

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me"—John 5:39.



These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"—Acts 17:11.

"Devoted to the Search for Divine Truth"

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Special Issue

Women Professing Godliness



(A Study Of The Role Of Women)

Donnie V. Rader • P. O. Box 9 • Lexington, AL 35648

There are two circumstances that prompt this special issue. First is the liberal attitudes that accept and promote the feminist concepts in the church. Secondly, the proper role of women has been dishonored and belittled by some.

The signs of the times suggest that there are problems ahead with reference to the role of women. We can easily see what has become commonplace in the denominational world. For many years their women have taken leadership roles and even become preachers. We can look at what is going on among our liberal brethren and get a little "prophecy" about what lies ahead for us. We are already hearing about women leading in prayer, serving the communion, leading the singing, being appointed as deacons and even preaching. Who could have dreamed this was possible just twenty-five years ago? Those who read some of the papers published by our liberal brethren are well aware of the fact that they have a real battle going on.

We should not be so blind as to think that the same could never happen among us. We are hearing of women attending business meetings. They are taking greater roles in a number of areas. Much of what is done may seem innocent (and is) at first. However, as has happened among the liberal brethren, one step leads to another and then another. As I travel in meetings, I have been asked such questions as "Can a

women say 'amen' audibly at the end of a prayer or during a sermon?", "Can a woman wait on the table and serve the elements if she does not lead in the prayer?", "Can she teach a class and one of the elders sit in to oversee? If one can, what about two, three and all the men?" I am concerned about what I hear.

Brethren, there is an ever present danger of apos-tasy. We can be assured that it will come if we continue to lose respect for the authority of the Bible. I am convinced that the real problem we are facing is a lack of respect for the authority of the Bible. This (the problem of the role of women) is just one symptom of the problem.

On the other hand, many women feel that there is very little purpose they can serve in the kingdom. Some wonder and ask, "What can a woman do in the church?"

This edition addresses both of these circumstances. The first two articles address the feminist movement and its impact upon us. The next two unfold the passages that place limitations upon women and put them in subjection to man. The next three articles show how God's woman can and does profess godliness. We close our study with Biblical answers to questions that are often asked about the role of women.

So we produce this special issue with a two-fold aim: to offset the liberal thinking and at the same time praise and honor women professing godliness.

What Is Going On In The Feminist Movement?

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It would be difficult to find anyone unfamiliar with the Feminist Movement. The national media seems to have adopted promotion of the Movement as a part of its purpose. Public opinion polls are frequently cited to prove that "... feminists and the women's movement have majority support."¹ The National Organization for Women (NOW) tries to prove this majority support by quoting polls that say 60% of women age 18 - 29 consider themselves feminists, while 71% under age 45 say there is a need for women's movement.² Well-known to statisticians is the fact that poll figures can be easily manipulated by the asking of carefully phased questions. Thus, most women polled will agree that they do believe in equal rights for women. This carefully phased question enables NOW to get its "majority." However, it can be shown that the majority of women do not believe in the specific agenda of the Feminists. In fact, a recent TIME/CNN poll reports that "63% of American women do not consider themselves feminists."³ We should not allow them to use their distorted figures. They should even be challenged on the size of their organization. They only have 250, 000 members.⁴ What we have here is nothing more than a small group of highly visible and vocal women, implying that they are speaking for all women. Who are these people, and what are the positions of the organizations they represent?

History Of The Feminist Movement

Feminist trace their origin to the 19th Century battle for the right to vote, the Women's Suffrage Movement. They note that the original Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was introduced in Congress in 1923. They carefully credit Eleanor Roosevelt with putting a women's equality statement in the Charter of the United Nations.⁶ NOW, the best known of the feminist organizations, was organized in Washington, D. C., October 29, 1966. Originally, the purpose of NOW was "... to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society... in truly equal partnership with men."⁶ Almost immediately, NOW realized widespread support.

To broaden their base, NOW embraced many other "rights" causes, such as, Civil Rights, the Environment, Economic Justice, Elimination of Poverty and Violence, and the Rights of the Disabled. Thus, NOW made itself the "voice" for all of these causes. However, two things happened which caused the Movement to lose steam.

First, the Equal Rights Amendment was defeated in 1982 when it was not ratified by a majority of State Legislatures. Secondly, the Feminist Movement's open-arm policy toward other Movements produced a backlash. "BACKLASH" best describes What Is Going On In The Feminist Movement. The leadership blames the failure of the Movement on the Reagan White House, the Courts, Hollywood and "the media conspiracy."⁷

Searching The Scriptures

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The Reasons For The Backlash

Some of the Causes embraced by the Feminist Movement were highly controversial, causing significant loss in public support. The following positions particularly harmed the Movement:

1. **THE PEACE MOVEMENT.** These were the people who opposed the military establishment. They opposed the "Star Wars" research project, along with military aid to struggling democracy movements in Central and South America. Many Americans favored these efforts and rejected those who opposed the military establishment.

2. **LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS.** Support of these groups cost the Movement dearly. Though these people have "come out of the closet," most Americans reject their cause. When the Feminist organizations started listing Gay Rights on their agendas, they lost significant public support. It did not help when NOW inaugurated Patricia Ireland as President. She has "acknowledged a four-year involvement with a woman in Washington, D. C." at the time she was married to her present husband.⁸ Gloria Steinem, the leading icon of American feminism, hurt the Cause badly with many followers when she said, "What does it matter what the private life (of the President Ireland is, LW) as long as its open and honest."⁹ To most women, even "open and honest" lesbianism is repulsive.

3. **ABORTION RIGHTS.** The Feminist Movement is the principal promoter of the abortion-on-demand Movement. They have applauded Roe v. Wade which legalized abortion. It is estimated that 1.6 million babies are murdered through abortion each year in this country. Feminists look on abortion as nothing more than another form of birth control. Feminists say, "Abortion is necessary for effective family planning."¹⁰ In a 1986 NOW publication, "The Third Decade Agenda," NOW asked its members to endorse the following statement: "We will fight to restore full reproductive freedom of choice... for all women." This fight has thinned the ranks of the Movement.

4. **THE LEADERSHIP.** Today the leadership is regarded as "a generation of out-of-touch feminist leaders."¹¹ Most women did not agree with the leadership position on many of their controversial Causes. To these women, "feminism came to mean denigrating motherhood, pursuing selfish goals and wearing a suit."¹²

5. **HOSTILITY TOWARD THE FAMILY UNIT.** Many feminists express such hostility. Christina H. Sommers, feminist educator and lecturer, noted the shift in feminist philosophy. She said, "I started to run into this amazing literature by feminists, which was so relentlessly hostile to the family,... denying choice to women who want traditional families... Gender feminists want to eradicate wherever possible the differences between men and women and to abolish the traditional family."¹³ I recently read these startling statements: "Radical feminists... are unrelenting enemies of the home as God ordained it and as most of us have known it all our lives... Shulamith Firestone argues... that women in the home are oppressed. Their

oppression stems from their childbearing and childrearing roles. Caroline Bird freely admits that women are seeking to revolutionize the world which patriarchy has created. That includes the radical reformation or the total abolition of marriage and the family."¹⁴ Is it any wonder that women are disenchanted with the Movement?

