Believe it or not, Luke 1:28 is the only scripture in the Bible that actually confers the status of “favored” by God upon a female. Previously only men qualified for this position: “The Lord looked with favor on Abel” (Gen. 4:4, emphasis added).

“N oah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8, emphasis added).

“The Lord . . . showed him [Joseph] kindness and granted him favor” (Gen. 39:21).

“You [Moses] have found favor with me [God]” (Exod. 33:12).

“S amluel continued to grow . . . in favor with the Lord” (1 Sam. 2:26, emphasis added).

“J esus grew . . . in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52, emphasis added).

A surface look gives the impression that women are not favored by God, even in the Bible.
No female had been said to have favor with God until the virgin girl Mary received a visit from an angel. The angel's pronouncement to Mary, recorded in Luke 1, changed the whole landscape for women. Biblical writers may have left women out, but God obviously had a different idea.

Interestingly, the angel did not simply call Mary favored, but highly favored. When a woman was declared to have favor with or a special place in God, she was not merely called special—she was extraspecial. She did not just have the status of privileged—she was called very privileged.

Notice also that the announcement did not come to us through a third party. We do not normally see God speaking directly to these men. However, the angel who said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored” (Luke 1:28), plays out the scene while we read it. He personally addresses Mary on God’s behalf in front of us, so to speak. And we, my sisters, are there.

We readers are a part of the angel’s conversation with Mary. We hear, along with Mary, the bestowing of her newfound position. We see God directly addressing this woman as highly favored as though He, through personal mediation, was correcting a historical injustice. We’re not allowed to simply read, “and Mary found favor with God.” God tells Mary directly, “You are highly favored.” And again, my sisters, we are there.

The angel repeats the pronouncement of favor two verses later. Often when the biblical writers repeat themselves, it’s not merely for emphasis but to expand the original idea. Could these words to Mary have greater implications? Is this pronouncement of high favor for more than just this one woman? Perhaps that’s why Elizabeth, Mary’s cousin, was included in this conversation with the angel. Granted, the impossible pregnancy of an older barren woman helped Mary believe in the possibility of a virgin birth. Both Mary’s and Elizabeth’s pregnancies were true miracles.

Yet the angel’s fervor about Elizabeth seems to do more than give support to a far-fetched idea. By including her, it was as if God were announcing a new status for women everywhere. Whether, young or old, single or married, fertile or barren—whatever the condition—hear the pronouncement concerning you. You have a new position—you are highly favored. This is
the conferred status that I believe God wants to place on all women. Regardless of what you've experienced, be it joyful or sorrowful, you are called to be God's Holiness woman. And that calling brings privilege—special rank, most-favored status for all women who with Mary trust what God is doing in them.

This means you, my sister. You are no second-class citizen. No longer are you forgotten at the bottom of the pile. No longer are you to see yourself as a victim or an enabler. No longer are you to submerge your intelligence beneath misunderstandings of the doctrine of submission. No longer are you to hide your gifts, your God-given personality, or your feminine sensitivity. No longer must you accept disrespect simply because you're a woman. God sees you and is speaking to you as the angel spoke to Mary. And I say, even as the angel, “Greetings, to you, my sister. You are blessed and highly favored!”