

Today's Christian Woman

Pt-3 Her Role in the Family & Home

I. Introduction

- A. The godly woman of scripture - Prov. 31
 - 1. The theme of a godly woman can be found throughout scripture and is pictured as the greatest of blessings for family and society as a whole. Her role as wife, mother, teacher, example, diligent servant of God and mankind inspires the true student of scripture. One cannot read scripture without appreciating, even standing in awe, at the role God has given to woman to fulfill in the Creator's world. She is, as the wise man said, to be praised by all, her value far exceeds the most precious of stones. To the God-fearer, few words conjure up more feelings of warmth and love and appreciation than does the word mother. The Christian knows that no one is more valuable to the Lord's cause than a Godly Woman.
- B. A generation is now living that knows only a feminist's world. Gender equality in every aspect of life is a basic mantra of our culture. It is not only pictured in every television sitcom and drama as the norm, it is becoming codified in the laws of our land. The very idea that female is to be subject to male in any way is regarded as antiquated.
- C. Biblical teaching on the roles of male and female are completely out of step with modern culture's beliefs and practices. Culture influences Christians. And feminism is influencing Christian thought.
- D. The new generation of young Christian woman is placed in a dilemma. She is urged to pick a career, train for it, pursue it and strive for the top. Then, somewhere along the way, she decides she wants kids, a family. A woman who has experienced the beginning of career and devoted several years to it and become successful in the business world, suddenly faces the difficulty of taking on the time-consuming, and physically and emotionally demanding role of a mother overwhelming. They often try to play both roles and end up feeling guilty about not doing their best in either. What is she to do? It is hard for some men to understand the dilemma she is in. This is also against the backdrop of being told that marriage itself is an outdated and demeaning relationship for a woman. And if she can't be in a leadership role in her church she should find a more up-to-date church in step with the times.
- E. Our discussion will be a biblically rooted discussion, respecting the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Any other basis for this discussion would be purely philosophical and one idea would be as good as another. We must recognize the Bible as the final authority in this matter.
- F. I cannot overstate the importance of such a study. The undermining of the Biblical role of woman in society is tearing out the foundations of the culture itself. The modernist mantra of "self-fulfillment" has an especially detrimental effect on the woman's crucial role in our society and in the kingdom of God. Women are told that self is all that matters.
 - 1. Women are told it is impossible to lead a fulfilled life as a wife and a mother. More and more are walking away from the most important work on this earth - the raising of the next generation of Christian men and women, molding and shaping the lives of their children as God teaches with the dedication it demands.

2. A lot of Christians who want to do right struggle with biblical teaching on these topic. I want us to see there is no need for any Christian woman to feel oppressed in her role in the Lord's body or in a Christian home and family.
 - i. I also recognize we are, to a great extent, looking here at the married woman though principles apply to all Christian women. The struggle for the single mother today is a unique and particularly difficult one. My heart goes out to a woman (or man) trying to earn an living and raise a family on his/her own. It is one of the most daunting tasks I can think of in modern society and the church should be as supportive as possible of a woman who is in that plight and is trying to be a Christian. They need our prayers and support.
 - ii. But this discussion is aimed more at looking how the modern culture has changed all thinking related to the woman and her role in culture today.

I. Today's Ideal Woman

- A. The modern view of the ideal woman has tried to paint a picture of a woman who has it all. It goes something like this:
 1. She has gone to college, gotten a solid education in her chosen field and has embarked on a career in the business world. Working hard for many years and going toe to toe with any man in her profession she has achieved success and received the honors and accolades of her business peers. She is very good at what she does and others know she has paid her dues to get where she is. She put in the long hours, outworked and outsmarted the competition and now she is the one others come to for insight on how to be successful. But she is more than that.
 2. This ideal woman is married and has children. Her husband respects and admires her as do her children. They love their mother and are grateful that she takes so much time with them. She never misses a school play or special event. She always makes her son's little league ball games and cheers him on. She makes things very special for them at home with all the special things that only a mother can do to endear herself to her children. But she is more than that.
 3. She is known in the neighborhood for her support of others. She always does her part in neighborhood projects and loves to have parties for the neighborhood kids and to help out when someone in the neighborhood is sick or in special need. She is always there for her neighbors and they admire her for her interest and support of them. But she is more than that.
 4. She also is a community leader. She does her part in community projects and is always present for town meetings to discuss important community issues. She has been approached and is considering running for city council. Many believe her good judgement and influence will help accomplish good things for the community. She is politically savvy and helps in party fundraisers and works tirelessly for candidates she supports.
 5. But that is not all. She also spends hours in helping with projects and teaching classes at church. She is know as an effective and dedicated teacher in Bible classes and one who doesn't hesitate to pitch in and help wherever and whenever she can in the church's work. All admire her tireless dedication to the lives of her brothers and sisters in Christ and how she selflessly does whatever she can to help them, no matter what it may take.
- B. Do you know this woman? I don't. Neither do you. Do you know why you don't know her? Because she doesn't exist. This modern concept of the ideal woman would not

only need to be Superwoman she would need about 42 hours in a day to do all things I have listed. When modern culture tries to tell the modern woman she can have it all, it is propagating one of the biggest lies ever told.