6. **ANTI-RELIGION SENTIMENT.** Note these views of Feminists on religion: "They argue that much of the Bible - especially the passages dealing with the roles of women in the family and in the church - is culturally conditioned and is not binding on churches or on individuals today... Rosemary Ruether believes Christianity now stands as a barrier to a genuine theology of liberation. Mary Daly argues that God as a Father was an invention of men and cannot represent women. She asserts that the women's movement may become the greatest threat to the major religions of the world."¹⁵ Gloria Steinem regularly makes anti-religion and anti-family statements. Her new book is "... about how religion undermines our self-esteem." She further says Biblical childrearing "... treats children like little animals who have to be tamed and disciplined... The breaking of the will is the goal of this school of childrearing, and its often religious..." Because of this, she believes "the majority of kids in the country have been... abused."¹⁶

My mission has been to document the current status of the Feminist Movement. Other authors will discuss the Scriptural implications of the Movement. It is encouraging to note that women in general are beginning to revolt against this evil. It is imperative that we continue to expose their opposition to religion, the home and the family, while crediting them with support of homosexuality and abortion. If we do so, it is possible that we might speed their demise.

¹ "Feminists Are The Majority," The Fund for the FEMINIST MAJORITY, 1988.

² "How Do Younger Women Feel About The Feminist Movement?," NOW Newsletter, 1-91.

³ Nancy Gibbs, "The War Against Feminism," TIME MAGAZINE, 3-9-92, pg 50.

⁴ Don Truex, "New NOW Leader," Plainfield, IN Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 2, 1-29-92.

⁵ "The National Feminist Agenda," The Fund for the FEMINIST MAJORITY Newsletter, 1987

⁶ "Statement of Purpose," NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN, 10-29-66.

⁷ Nancy Gibbs, Op. Cit, pg. 54.

⁸ Don Truex, Op. Cit.

⁹ Gloria Steinem interview, THE MORNING EXCHANGE, WEWS-TV, Cleveland, OH, 1-29-92.

¹⁰ "Abortion: For Survival," The Fund for the FEMINIST MAJORITY, 1989.

¹¹ Nancy Gibbs, Op. Cit., pg. 51.

¹² Nancy Gibbs, Op. Cit., pg. 52.

¹³ Scott Jaschik, "Philosophy Professor Portrays Her Feminist Colleagues as Out of Touch and Relentlessly Hostile to the Family," THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, 1-15-92, pp. 1, 16, 18.

¹⁴ Winford Claiborne, "The Feminist Movement," THE

¹⁵ SPIRITUAL SWORD, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1-91, pp. 11-12.

¹⁶ Winford Claiborne, Ibid., pg. 13.

¹⁷ Gloria Steinem, Op. Cit.

The Impact of The Feminist Movement Upon God's People

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The subject assigned to me is one of great importance because this movement has already had a greater impact upon the church than many of us realize. The feminist movement did not begin to have any great influence upon our government and other institutions until the early 1960's. Since then its influence has steadily grown until it now has a great impact. The

movement has contributed millions of dollars into the campaigns of liberal politicians who in turn have helped the cause of the feminists.

What the feminists Relieve and Teach

The feminist movement has a diversity of beliefs—all the way from the radical feminists to the so-called "biblical" feminists who pretend to be committed to the Bible, but will then argue that much of the Bible is "culturally conditioned" and is therefore not binding on people today. They reject what the Bible teaches about the role of women in the church (1 Tim. 2: 11-12; 1 Cor. 11: 3) and in the marriage relationship (Eph. 5: 22-24). The radical feminists are anti-God and anti-marriage: they are humanists. They have set out to restructure the government, the home and the church. They are intent on changing all our standards in society. They support civil rights for homosexuals and lesbians, are pro-abortion, and approve of any kind of "live-in" arrangement that one might desire. They say that marriage is a "dehumanizing" institution; that it is "legal whoredom" for women, and believe that it must end in order for women to be liberated. They believe children should be taught to believe in "human potential" not in God, and they would give the responsibility of rearing children to the state.

Its Impact on denominationalism

The feminists do not intend to leave religion alone. They have had such an impact on denominational churches that by the middle of the 1970's there were 7,000 women ordained to preach among religious groups in the United States. The Methodist church alone had more than 500 women preaching at that time, and the Disciples of Christ ordained 51 women in 1987 (**The Christian Standard**, Feb. 26 1989, page 23). In a period of ten years the number of females enrolled in seminaries grew from three (3) to sixteen (16) percent. (**U. S. News and World Report**, Sept. 27, 1976, page 84). In 1982 the feminist movement had such an influence on the National Council of Churches that it issued

a new version of the Bible attempting to remove from the text most of what they called "sexist" language.

Its Impact on Institutional Churches of Christ

Institutional churches of Christ are now involved in a great struggle over the issue of women preachers, elders and deacons; women leading public prayers, and women being used to usher and to serve at the Lord's table. In 1990 Freed-Hardeman University had what they called "The Preachers and Church Workers Forum" on the subject of "The Role of the Women in the Work and Worship of the Church". Earl D. Edwards (forum director and Dean of the School of the Bible) gave the following as one of his reasons for having this forum: Because this writer is convinced that if the tendency to place women in public leadership roles is not checked, it will cause division in churches of Christ within a very few years (**Gender and Ministry**, Preface, page 6).

They studied in this forum such questions as: "Are Biblical prohibitions cultural ones?", and "Should today's Christian woman be encouraged to lead prayer (or even preach) in the assembly?" (**Gender**, page 7). Four men spoke: the two men who defended the expanded role of women in the church were Robert M. Randolph (preacher for the Brookline, MA church) and Lynn Mitchell (one of the elders of the Bering Drive church in Houston, TX). Ralph Gilmore and Don McWhorter took the opposing view. Randolph and Mitchell argued that the expanded role of women is allowed today because the restrictions found in the scriptures are "cultural"; Gilmore and McWhorter showed that 1 Timothy 2, 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Corinthians 14: 34 are **not** tied to culture but to the creation of God. Brother McWhorter said in his summary speech:

First Timothy 2: 11-12 finds Paul still not appealing to culture, but to the normative law of creation as the reason why women cannot teach over men nor usurp authority over men. I do not see any argument that has been made that would change that (**Gender**, page 165). The Bering Drive church in Houston (where Lynn Mitchell is an elder) have women participating in public worship in equal roles with men. In a "Report on Women's Participation in Public Worship" dated March 5, 1989, they stated:

On July 31, 1988, the elders presented a statement to the Bering family concerning the use of spiritual gifts by both men and women expressing our conviction that it is scriptural and appropriate for

sisters, as well as brothers, to serve in Sunday morning worship roles of ushering, greeting visitors, receiving the offering, reading scriptures, leading prayers, leading singing, and serving communion (**The Spiritual Sword**, Jan. 1991). During the aforementioned forum at Freed-Hardeman in 1990, Robert Randolph was asked, "Can women serve as elders today?", to which he replied: "I have no problem with women serving as elders today." When Lynn Mitchell was asked the same question, he said: "I would not take any exception to what brother Randolph said." (**Gender**, pages 74, 75).

