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## Women in the Maze: Questions and Answers on Biblical Equality

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Marywood—to shape this collection.

Rienstra has given each day's Psalm-prayers a general theme (such as "Hoping in God Our Future" for each Monday), related hymn-prayers (also paraphrased in feminine language), references to related Scripture passages, suggestions for spontaneous prayer, and benedictions. An extra is an appendix of readings from the works of Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa of Ávila, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Julian of Norwich to alternate with readings from Scripture. With so many resources, *Swallow's Nest* can renew and sustain personal and corporate worship for a long time, helping us know the Psalms "by heart" in a new way.

*Reviewed by LINDA BIEZE, an editor and member of the Christian Reformed Church who lives in Chelmsford, Massachusetts.*



### **Women in the Maze: Questions and Answers on Biblical Equality**

by Ruth A. Tucker  
InterVarsity Press, 1992  
276 pages, paper, \$10

"Dear God, Are boys better than girls? I know you are one, but try to be fair." This familiar prayer of a little girl establishes both the form and content of Ruth Tucker's book. Women are caught in a jumble of conflicting information about their worth and their place in church and society. By posing questions Christians often ask about gender relationships, Tucker provides answers to help both women and men pick their way through the maze.

In light of the stream of religious feminist books published during the last couple of decades, what is distinctive about this one? First, the-question-and-answer format makes it easy to read in small chunks, and the style is inviting—full of illustrative anecdotes and human interest. Tucker is obviously appealing

to lay people and youth in conservative and/or Evangelical churches who may be only beginning to question traditional patterns of male-female relationships.

Second, this book presents well-organized sections on theology, biblical exposition about women in both testaments, women in church history, and contemporary feminist issues. Such a broad swathe does not provide great depth, but Tucker has condensed well and kept up to date with recent research and events.

Third, Tucker argues for "biblical feminism," presented from her background in the Reformed tradition. For her the Bible is authoritative, and her main sparring partners are traditional Evangelicals who oppose women's leadership and role equality. She insists that the gospel calls both women and men to ministry and leadership without regard to gender; to ignore that is to distort the biblical teachings.

Though agreeing with Tucker's overall thrust and conclusions, I have two caveats. One is that she does not deal in any depth with how we interpret ancient texts written within different time and cultures from our own. She does cite some specifics on texts like 1 Tim. 2:9-15 and 1 Cor. 14:35-37 but hardly does justice to the ways all the biblical writings reflect the thoroughly male-dominated cultures out of which they emerged.

Second, I dislike Tucker's cursory responses to the tough questions of homosexuality and abortion. She too easily assumes that Evangelical feminists will be prolife and against any homosexual practice whatsoever.

These discomforts aside, I recommend *Women in the Maze* as an introductory text on biblical feminism for your high school or adult Sunday school class. Once a door is opened, various issues can be studied in greater depth later.

*This review by RETA FINGER, globe trotter, was first printed in The Mennonite, May 26, 1992.*