- C. Every woman has to make choices. No woman can succeed in all possible areas of endeavor at the same time just as no man can. Choices have to be made.
 - 1. Let me illustrate to show you this is not just some idea some preacher dreamed up.
 - i. Article - Maybe Supermoms Are Finally Getting Tired. Tampa Tribune, Wed. Nov. 5, 2003; Nation/Word, p. 13. An editorial from the San Jose Mercury News (hardly a bastion of conservatism).
 - a. Women going to work within a year after having a child decreased. It dropped 4% over last 4 years (98-02). Also, the number of women without kids fell slightly. A trend reversal of significance as families realize the choices they need to make for families sake.
- D. Christianity is about how to live our life. And what our God has revealed to us in His Word is His counsel on what choices we need to make to please Him.
 - 1. They are not necessarily the choices the world would make, but they are the right choices. As you will see we all don't have to make the same choices. But we must realize that whatever choices we make carry with them responsibilities - God given responsibilities. Responsibilities we cannot ignore and please God. God wants us to do our best at whatever we choose to do. And that means that the choices a woman makes for her life demand she do the best at what she chooses. What we want to see is what the Bible says about those choices so they can be carried out as God teaches.
 - 2. Again, see that some in our culture are beginning to come to their senses about these matters.
 - i. Article - Boomers Still Struggle To Balance Work, Family. Tampa Tribune, Business & Technology magazine, Monday, Oct. 27, 2003; p. 18. AP story. People choosing to work less and have more time for family and other activities, even when it means making less.
- E. The topic of the Christian's Woman Role in the Family and Home can be a touchy one and easily misunderstood. That is why I want to address this from the Bible, not in the arena of human opinion. Studies that have been made of families and marriages can often illustrate biblical principles but we want to gain the principles from the Bible, not from man.
- F. I hope you will listen to these biblical principles with one thing in mind: How can I please God? It is not about self-fulfillment. It is about selflessness and service to others.

II. Making Choices.

- A. Today's Christian Woman has choices set before her. I would think the big 4 would include: marriage, children, job or career, Christ. The last of these four will guide choices in the other 3. Christ is everything to the Christian. Anything He says is final for the Christian. Therefore choices made regarding marriage, children, job or career will be heavily influenced by Jesus.
- B. Job or Career.
 - 1. Choosing a career may be different than just getting a job. By career I refer to setting a career type goals and pursuing a lifelong course in a chosen field. You prepare yourself with training and education and you dedicate yourself to your job in

order to learn, improve and advance in your field. That takes dedication. I see nothing in scripture that would prohibit a woman from making a career choice. That may shock some but I don't.

- i. Lydia was obviously a career businesswoman, and a successful one. The virtuous woman of Prov. 31 was at least a woman with a business. She planted a vineyard and operated it; she made and sold clothes. It appears to me that Phoebe (Rom 16:1,2) had traveled to Rome on business and Paul urged the church in Rome to assist her in whatever need she may have.
 - ii. The Bible does not teach that a woman cannot work outside the four walls of her home. That is a false conclusion.
2. But if a woman makes a choice to pursue a career, let her realize the demands it will put upon her time and her person. To do your best will be demanding and require sacrifice and dedication. The wise man said, "Whatever your hands find to do, do with all your might" (Eccl. 9:10). And you are to do it not to please man but to please God (Eph.6:6-8; Col. 3:23-25) working honestly and heartily and conscientiously, "as unto the Lord."