Some institutional churches of Christ began a drift from the God-given role of women in the 1970's. In some situations that involved small groups of young people and adults, women were allowed to lead prayers and to participate in chain prayers along with the men. We can see that in a few short years they have progressed from women leading prayers in small groups to a place where it is being advocated that a woman can be an elder and a preacher! Brethren, any trend away from God's pattern, if it is not stopped in the very beginning, will grow into a full apostasy!

Its Impact on Conservative Churches

Conservative churches of Christ have not escaped the impact of the feminist movement. As brother Mike Willis said in **Guardian of Truth**, March 16, 1989: To think that we can live in a society with such a movement as the Women's Liberation Movement influencing religious groups around us without some spillover occurring among us is naive. In the milieu of this movement, we are now seeing articles asking whether or not women should attend the business meetings. Is this the portent of a demand for leadership roles for women? Brother Connie Adams (editor of this paper) said in the February 1992 issue: "There are straws in the wind which indicate that we shall not be immune to this problem." Brother L. A. Stauffer made the following statement in an article entitled, "Women - Their Subjection":

A disturbing sign or two are beginning to display themselves in some churches I know about and others I have been associated with in meetings. A few women have made it clear, especially in the absence of elders, that they want to be in business meetings where decisions are made about the work of the church. This is one small step in the direction of the long strides that have been made in society by the feminist and E. R. A. movement. Are these women looking for equal rights and equivalent roles in the church?

Some congregations among us are now having both men and women to come together to talk about the work of the church. In these meetings they discuss the needs and hopes for the congregation, and make suggestions for the improvement of the work. Brethren, this is just a *first* step in the wrong direction. The next step will be that women will naturally want to be included in the decision-making process. It is like our institutional brethren allowing women to pray in small groups (which

is a violation of 1 Tim. 2: 8, 11-12), now women are preaching (in some places), teaching classes where there are both men and women, serving at the Lord's table and leading prayers in the assemblies! One step away from God's order leads to another, and then another, and another... !

God has put the care of the business of the churches into the hands of men. He intended for every church to have a plurality of elders as soon as men can be qualified (Acts 14: 23, Titus 1: 5). Elders are men, not women. No woman can be an elder because she can never meet the qualifications (1 Tim. 3: 1-7; Titus 1: 5-11), therefore she has no right to be in a business meeting of the local church helping to plan and make decisions for the work. She cannot do the work of one she can never qualify to be, an elder! The man has been given the headship role, not the woman (1 Cor. 11: 3). None of the apostles, elders, deacons or evangelists were women in apostolic times. With the understanding that God has specifically placed the business of the church in the hands of men, no God-fearing woman should want to do what God had forbidden her to do—take the role of headship (1 Cor. 11: 3; 1 Tim. 2: 11-15) and leadership in His church. Just as God placed the husband in the role of headship in the home (Eph. 5: 23-24; 1 Pet. 3: 1, 5-6), He has placed the man in the role of headship in the church (1 Tim. 2: 11-14). Any woman who rejects the headship/leadership role of man, in the home or in the church, has sinned against God who gave the roles of men and women for as long as the earth shall stand.

Why would women today want the role of decision-making in the church? The only answer is that many women (and men) have been influenced by the feminist movement of our day. Many in the church today know more about the feminist movement than they do about the Bible and the God-given roles for men and women given from Genesis! There is a great need in the church today to go back to the word of God and study again the roles God has given us as men and women, and may God help us to be content to abide by the limitations He has placed on us.

The impact of the feminist movement upon God's people has been greater than many realize, and the full impact is yet to be felt if preachers, elders and brethren don't do some good, sound teaching on this NOW! I believe that God gave woman a great role in the home and in the church—she is no second-class citizen in the Kingdom! But, others will deal with these things; this article is intended to show the impact on the church when woman steps out of the role that God has given her.

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1 Cor. 14: 34-35 & 1 Tim. 2: 11-12

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Every Biblical discussion of contemporary woman and her role in God's service must take into account the restrictive passages of the New Testament. A lack of faith in God's Word is demonstrated when we ignore these passages, call for a new hermeneutical rule, or rule them out upon the basis of this being a new age. Man made rules, designed to eradicate the binding force of these scriptures, also destroy everything else God has ordained. We must accept all God has said or we destroy the basis upon which we accept anything He has spoken. This is how faith in God is determined (Rom. 10: 17).

1 Timothy 2: 11-12

"Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." We discuss this text first because it is broader in application.

Through the years most of our efforts were directed toward answering those who would deny godly women the right to do the teaching God accepts and requires (Acts 18: 26; 2 Tim. 1: 5; 2: 2; Tit. 2: 3-5). Today, we must deal with those who wish to ignore these texts.

The Anti-Women Teacher Position

1 Timothy 2: 11-12 is used by those opposed to women teaching. They forbid women purposely teaching anyone at any time. They have insisted that Paul was saying, **"I suffer not a woman to teach," period.** This could not be what Paul was saying, however, because that would mean Christian women could not do the teaching God requires of them. They could not teach by **singing** (Col. 3: 16), be **teachers of good things** (Tit. 2: 3), or **teach the younger women** (Tit. 2: 4) as directed, if forbidden to teach, period.

The Passage Must Be Qualified

Everyone who studies this passage knows that it must be qualified. Even the Anti-Women Teacher advocates realize this. One proponent's position on the passage, once he finished qualifying it, went something like this: **"I suffer not a woman to teach the Bible, (that is: to be a teacher, deliver didactic discourses), in the church, in any class the church may arrange, in public, or in worship, nor to usurp authority over the man, the woman, or the child, but to be silence."**

His qualifications were found in his writings. He could not and did not deny them.

We do not argue with one's attempt to qualify the passage, but we do question one's right to qualify what he contends must be, **"I suffer not a woman to teach"** period. Such is blatantly inconsistent.

All of us must qualify the passage. Do we qualify it by our own arbitrary rules designed to suit our theories, or do we qualify it by God's own established rules?

The Scripture's Qualification

The context of 1 Timothy 2 shows how Paul qualified these statements. Verse 1-7 discuss the universal nature of salvation. Of this salvation, Paul was ordained a preacher, teacher and an apostle. The varying roles of men and women in respect to this work are addressed in verses 8-15. **Men** (males) could pray everywhere (v. 8). The exclusive nature of this statement means women cannot pray everywhere. Why not? The context will reveal the reason.

The conduct of women is examined in verses 9-15. First, they are to dress modestly and conduct themselves as **"women professing godliness."** Second, women are to **"learn in silence with all subjection"** and are not **"to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man."** To whom are they to be in subjection? Obviously, the one over whom they cannot exercise authority, **man.** The reasons given were: (1) the creation, **"Adam was first formed,"** and (2) the curse, **"the woman being deceived was in the transgression"** (cf Gen. 2: 23-24; 3: 16). From the beginning, God recognized man as the head of the woman. For this reason, female Christians cannot teach in any capacity that violates their place of submission to man. On the other hand, they can teach in any capacity required by the scriptures that does not violate that position. Godly women do not violate this principle when they teach their children (1 Tim. 2: 15), other women (Tit. 2: 3-5), or even when they teach men submissively (cf. Acts 18: 26).

1 Corinthians 14: 34-35

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." This text deals with one specific place where the rule of submission applies, the **assembly** of the saints. Women must not address this assembly. They must remain silent. It is a shame for them to speak in the assembly.

