

## Sojourner Truth: Our Spiritual Predecessor

Sojourner Truth (1797 – 1887) fought bravely for the rights of women during an era in history when women were deprived of such privileges. As a contemporary of Frederick Douglass, she joined the cause for freedom and equality of enslaved African Americans as well as for women. Like others, her deeply profound commitment to Christ coupled with her theologically cohesive mind compelled her to confront the injustices of her day.<sup>1</sup> She stated, “To deny women the privilege of voting or preaching because Christ was male was to ignore the fact (posited by Karl Barth years later) that it was Christ’s humanity—not his gender—that made him a sacrifice for both men and women.”<sup>2</sup>

Through Truth’s life as a speaker, teacher, preacher, and advocate for the freedom and equality of the oppressed, marginalized, and disenfranchised, she instilled in others the worth, value, and dignity she felt as an African American women. In other words, her identity was rooted and grounded in the moral authority of scripture, which energized her to go against the status quo of racism. Even though she understood that the Constitution of this nation excluded her as a person, God’s word did not. She explains, “I take hold of this Constitution and it looks mighty big, and I feel for my rights, but there ain’t any there.”<sup>3</sup>

Truth’s example as one of our spiritual predecessors provides the encouragement that we, too, can confront injustices, such as racism, as we seek to be deeply rooted and grounded in studying the scriptures, which defines our identity as African Americans. Also, it is through

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<sup>1</sup> Aida Besancon Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad, eds., *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Ministering Together in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today: Revised Edition* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2004), 130.

studying of the scriptures that develops our core beliefs as biblical and social reformers that impacts and influences our culture in light of racism as the status quo of our day.

*The value, dignity, and service of women is located in their truest identity—as heirs of Christ’s sacrifice equally available to men and women.*<sup>4</sup> Sojourner Truth

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