C. Marriage (and possibly children)

1. It may be that you as a Christian woman, fall in love and desire to marry. That, too, is a God-given choice. It is not demanded of a Christian woman. An unmarried woman is not less of a Christian than a married woman. But if a Christian woman chooses to marry, she makes a good choice. ("He who finds a wife finds a good thing.") Marriage was ordained of God and a man and woman find in each other companionship, happiness and opportunity for further service to their God.
2. But, understand that marriage brings with it God-given responsibilities. Marriage, as ordained by God, is also governed by God. We must remember that. If you as a Christian woman choose marriage, what does God say you are to do in that relationship to honor Him?
3. Genesis 2:18-25 - She is to be a "help meet" for her husband.
 - i. "Help meet" is two words - The first means "helper." The word translated "meet" or "suitable" is a preposition meaning "like unto, answering to or suitable for." Literally the expression means a helper like unto himself, a helper of his own kind, a helper answering to his needs, or a helper suitable for him.
 - ii. No suitable companion was to be found among all the animals God created. So God took a part of man and formed from the rib one like unto man himself, yet also different. They complement or complete one another. As one part of a circle complements or completes the other part, so a woman complements or completes the man, and vice versa. Together they reflect the image and likeness of God as fully as it could be expressed in human form (short of the divine incarnation of Jesus in the flesh).
 - iii. She then is to be her husband's companion, helping him, as he also helps her. She becomes an inseparable part of his daily life. The two become one (Gen. 2:25).
 - iv. That is a demanding task. Outside of her relationship to Christ, it is a Christian woman's most important earthly relationship - more important than her role as a neighbor, daughter, sister, or even mother. Her husband comes first (and so it is with the husband toward his wife). A Christian woman must be willing to make the commitment to all such a relationship will require. What are things that will be required of her in that relationship?

4. Eph. 5:22-33 - A passage that discusses this relationship. (Cf 1 Peter 3:1-7).
 - i. (Ephesians 5:21-24,33) "...submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything... 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." (NKJV)
 - ii. Submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.
 - a. Submit - be in subjection to, be under obedience to.
 - b. God has placed the husband in the position of being the head in a marriage. The woman's submission cannot be separated from the kind of headship the man is to provide - loving, caring, sacrificial, for the benefit of the marriage and the spiritual welfare of both. Nevertheless, the wife is to submit to her husband. That is God's teaching. No team of any kind functions effectively without leadership, without a place where the buck stops (so to speak). God has placed man in the position and the wife is recognize his position as head of the home.
 - c. The model for the relationship in Eph. 5 is Christ and the church. The man is to be as loving, caring and sacrificial as Jesus was for the church as He gave himself up for it. And the wife is to show the followship that the church is to show to Christ, out of love and respect for a husband who wants to be as Christlike as possible.
 - d. This is not a popular concept today. But it is the biblical concept and anyone who chooses to marry and wants to please God should take this teaching into account. I don't have time in this lesson to go into detail about the strengths and advantages of such a relationship but we trust God and know that His way is best.
 - e. So if you as a woman choose to marry, recognize the need to submit to your husband in all things and to respect him. And you are to "love your husband" - Titus 2:4.
5. Titus 2:3-5 - Another passage where Scripture defines responsibilities in a marriage. Here Paul is exhorting the older women to teach certain godly principles to younger women. It is a list that helps to set the standard of a godly wife. Look at what this passage says.
 - i. "Love your husband" - The word translated "love" is *philandros* which is an exhortation to be affectionate. She is to be affectionate and loving toward her husband. She has a responsibility in marriage to meet his physical needs and desires and she has a responsibility to show tender care and support that is an expression of such love.
 - ii. Discreet - sober-minded, sensible, wise in mind. Word implies self-control. She is a woman who takes life seriously, who is not flippant about important matters and takes on her role in her marriage with dignity and purpose.
 - iii. Chaste - literally, to be clean. Refers to her moral character. She is pure, innocent of immoral behavior. She desires to keep herself for her husband alone and acts in a godly, wholesome way when around others.
 - iv. Good - *agathos*, lit. "describes that which, being good in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect." It means just what you think if means.

She is to be a good person. God defines what is good so it means she is doing those things that God considers good. Her life is characterized by good works. In this context, she especially seeks to be a good wife and mother. Some translations use the word "kind". Certainly kindness is one of the most important traits of a wife and mother.