Inconsistent Positions

The Anti-Bible Class people have used this passage to condemn the Bible Class arrangement, insisting that it only authorizes an assembly where the whole church is together in one place (cf. v. 23). Their position is inconsistent because it permits the teaching of the Bible only in an assembly where the whole church is together in one place. Bible examples of the word of God being taught in places and at times other than when the whole church is together in one place prove this position to be in error.

The Anti-Women Teacher advocates who believe classes are scriptural apply this text to the Bible Class arrangement. To them, "Let your women keep silence in the churches" also means "in any class the church may arrange." However, consistency would demand that all the principles of this text likewise be applied to Bible Classes. This would mean conducting only one class at a time because two or more would violate the principle of only one speaking at a time (cf. v 29-32).

Some brethren have argued through the years that 1 Corinthians 14 is not binding today. There are two theories: (1) The passage is regulating the conduct of "inspired persons." Since divine inspiration ceased (13: 8-13), they contend the restriction no longer applies. (2) The passage controlled of "the prophets' wives" (deduced from the expression "**your women**" in KJV) and, since the prophets no longer exist, it is no longer binding.

Few have questioned these positions through the years. I questioned them. Were only the "inspired women" or "the prophets' wives" to be under obedience? If these positions contain validity, all other women (except the categories mentioned above) could speak in those assemblies. If not, why not? If all other women could speak, then God penalized these women, not because they were to be under obedience but, because of who they were. Who can believe it? On the other hand, if the other women could not speak, what is the point of the argument? Negating the force of this text upon the strength of these arguments would actually negate the teaching of the entire New Testament.

The reason our sisters at Corinth were forbidden to speak was that "**they are commanded to be under obedience.**" To whom were they obedient? They were subject to the general headship of man (cf. 1 Cor. 11: 1-16).

Nothing Has Changed

Man has been the head of the woman since creation (Gen. 2: 23-24; 3: 16; 1 Tim. 2: 13-14). While the Old Testament does not argue the point as powerfully as the New Testament, it is evident that man was the head of the woman (cf. Num. 30: 3-8, 13). The New Testament thoroughly establishes the point. First, "the head of every man is Christ; **and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God**" (1 Cor. 11: 3). For this reason godly women must recognize and keep the customary rules that distinguish her as a woman (1 Cor. 11: 4-16). Second, godly women must not violate their place of submission to man when teaching others (1 Tim. 2: 11-12). Though they can teach other women and chil-

dren, and even men submissively (Acts 18: 26), they cannot teach in any capacity that violates this rule. Third, godly women must not address the assemblies of the saint (1 Cor. 14: 34-35). Finally, godly women submit to their own husbands (Eph. 5: 22-33; Col. 3: 18; Tit 2: 5; 1 Pet. 3: 1-6).

Has God changed His law? If so, where? Since God established His order with the creation, and He has not changed it, what right do we have to change it for Him? The law of Christ emphasizes this principle and we are still under law to Christ. Women who **profess godliness** have never had a problem with the rule. They praise God by remaining in subjection to man.

Conclusion

Seeking to nullify the binding force of 1 Corinthians 14: 34-35 and 1 Timothy 2: 11-12 is a serious matter. Those who do so are "**perverting the gospel of Christ**" (Gal. 1: 6-8), are not **abiding "in the doctrine of Christ"** (2 Jno. 9), and they are inviting the wrath of God upon them (Rom. 2: 8-9). It is far better that female Christians adorn themselves with the beauty ordained of God as a daughter of Sarah (1 Pet. 3: 1-6) than to enjoy all the glory this world has to offer.

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Living In Subjection

1 Cor, 11: 1-3; Eph. 5: 22-33

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I believe the editor of this special issue gave me the hard-est topic. It is the last one I would have picked if I had been allowed. I shall try to deal with it without bringing down the wrath of Christian women upon me. But no promises.

Some women feel that living in subjection is not really living at all. There are some reasons for this: (1) They have not been shown and taught by their mothers; (2) They are rebellious toward authority; (3) They don't understand God's reasons; (4) They have never seen a good husband. Before examining these, let us look first at our texts.

1 Corinthians 11: 1-3

We are particularly interested in verse 3 - "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." The significant word in this passage is **head**. It does not suggest "source" or a superior/inferior relationship. It denoted one thing only **authority** (government). The word authority could be substituted for "head" and one would receive a proper understanding of this verse. The woman's subordination does not violate the equality of the sexes. There is a sense in which being in Christ is "neither male nor female" (Gal. 3: 28).

Headship Needed In All Relationships

All groups and units of people must recognize headship to be able to function. An army with no leader will be defeated. At the same time it can have only one commander-in-chief who makes the final decisions, or else it will be defeated. *"The subjection of a wife to her husband is not that of force and fear and slavery, but of loving submission which comes from freedom. A body with two heads is a monstrosity; a church with two heads cannot prosper; a house with two heads cannot stand"* (Lehman Strauss, **Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians**, p. 205). God made neither the church nor the family a democracy. He ordained a chain of authority. This does not mean He loves elders more than He loves deacons, or kings more than He loves citizens, or parents more than He loves children, or husbands more than He does wives.

No Difference Based On Gender

There is no distinction in Christ based on gender (Gal. 3: 28). It is not based on the idea that males are His favorites. It does not enhance a man's salvation above that of his wife. It is based on which is best suited for a particular role. God stated near the beginning that "her

desire shall be to her husband" (Gen. 3: 16). *"This principle involves no humiliation, no injustice, no wrong. It recognizes a difference of function and responsibility, but it precludes selfishness, harshness, and unkindness"* (Charles R. Eerdman, **Commentary On I Corinthians**, p. 112). As the Father and Son are "one," so are man and wife (Eph. 5: 31). Though Christ is subject to the Father, there is no rivalry between them. Neither did God intend any between husband and wife, though the wife is subject to the husband. While the woman was made for man, man was never complete until woman was there. There is an interdependence upon each other and upon God. Paul recognized this when he said "Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God" (11: 11-12). Paul is not arguing for anything other than a partnership, though a partnership in which man is the head of his household. The scriptures recognize wives as being on an equality with their husbands mentally, morally, and spiritually.

To Wives Or To Women In general?

In both 1 Cor. 11 and Eph. 5 Paul is writing to Christians and of married women. In 1 Cor. 11 Paul indicated this by using the creation as an illustration (v. 7-9, 11, 12). He says the woman is the glory of the man. In Eph. 5 he specifically refers to husbands and wives. Generally, a woman is not to usurp authority over a man (1 Tim. 2: 11-14), but my wife is not in subjection to every man on the street. Nor does it mean a widow could not hire a man to do manual labor for her. However, a wife is to yield her will to her husband's. She is not to take the rule, dominate, and act on her own authority, but to subject herself to her husband. It is the will of God.

Ephesians 5: 22-33

Paul had just stated (v. 21) that Christians are to subject themselves to each other. That means they are not domineering but are concerned about the welfare of one another. But there is a special kind of subjection for wives to their husbands, for "the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is also head of the church." What is the nature of his authority? *"It is the authority that empties itself completely, in complete self-sacrifice, in the interest of loved ones. Every true woman who realizes that ground of authority yields to it by the very fiber of her nature"* (G. Campbell Morgan, **The Corinthians Letters Of Paul**, p. 134). It is almost impossible to discuss the submission of wives without talking of man's love for his wife.

