

Sacred Space and Stories: Embracing vulnerability in mission ‘When Women Speak ...’

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Abstract

‘The women we ask always say no.’ Mission leaders are perplexed. Why are women not accepting their invitations to leadership? Now it’s a woman problem. The door has been open and they are refusing to go through it.

There is deep frustration among men and women. While male leaders see themselves as opening the door for women, women, cognisant of systemic issues of power, masculinised leadership dynamics, strategic operations, and mission practices, are choosing to envision mission as vulnerable acts of co-creating sacred spaces in stories. They are telling and owning their stories in a community of the vulnerable and writing new endings.

This paper explores what happens ‘When Women Speak ...’. When Women Speak ... is both a network of women in mission exploring missiology, training and practices with particular reference, at present, to walking with Muslims exploring Christian faith, and it is a statement of the changes that metamorphose in the power structures of mission when women engage as women.

We will examine how a global network of women is imagining and practicing mission differently, asking how this reconceptualises power and vulnerability, and challenges embedded inequalities. It takes as a case study two gatherings of women followers of Jesus from Islam, examining how the work of mission is done ‘When Women Speak...’. The paper considers that ‘When Women Speak...’ power is subverted in sacred spaces where inequalities are mutually-embraced vulnerabilities that are shared through each of our stories.