- v. Obedient to their own husbands - Already discussed, but interesting that Paul is urging the older women to teach the younger ones the importance of this trait. Indicates this may not come naturally to some and needs to be taught.
- vi. Love your children - fond of one's children; maternal. This is what should be a natural affection. And its expression is seen in how the mother cares for, trains, disciplines and guides her children.
 - a. Motherhood is a choice. Another choice that God allows us to make. As with other choices set before us, if this choice is made and children come into the home, the godly woman must recognize the God-given responsibilities she now has as a mother. *A mother who loves her children recognizes the tremendous responsibility that God has given to her in being the focal point of their care.*
 - b. There is no greater work on the face of this earth than raising children. It is just unbelievable to me how this role has been, not just belittled, but demonized by the modern women's movement. The idea that a woman might dedicate many years of her life to her children is scoffed at as a waste of time and a waste of a woman's talent and ability. How disgusting. Somehow shaping and molding human lives is not important. A bigger paycheck and a bigger home and better car and "self-fulfillment" is. I don't understand that kind of thinking.
 - c. From 1960-1995 the amount of contact parents have with their children dropped 40% (Home by Choice by Dr. Brenda Hunter; quoting Wm. R. Mattox, Jr.;p. 19.) One psychologist has said that never before in American history have so many children been raised by strangers" (HBC, p.65)
 - d. Any woman who wants to please God and decides to have children must be ready to take whatever time is necessary to fulfill her God-given role as a mother.
- vii. Homemaker - lit., a watcher at home, or a stay-at-home. Various translations homemakers, keepers at home, workers at home, busy at home, workers in their houses, domestic. I know that last word probably doesn't set too well with some but it is used in its original meaning of "fond of homelife and household affairs."
 - a. This word has probably been the most difficult for many to handle when talking about a woman's role in the family. Some have interpreted it to mean that a Christian woman can do no work outside the home. At the other extreme are those who have tried to completely change the meaning of the word so that it means absolutely nothing.
 - b. What does God mean by using this term? Certain things should be clear.
 - 1) It means homelife is her focal point. Her life revolves around home and family. Her primary responsibility is to "rule the household" or "guide the house." That phrase is used by Paul in 1 Tim. 5:14 in instructions to certain young women. The home and its environment is her charge and responsibility from God. It is to come first in her life. She chose to establish a home and to have

children. Now she must accept the sobering responsibility of being in charge of that home and its environment.

- c. Does that rule out all other activity?
- 1) No. Just look at the virtuous woman in Prov. 31 that drew the praise of her husband, children, neighbors and God. She ran a business (considered a field, bought it, planted a vineyard in it, worked it and made it profitable. She makes clothing and sells it to the merchants for them to retail to others. She was industrious and used her talents to make money.
 - 2) But it is also clear she did none of this to the neglect of husband and children. Her goal was helping to help provide for them but it is pretty clear she was not taking on a job that would essentially reduce her time with family to a bare minimum and requiring farming out most household responsibilities including the most serious ones of child raising and caring for her husband. The key is vs. 27 -"She looks well to the ways of her household."
 - i) As a child I knew a woman who worked side by side with her husband in his business every day. My mother said she never knew a woman get more done than she did. She took every role in her life seriously. She never neglected her responsibilities in the local work. (It was jokingly said one time that when there was a death in the congregation that she would food at the house before the body was cold.) She and her husband raised a godly daughter who married a godly man and now, we as a congregation benefit from her work because her Christian grandchildren and great-grandchildren worship with us. Somehow she found the hours in the day to do all that but one thing was always clear - family came first and she took the time to make that happen. She always looked well to the ways of the household first. But I will also say, that godly woman I just described is the exception, not the rule.
- d. So does this passage rule out a career for a woman? The Bible doesn't say that and to say that it absolutely does, is to speak arbitrarily. However, if a Christian wife and mother chooses both (i.e., family and career), she needs to make sure she can do both and do them well. Few can but I won't say it can't be done. She is going to have to give up some things - either home life, church work, good deeds to neighbors and friends, community involvement, or her career path. - something will have to give and she needs to make sure that it is not her God-given responsibilities she took on as a wife and a mother. That must come first.
- viii. "that the word of God may not be blasphemed" - that is by the behavior of these young Christian women God's name will be honored and not cursed.
6. These traits describe the role of the woman as a wife and mother. There is no higher calling for a woman than to aspire to these ideals set forth by the Word of God. Historically, societies that rejected these ideals for women ended up treating woman with less respect, even to the point of being considered chattel property.

Societies that have respected these ideals have come to honor their women as heroes of the home, as the greatest influence on their culture, and raised them to higher levels of respect and honor in society. Sadly, our culture has lost that perspective and we will pay and already are paying a high price for it in many ways - in rampant immorality and soaring crime rates among juveniles, a society without a moral compass and a loss of spiritual influence - the very things that are instilled in a person at their mother's knee.

7. Ladies, make sure you are putting God and family first, not just in lip service but in your daily life, in time spent in service to Christ and family, and attitudes shown toward husband, children, neighbor and friend. You have made choices in your life and I urge you to accept the responsibilities that come with those choices. The Lord's cause, your family and all society will be better because you did.

III. Conclusion

- A. I keep waiting for the question that I haven't heard yet as I preach this series: "When are you going to preach to the men?" Fair enough. I will do that. We men need to remember the responsibilities that our God-given choices have placed upon us, too. I would just say to include the discussion of both at the same time would have made this series at least twice as long and I thought that too much. Other topics need to be covered from this pulpit. In the meantime, I hope all will take these lessons as intended - to teach God's role for the Christian woman and the honor it will bring to her and her God if she will fulfill it.