The husband is to love his wife to the same extent Christ loved the church. He should be willing to give himself up. As Christ is the savior of the church, the man should be devoted to saving his wife. This is his great

object in life. Paul emphasizes the dignity of woman. He is to love her as his own body (v. 28). This does not mean he loves her "as much as" his own body, but "because she is" his body. He is to nourish her. This involves protect-ing and comforting. She will look to him for this. "Her desire shall be to her husband" (Gen. 3: 16). They are different physically, biologically, and emotionally. He honors her as the weaker vessel, or body (1 Pet. 3: 7). He is to cherish her (v. 29). This means he places a high value on her and esteems her.

To What Extent Is Her Subjection?

"In everything!" (v. 24.) That's it. Sounds like a tall order - enough to cause a woman to balk. Some have not only protested but have actually blasphemed against God. Some, both men and women, have never understood this. It means *in everything which is not contrary to the will of God, pertaining to a husband's legitimate authority* - "as is fitting in the Lord" (Col. 3: 18).

I knew a Christian lady who was bewildered by her non-Christian husband. He mistreated her and knew just enough of the Bible to know it said that wives were to "submit to their husbands *in everything*." He would command her to do some demeaning, demoralizing, and ridiculous things just to prove she was in subjection. As A. C. Grider used to say, "A man like that should be ashamed to live and afraid to die." She was frustrated, lost her self-esteem, and her faith was greatly shaken as she attempted to meet all of his demands. WAS THIS WHAT THE LORD HAD IN MIND? Of course not.

The person who plucks Eph. 5: 24 out of context is no different than the one who plucks John 3: 16 out of context and refuses to consider anything else the Bible says on the subject. It is not "fit in the Lord" for her to violate the will of God (Acts 5: 29). Nor is it "fit in the Lord" for man to abuse and mistreat his wife by making a slave of her. It is hard to believe a man could read Eph. 5: 24 and not also read the next verse (and also vs. 28, 29). Such a man is wresting the scriptures unto his own destruction (2 Pet. 3: 16).

Reciprocal Attitudes

The wife's demeanor is that of a meek and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3: 1f). She loves and reverences her husband (Tit. 2: 4; Eph. 5: 33). If she wants her husband to love her, she submits and tries to please him. If a husband desires his wife to "honor and obey," let him have the care and concern Christ had for the church. Rather than terror and threats he should have love and attachment. He is commanded to love her. When each comes to the marriage willing to give, they shall receive.

Some wives have to fight the tendency to be domineering. Some men need to fight the tendency to abdicate and let the woman be in charge - the head. This is not God's will. Adam Clarke quotes a homely rhyme from Francis Quarles:

"Ill thrives the hapless family that shows
A clock that's silent, and a hen that crows!
I know not which live most unnatural lives,
Obeying husbands or commanding wives!
Let us look again at those 4 reasons why some women living in subjection are not really living at all. (1) *They*

have not been shown and taught by their mothers. This is a duty enjoined on older women (Tit. 2: 3, 4). Not only should they look for opportunities, but elders should plan classes for younger women taught by older women. Even if they didn't learn from their mothers they can learn from the Bible. (2) *They are rebellious toward authority* (Rom. 1: 30). The feminists shall receive their reward (Rev. 21: 8). (3) *They don't understand God's Reasons.* Which are: a. Man was created first (1 Tim. 2: 13). God has always given preeminence to seniority. He did this with the firstborn in families and he does to man in order of creation, b. Woman was easily deceived, thus better suited for subjection than headship. She over-stepped her bounds and took the lead in the first sin and persuaded her husband to join her. (4) *They have never seen a good husband.* She submits easier to love than to bitterness. "Husbands love your wives and be not bitter against them" (Col. 3: 18). But she is still commanded to submit. This shows the value of courtship. Headship and submission should be discussed before marriage. Both husbands and wives have often been greatly disappointed. A woman who made a bad choice for a husband may have to work with him slowly and win him by her behavior (1 Pet. 3: 1f). She should spend much time in prayer, for both of them.

Conclusion

Women enjoy the highest happiness in communities and homes where the Bible with its principles of Christianity are accepted and obeyed. The submission of a wife to her husband is part of her obedience to the Lord (Eph. 5: 22). Eerdman observed that Paul is pictured as an enemy of women, and by leaders of the feminist movement he is regarded with horror and disgust. It is possible that Paul may someday be discovered as the great emancipator and protector of women.

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The Woman Whose Price Is Far Above Rubies

(A Study of Prov. 31)

Bill Hall • Route 8, Box 385 • Florence, AL 35630

"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies" (Prov. 31: 10). These words serve to introduce the Bible picture of an ideal woman. This is **God's** "ideal." This is beauty as **God** sees beauty. This is **God's** formula for happiness and contentment. We would emphasize that this is the ideal. This is the standard for which godly women strive. No one woman has reached it to perfection. Many women, however, focusing on the qualities that characterize the woman of Prov. 31, recognizing her beauty, and realizing that she is a picture of what God wants them to be, have taken on her character to a remarkable extent. We hope that we can encourage others to do so. God's picture of the ideal woman provides a refreshing alternative to the world's standard. The world would picture her as a career oriented, independent, aggressive, self-assertive, refusing to allow anyone or anything to get in the way of her personal ambitions and goals, looking out for self, unrelenting in her pursuit of "success." Some would even go so far as to picture her as being able to out-cuss, out-drink, and out-maneuver any man if competition demands it. We are confident that our readers' faith in God and His wisdom will enable them to overcome the pressures of this modern and sinful world in order to appreciate the beauty and grace of the woman pictured in this passage.

She Is Trustworthy

Whether her husband leaves the home for an hour, a day, or many days, he knows that he can trust her to be faithful to the vows she made when they married and to carry on the affairs of the home in the most efficient manner possible. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need to spoil" (v. 11).

He is able to trust her in regards to the family's financial affairs. She is a good manager. He faces no temptation to plunder or steal because she has over-spent. He has no lack of gain. She is capable of living within the family income and is conscious of getting good value in her purchases: "She seeketh wool, and flax... She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar" (vs. 13, 14). "She perceiveth that her merchandise is good" (v. 18). She stretches the dollar to provide the very best for her family. Through her careful management the family enjoys what other families of greater income seem to be unable to afford.

She Is Unselfish

She places the interests of her husband and children ahead of her own. "She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (v. 12). She loves her husband, rejoices in his successes, helps to build his self-image, and is always supportive in everything that is good. She is unselfish with her husband's time: "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land" (v. 23). This verse suggests that her husband is respected, that he joins with other "elders" of the city in settling disputes among the people. She encourages him in this even though no doubt such duties require time away from home.

She watches after her children and provides for their needs. "She looketh well to the ways of her household" (v. 27). She makes it her business to know where her children are and what they are doing. She is a disciplinarian.

She Is Hardworking

She "worketh willingly with her hands" (v. 13). She is not the family breadwinner, but she finds ways to supplement the family income by buying a field and then "with the fruit of her hands (out of her earnings - NIV) she planteth a vineyard" (v. 16). "She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant" (v. 24). She is skillful in her work: "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff" (v. 19).

