

The Bible women’s loyalty of faith towards the growth of the Korean church and evangelism and the loyalty of faith of the women at the cross towards Jesus

The name ‘Bible Women’ is conferred by missionaries and refers to the Christian females who greatly influenced the revival and development of the Korean church from

1892 to 1945. These women showed loyalty of faith as Christians and sold Bibles, trained other Christian women, while also spreading the Gospel and participating in missionary activities (Chang 2008:22). Many groups that had a significant impact on the growth of the Korean church are those who worked under the name of 'Bible Women'. The 'Bible Women', who showed loyalty to the establishment and revival of the Korean church, received cold reception and were gender discriminated against by society.

The ministry of the Bible Women is so extensive that I would like to look at only a few cases. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Bible Women organised prayer meetings and devoted themselves to selling copies of the Gospels, preaching to women, and teaching children (Chang 2008:248). Among these roles, the Bible Women played a very important role in the spiritual revival movement. They mainly delivered the Gospel and led the revival to areas and people whom foreign missionaries could not afford to handle (Yeoseongsayeonguhoe 1999:201–209). The revival prepared by the evangelical women was a very organised and in-depth spiritual meeting. They prepared for the revival for a long time and held many Bible readings, doctrine learning and prayer meetings, especially during the preparation period. While preparing for the revival, the Bible Women were moved by the Holy Spirit and a remarkable work of revival occurred, including the confession of their sins and repentance (Hillman 1906:183). The revival meeting erupted with a spiritual explosion, bringing forth a tremendous spiritual revival and reform which led to new churches being built in new areas. Unfortunately, the revival and missionary work of the Bible Women were always discriminated against and treated coldly by men. The passionate ministry of the Bible Women greatly influenced the establishment of the Korean church. Churches centred on children and women began to be built throughout the area, and even a Ladies Church was built. The evangelical women established the church in An-dong, which is the most conservative and based on Confucian culture in Korean society. This church was built by a newly-married woman (Bible woman) when she moved to a village called Pang-kol (Welbon 1915:28–30). The Pang-kol Church grew rapidly, but the elderly (male elders) did not approve of the church being centred on women and they did not accept female leaders. The missionary women were supported by foreign missionaries to fight against the abolition of Confucian culture, which neglected the social status of women and their church activities (Chang 2008:254). Pang-kol church revived as a church that led and guided the community.

The Gospel evangelism and church pioneering services of Bible Women took place throughout the whole country. Even when male gender discriminated against women, and their social status was not respected, the Bible Women were undaunted, showing loyalty of faith and worked harder for the revival of the church. Even though they were struggling financially, the Bible Women held unyielding loyalty of faith for God and spread the gospel all over the nation. Following

Jesus and showing loyalty to God through faith was the only core of their lives. Women workers led by the Bible Women, organised small groups in the church to hold prayer meetings and Bible studies. These gatherings became the cornerstone of the church's revival, bearing fruit and greatly helping the church's quantitative growth. The Bible Women, who could neither be leaders of the church nor be in charge of the organisation, rendered dedicated service to the revival of the church, but were not acknowledged by others. The reports of missionaries who worked in Korea in the early 20th century showed how active the evangelical and church-pioneering missions of the Bible Women were (see McCune 1915:64).

The loyalty of the Bible Women also seems to have played an important role in stabilising the financial independence of the Korean church. It seems that the Bible Women wholeheartedly gave their possessions to God to replenish the church finances. According to missionary McCune's report, the prayer meeting of the Cheolsan region gave God 18 cents of money earned from sewing because they had nothing else to give to God. And a woman named Ryu, who established the church, gave her life-savings' silver in the offering basket to give more to God (McCune 1915:64). The Bible Women tried to stand on their own without the help of missionaries, and devoted themselves to the revival and development of the Korean church.