She is hardworking, but is not in competition with her husband. He does not feel threatened by her, for she seeks his good. She is hardworking, but not in such a way as to neglect her children, for she looks well to their ways. She can be found when a bloodied knee needs attention or hurt feelings need comfort and sympathy. She is hardworking, even though all indications are that the family is prosperous with plenty of household servants. She does not use her affluence as an excuse for idleness, for she "eateth not the bread of idleness" (v. 27).

She Is Well Organized

Plans are made before the day ever begins. "She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens (servant girls - NIV)" (v. 15). It is likely that the "portion" mentioned in this verse refers to "tasks" that the servant girls are to carry out. No time is wasted. She knows what tasks are to be performed during the day, and she is ready to assign them just as soon as the servants are available.

She also is aware of winter's approach and sees to it that proper clothing is available for the family. "She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her

household are clothed with scarlet" (v. 21). Nothing "slips up" on her. She thinks ahead. She is organized. There is little last minute scurrying around in this household.

The future holds no fear for her. "She can laugh at the days to come" (NIV - v. 5). She is well prepared for the future. She has her trust in God. She has nothing to fear. She can live her life in peace and serenity.

She Is Benevolent

She is a woman of compassion, of sympathy, of concern for the needy. A child that is hungry and poorly clothed, a family that has fallen on misfortune, or an outstretched hand from an impoverished fellow-being, stirs her spirit. "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy" (v. 20). Her children grow up, learning by example the importance of caring for the fatherless and widows.

She Commands the Respect of Others

When she speaks, "she openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (v. 26). No malicious gossip comes from the lips of this woman, no harsh and unkind criticism, no shallow babble. Her mind is fertile, and her speech manifests the depth of her thoughts. She is kind, and her lips speak forth words of kindness.

She dresses becomingly. "Her clothing is silk and purple" (v. 21). She cares about her appearance. Her clothing reflects her character and self-respect. She knows what is appropriate for various occasions and dresses accordingly.

She is a woman of strength. All who know her admire her fortitude. "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms" (v. 17). People respect her for her quiet, but strong, confident demeanor. "Strength and honour are her clothing" (v. 25).

She Is Valuable

She is not just valuable, she is invaluable. Her worth cannot be stated in monetary terms. "Her price is far above rubies" (v. 10). She is not for hire. Her labor is a labor of love. What she does and what she is cannot be bought for any price. She can only be repaid with love, appreciation, and praise. Her "job benefits" are a good self-image, fulfillment, the joy of a well-run household, the respect of her children, the praise of her husband, the admiration of all who know her, and, above all, the approval of God, who calls her a "virtuous woman." Her benefits cannot be stated in monetary terms, for they too are invaluable.

Her life is not an easy one. It calls forth all the energy, determination, and strength she can muster. But her joy is complete. "Her children arise up, and call her blessed" (v. 28); and her husband, in love and appreciation, praises her, saying, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all" (v. 29). She may or may not have physical charm or beauty, but she is beautiful with a beauty that lasts and is enhanced with age. The man who finds such a virtuous woman may not be rich in this world's goods, but he is rich indeed. A virtuous woman - God's wonderful gift to man!

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A Tribute To The Housewife

Donnie V. Rader • P. O. Box 9 • Lexington, AL 35648

The role of the housewife is one that is very often minimized and not appreciated. I know from personal experience the feeling that comes from having a job that in the minds of many is not work at all. That is precisely the view that many husbands and children have of the woman who guides their house. Many other women, who are not all that thrilled with being house-wives, also have a limited view of the responsibilities. May we learn to give that role the consideration, honor and respect that God would have us give it.

It is Honorable

A few women refer to themselves as "just a housewife" as though they are ashamed that they are nothing more. If the same women held high positions in the business world they would proudly state their job description and the company they were with. May I say with great emphasis that being a housewife (and "just a housewife") is a position of honor for the simple reason that God assigned her that responsibility. Paul wrote that women should "marry, bear children, guide the house" (1 Tim. 5: 14). He also told Titus that the older women should teach the younger women to be "keepers at home" (Tit. 2: 5). When a woman does that, she is fulfilling the highest purpose and usefulness that she possibly can. Then she has all the dignity she can have. The Proverb writer describes such a woman as "virtuous" and worthy of "praise" (Prov. 31: 10-31).

Being a homemaker is not a second rate, inferior role. But, "here she is supreme—she has no equals. Here her first and her best work is to be done" (P. D. Wilmeth, *The Christian Home*, p. 101). Ladies, don't ever apologize, be ashamed or minimize your role.

It's A Real Job — It's Work

For those that think housewives have nothing to do please consider the expression "keepers at home" (Tit. 2: 5) means "caring for the house, working at home" (Thayer, p. 442, emphasis mine DVR). Read again Prov. 31 and it will be obvious that the woman of the house had plenty to do. She cooks, washes dishes, washes clothes, folds clothes, irons, sews, cleans bathrooms, washes windows, vacuums, dusts, goes to the grocery, shops for the whole family and picks up after others in the house. She starts her day before the rest, getting breakfast ready and sending her husband and children off in different directions. She works all day and then her job continues long after her husband and children have come home. She continues to cook, wash clothes

and see to the 1001 needs of her family. There is more truth than poetry in the saying that "A man works from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done." And don't forget that she puts in overtime every day. She doesn't get the weekends off. Holidays are double duty.

Now, when you think that your wife, mother or friend has nothing to do, maybe it would do you good to spend about a week doing what she normally does. Believe me, you will change your mind! In fact, husbands, it wouldn't hurt us to pitch in and help. Even with that help, she will have all she can handle.

Husbands and children, have you ever thought what the work your wife and mother does is worth? If she were to be paid by the hour or what she is really worth, you couldn't afford her! It is in the home that she works the hardest and is appreciated the least. What we need to do is just stop and thank her for what she does. And most certainly thank the Lord for her because having found a wife, you indeed have found a good thing, and "obtain favor from the Lord" (Prov. 18: 22).

She's A Mother too

Besides all the other household chores, there are times she will have little children to tend to all day. Either one can be a full-time job within itself. But, she does both and never complains while others think she has nothing to do. She is the one who is up at night when the baby needs to be fed and rocked. She is the one who checks on the children every hour when they are sick. She is the one who changes most of the diapers. She does the potty training and reads and sings to them. She somehow manages to do all of that and still finds time for her husband and other family members. How dare anyone minimize the importance of what she does!

Sure the father has the responsibility in rearing the children, especially in shaping them spiritually (Eph. 6: 1-4). However, generally that has been done by mothers (2 Tim. 1: 5; 3: 15). Napoleon said, "The future destiny of the child is always the work of the mother."

What's Happening?

What is happening to the role of the housewife? Why are so many dissatisfied with being "just a housewife"? Many have followed some career to the neglect of the house, children and their husbands. Could it be that some are trying to live by a higher standard than they can afford and it thus forces the wife to leave the home and into the marketplace? Don't misunderstand. I'm not saying that it is wrong for a woman to work outside the home. I am saying that it is a shame when some woman chooses her career (or unnecessary job) and doesn't keep up her work at home and leaves the children to be raised by some hired baby-sitter and the older ones to come home from school to an empty house.

Why isn't more emphasis given in the training of young girls to become housewives? Why is it that so many who marry today have no concept of their responsibilities? Is the art of being a good homemaker becoming a thing of the past? God forbid that the day should come!

Many of the homes among the brethren where I have labored for the past several years have been blessed with women who are seeking to be good housewives and mothers and nothing more. These are women who profess godliness. Those of us who have homes that have been so blessed have every reason to thank God.

You're Only A Housewife?

ONLY a wife and a mother?

When God wants a spirit to bear
 Intercessory prayer to His presence;
 Effectual, passionate prayer,
 He looks to the heart of compassion -
 A "mothering" heart than can best
 Understand how He longs for the sinner
 To come to His arms and find rest.

ONLY an wife and a mother?

When God want a preacher, and one
 He can trust, He looks to the mother
 Who is faithfully training her son.
 And when He ordains that son "preacher, "
 And gives him the right sort of wife
 Who will nurture, encourage and strengthen,
 Who will be "his right arm" through his life.

When God wants a Sunday School teacher

For the little folks He wants to reach,
 Who will show them the way of salvation
 As only a mother can teach.
 He looks to the heart that is busy,
 At home, in His throne-room with Him
 While the hands of this hurrying housewife
 Are keeping her house neat and trim.

Oh, you are not "only a housewife. "

When God chose a name for His church
 He called her, not slave, nor yet servant,
 But bride—and when He has ended His search
 For those who will make up her number
 And she, as His wife, she will take up the task
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What Women Can Do To Promote The Cause of Christ

Connie W. Adams • P. O. Box 69 • Brooks, KY 40109

Paul said there were "women which labored with me in the gospel" along with Clement and other "fellow-laborers, whose names are in the book of life: (Phil. 4: 3). Exactly what these women, Clement, or the other fellow workers did to help Paul in the gospel is not spelled out. But it is clear that it is praiseworthy for women to labor in the gospel. Other writers have dealt with limitations upon that labor. It is my task to expand upon areas in which godly women may labor to promote the cause of Christ.

It is erroneous to think of the cause of Christ only in terms of what is done in public worship assemblies. It is helpful to speak of the church both *collectively* and *distributively*. As Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church at Jerusalem, it is said that he "made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and hailing men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8: 3). The church was not assembled here, but the people were still described as "the church".

It is in this sense that there is so much which godly women can do to promote the cause of truth.

Helping The Local Church

1. Women can help **establish** local churches. The church in Philippi began with the conversion of a band of women with Lydia who gathered by the riverside for study and prayer (Acts 16: 13-15). They attended to the word spoken, were baptized and immediately showed hospitality to Paul and his companions who continued to preach there. Many congregations would not exist today had it not been for the faith and devotion of a godly woman, or several, who were determined to see the cause planted where they lived. When I preached in Atlanta, Georgia, it was through the encouragement of two sisters who lived in Covington and were traveling about 40 miles each service to meet with the Glenwood Hills church, that the work began in that place. They helped to arrange for Sunday afternoon services in the Legion Hall and did much work behind the scenes to get it going. When crews of men went down on Saturdays to help erect the building, they quietly arranged for the gathering of food and drink for the workers at noon. They never preached a sermon, nor wanted to. They did not aspire to be elders or deacons or lead in any way, but I'll tell you, without them the work would not have been started, at least, not then.

2. Women can help **maintain** the work of a

congregation. The church in Cortez, Florida was kept alive for a number of years by a sister and her children who would not give up. There were times when she and a few other women and children were the only ones who met. They conducted the services. When a meeting resulted in the conversion of a man, he took the lead and they encouraged and helped him and then did the same with other men as they were converted. The church at Ask Fork, Arizona has been kept alive through the work of an elderly sister who refused to give up.

3. Women can help **within** the congregation to promote the cause. They can teach classes of children. I attended the funeral of a dear elderly sister a few years ago and met a number of people who told of the profound influence she had on them as a teacher when they were small children. Her story could be multiplied over the country and around the world. Many faithful workers for the Lord, including elders, preachers, song leaders, teachers, and godly women who do so much to help the work of the Lord, were first instructed by a faithful sister in a Bible classroom who probably had no idea how vital a role she was filling.

Many older women have done much to instruct the younger women. Not only should older women teach the younger on such subjects as being godly wives and mothers, but on a wide range of Biblical studies. Women need to be well grounded in the whole counsel of God. They need to be informed on evidences to support faith, on the nature, work and organization of the church and dangers for corruption from the divine pattern in these areas. They must be taught textual studies of all sections of the Bible including the prophets and Revelation. Various issues which arise and trouble the saints should be thoroughly covered. Sometimes it is a well informed wife, mother or grandmother who is able to quietly point out the truth to the rest of the family. Sometimes a devout wife can save her own husband from grievous error.

Some of the greatest encouragers of gospel preachers are faithful sisters who listen with eloquence and sometimes speak words of encouragement. The quiet dignity and unyielding consistency demonstrated by so many devout women is the source of strength to many of us. For many years I have suggested to younger preachers and other Christians that they spend some time talking with and listening to elderly sisters in Christ. They often have a wisdom borne of experience which enables them to be wise counselors to the younger.

I do not know how many studies have been arranged for me by faithful women. Through their influence they have played a role in leading countless people to Christ. Many times I have been called upon to baptize those

who were taught one-on-one by some sister in the Lord. Women need to learn how to teach in the most effective way. My wife teaches classes often in our meetings for the women on how women can teach other women the gospel. It is a scriptural, common-sense approach that works.

Phoebe was "servant of the church which is at Cenchrea" (Rom. 16: 1). They had entrusted her with some responsibility on behalf of the church there as she journeyed to Rome. Paul gave instructions to the brethren to "assist her in whatever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also" (verse 2). In the same context he wrote of Priscilla and Aquila who were described as "my helpers in Christ Jesus" and said that he and the churches of the Gentiles owed thanksgiving to God for them (Rom. 16: 3-4). He further sent greeting to "Mary, who bestowed much labor on us" (v. 6).

There were certain widows who were to be "taken into the number" (enrolled) (1 Tim. 5: 9-10). These were to be 60 years of age, "well reported of for good works; if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." These were women to whom special responsibilities were assigned and for which there was compensation. The "enrolling" had to do with being numbered among those to be cared for by the church as the context indicates. They were therefore to be just representatives of all that was good and noble about the church.

Promoting The Cause Generally

Older women are to teach the younger women. "The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2: 3-5). Notice that older women were to be "teachers of good things." This may be done by word and example. Younger women were to be "good" (or beneficent, contributing to what is noble or praiseworthy). When this is not done, then the result is that "the word of God will be blasphemed."

1. The power for good in the domestic realm is shown in this passage. Where this influence is lacking, society at large suffers, and especially the church. It is this writer's settled persuasion that the present absence of this domestic influence, all too evident across the land, is responsible indirectly for many of the woes which beset the people of God. The family circle is the foundation of all ordered society. Where it suffers, everything it touches suffers with it. Strength in this area helps to develop strong leaders in the churches and contributes greatly to the developing of gospel preachers and teachers and their wives. Weakness in this area is partly responsible for the lack of qualified elders and deacons. Where there is a de-emphasizing of home making, there is also to be seen generally a failure to train children properly. As they reach their teens untrained and undisciplined, their fathers are ill prepared to serve as elders.