The Gospel of Matthew features women who took on ministry like that of the Bible Women. Among those women who watched the crucifixion of Jesus were those who had followed him from Galilee (Mt 27:55–56). In Matthew 27:55–56, we find some characteristics of these women who went on to join the mission of spreading the Gospel of heaven. Participating in the traveling ministry with men as a woman during that society means that these women were full of loyalty grounded on faith. First, we should focus on the verb 'followed' in the phrase 'women followed Jesus'. The verb, *avkolouqe,w* [to follow] used in the Gospel of Matthew is used by three different groups which are the 12 disciples, the disciples beside the 12 and the crowd (Shin 2007:414). I agree with Kingsbury's argument that the verb 'to follow' used in the Gospel of Matthew does not at all represent discipleship (Kingsbury 1978:61). However, the term *hvkolou,qhsan* [followed] of 'many women had followed Jesus' used in Matthew 27:55 seems to imply discipleship, because the women who watched the crucifixion of Jesus from afar can be seen as the group from Galilee who supported Jesus' ministry (Shin 2007:406–407). They were probably long-standing members of Jesus' public ministry (France 1985:402). It seems to be that their role was supporting the needs of male disciples who supported the ministry of the male Jesus (cf Lk 8:1–3). When Jesus travelled around each region with the 12 disciples to preach the kingdom of God and spread the Gospel, women served Jesus and his disciples using their own possessions. The women serving Jesus and the 12 disciples with their possessions means that they played a role of supporting the male disciples when they proclaimed the Gospel of heaven. This phenomenon can be seen as limiting

women's social status and role because society at that time discriminated against women (Patte 1987:391). Women also participated in the mission to spread the Gospel of heaven, but they did not play a role in delivering the Gospel directly like men and dealt with trivial works. Also, it should be noted that the Greek language adjective *pollai* [many] in Matthew 27:54 indicates that it was not one or two women who followed Jesus from Galilee, but that literally many women joined Jesus' ministry (Shin 2007:406; cf Verbrugge 2000:1074–1075).

Secondly, the Greek language participle *Diakonou/sai* [serving] in Matthew 27:55 clearly identifies the role of the women who followed Jesus from Galilee. Women's 'serving' should be regarded as a connotation of daily food preparation and table setting (Wainwright 1991:85). It is shown that the main part of the role of women in the ministry of Jesus from Galilee was food preparation to support and help male disciples (Shin 2007:407). It can be said that the women who followed Jesus accompanied him in his ministry, but their roles were limited to less important roles and they were serving from a subservient position like any other ordinary women, unlike men who participated in proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Women who followed Jesus were not given social status and official roles, but they still handled their duties with great loyalty. Therefore, not only did these women devote themselves to expand the Kingdom of God more than the 12 disciples, but they showed loyalty of faith and practiced a life of spirituality despite gender discrimination and social disrespect. The fact that these women followed Jesus from Galilee to join the ministry of Jesus Christ shows how great their loyalty was. Behind their loyal devotion was their faith in Jesus Christ.

The Bible Women and the women who followed Jesus from Galilee to participate in his ministry are loyal believers of God. They gave up their rather comfortable lives and participated in the expansion of the Kingdom of God with firm loyalty. Both of these women were loyal to God and participated in spreading the Gospel because they loved Jesus Christ with sincere faith.

Conclusion

Both men and women are creations of God and it is only right that women be given equal social status and roles. However, women have rarely been equal to men throughout history and this has continued into the modern Korean society. It is an even more unfortunate reality that social discrimination against women remains an issue that has not been solved even in Christian communities that believe in God's creation. Therefore, by comparing and analysing the religious lives and qualities of women who appeared in the Gospel of Matthew with the religious lives and qualities of women who worked in modern Korean churches, we can see how important the role of women is in the development of the religious community.

The women in Matthew contributed in expanding the Kingdom of God through dedication and loyalty in their religious lives even though their social status was limited. They are the ones who overcame their unfair reality by faith and won the battle against the poor treatment of society. Through the dedication and loyalty of the women, Jesus and his disciples were able to bear fruit in their ministry of proclaiming the Gospel of heaven. In particular, the case of the Canaanite woman who overcame racial and gender discrimination by faith is like a mirror that reflects the influence of the religious lives of women on the Christian community during the era of Jesus.

We have looked at the severe gender discrimination against women and how the social status of women was neglected in Korea. Despite being in a Confucian cultural background where women could not even leave the house, Korean women overcame their circumstances through faith and went to church. In particular, women were discriminated against in their ministry and roles compared to men in the church, but they overcame these difficulties by faith and dedicated themselves for the contribution to the development of the church. The roles of Jeon Sam-Deok, who showed dedication of faith, and the Bible Women, who showed loyalty of faith, were the foundation for the revival and development of the Korean church. Recently, the Korean church has started to give equal status and roles to women regarding their positions and church activities. However, the Korean church still tends to perceive that women's abilities and roles are to be limited. We have to be aware that this type of discrimination is still at play. This article suggests that the activities of women who revived the church in modern Korean society be remembered, and that the modern Korean church focus on the qualities of dedication and loyalty of the Korean women to bring growth, not only in the role and status of women, but also in the church.

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Author's contributions

I-C.S. is the sole author of this article.

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