Their families are not in control.

2. Women have great power for good in society at large. Remember Dorcas? Upon her death, many came testifying of her good deeds. Luke reports "this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did." When she died, "all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them" (Acts 9: 36-39). Where did Dorcas find the time to be "full of goods works and alms-deeds" and to make "coats and garments" for the poor? What was her role in the church at Joppa? She was neither an elder nor a preacher. She is described simply as "a certain disciple" (Acts 9: 36). Her power for good in the community was felt. She practiced her religion and when she died, she left an empty place in many lives. There is an innate compassion in godly women. We must not allow the pressures of modern society to squelch that. It was said of the "worthy woman" that "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy" (Prov. 31: 20). So did Dorcas.

Peter said that the godly wife might be able to win her husband to the Lord even when he will not listen to the preaching of the word. He cannot fail to see the power of the word as it makes his wife all she ought to be (1 Pet. 3: 1-6). This is what is meant by promoting the cause generally.

There are women who are engaged in various occupations which bring them into daily contact with many unsaved people. They will observe your dress, speech, dignity and self-respect, your response to pressures from those around you on the job and they will soon learn how much you know about the Bible and whether or not you are real in living according to what you say you believe. You may be the only opportunity some of those who see you daily will ever have to observe a real, live, walking and talking Christian. What is the gospel according to you, sisters? That is the gospel they are reading.

This writer owes much to the power of righteous women: a grandmother, a mother, a sister, aunts, two godly wives, and two saintly mother-in-laws, a host of grandmothers and mothers and sisters in Christ whose lives have touched my own and helped me along the way. All of these have a share in whatever has been accomplished in preaching the gospel wherever doors have opened for me to go. Whatever has been said or done to build up churches and save the lost is due in large part to the power and influence of these good women. May their tribe increase.

God's Woman

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The inspired scriptures will perfect a man unto all good works (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17). Any work that is not authorized by the scriptures is not a good work (Eph. 2: 10). Every question must be answered by the word of God.

This article is limited in content because of space. I shall limit the questions to a woman's role to public worship and service.

I want to lay down three principles from God's word which I believe will govern all questions relating to the woman's role anywhere, especially in the church.

1) God created man and woman and specified their relationship in the family, in society and in the church (Gen. 3: 16). That relationship does not change through the ages.

2) The word of God is complete to furnish everyone unto all good works which God had ordained (2 Tim. 3: 17; Eph. 2: 10). God "... hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness..." (2 Pet. 1: 3).

3) The following divine instruction to women is clear, complete and concise:

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1 Cor. 14: 34, 35).

"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2: 11, 12). These two passages place the following obligations upon every woman everywhere.

1. Not to speak in the church (assembly).
2. To keep silence with all subjection.
3. Not to usurp authority over the man.
4. To be under obedience.

These verses do not permit any women to speak in the assembly of the church, or to usurp any position of a man. This applies to all churches and all situations in which a woman would usurp any authority over men.

Woman In Creation

Woman is man's equal, created from him, for him, and for his glory (Gen. 2: 22; 1 Cor. 11: 7-9), but she was created to be in subjection to man (1 Cor. 11: 3; 1 Tim. 2: 11, 12; Eph. 5: 22-24; Col. 3: 18; 1 Pet. 3: 1). The man was

created first (1 Tim. 2: 13). Woman was created afterward for a helper and companion to man (Gen. 2: 19-25). She is to be in subjection to man; he will rule over her (Gen. 3: 16). This applies to society as well as to the family relationship (1 Tim. 2: 11, 12).

Woman's Work In the Church

The role of women in the church has been undergoing some change in the wrong direction for more than a generation. I have received questions from women across the country seeking some justification from scriptures to engage in a leading role in the public worship, and in the activity of the church which is not permitted to them.

1. Are Women Authorized To Preach?

"Let your women keep silence in the churches:... for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1 Cor. 14: 34, 35). "... But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be silence" (1 Tim. 2: 11, 12). These passages prohibit women teaching or usurping authority over the man. They are not permitted to be in any position in the assembly of the church that is usurping the authority of the man.

The context of the above statement indicated that "church" refers to the assembly of the saints for edification and worship. The apostle was discussing spiritual gift of tongues to edify the church.

2. Can women attend business meetings and participate in the discussion?

A woman is not to usurp authority of man; she is not to take a ruling position in the affairs of the local church. These meetings are called "business meetings" because they are usually the means of conducting the "business" affairs of the church in the absence of elders. Their intended function is to make decisions concerning the affairs of the church. The Bible forbids women taking the lead in any affair of the local church. Women should not attend "business meetings" of the church.

3. Can women serve the elements of the Lord's supper to the congregation?

A woman is not to be in any position that usurps the authority of a man because the New Testament forbids that. There is no teaching in God's word that is more direct, positive and specific than 1 Corinthians 14: 34, 35 and 1 Timothy 2: 11, 12.

Serving at the Lord's supper is a leading role of men, and women cannot do so scripturally. Any public direction or service before the assembly for worship by a woman is usurping the authority of the man.

4. Can a woman lead a public prayer?

No, if she is in an assembly of men and women.

Leading a public prayer is the same in principle as speaking before the assembly to preach to teach. Public prayer is talking to God, but it is also speaking before the assembly, otherwise, how would they be following the petition to God. She would be violating 1 Timothy 2: 12.

5. *Can a woman say "amen" audibly during the sermon or at the end of a public prayer?*

Most people who pray with one "leading" the prayer say "amen" to themselves, or very softly. To say "amen" audibly, loudly, is attempting to speak a word before the assembly. Could she not quietly say "amen" to herself and accomplish exactly what the Lord would permit her to do?

6. *Can a woman serve as an elder?*

No man or woman can serve as an elder or deacon who is not qualified according to the scriptures. 1 Timothy 3: 1-7 and Titus 1: 5-9 give the requirements that will qualify a man to be an elder, and no woman can attain these qualities. An elder is to be a man and to have one wife. No woman can have one wife by God's law. An elder must rule his own house well (1 Tim. 3: 4), and the woman can not scripturally be the head of the house (Eph. 5: 22-25).

An elder is to have the oversight (1 Pet. 5: 2). Elders are to rule over the flock (Heb. 13: 7, 17; 1 Tim. 5: 17). A woman would violate 1 Timothy 2: 12 to try to be an elder or a deacon.

7. *Can a woman lead singing?*

Many women have good singing voices. Some of them have good knowledge of the Bible and have a good vocabulary, but they are not permitted to speak in the church (assembly) over the man. Directing singing is taking a leading role in part of the public worship, and a woman is not permitted to do that.

In rare cases when very small numbers of saints meet, and only one or two men are present, a lot of help could come from one or two of the sisters, but even here a woman is not to "lead" singing if a man is present. He should try to direct the singing.

8. *Can a woman make the announcements?*

Any public speaking in the assembly for worship is a violation of 1 Timothy 2: 12. She cannot speak or teach over the man, and cannot usurp the authority of the man. She should not be in the position of a man.

A woman should not try to circumvent the word of God by trying to take the role of leadership and rule in the church through her husband, father or brother. In some areas this is what disturbs churches which would otherwise be at peace. Let the woman fulfill the role God gave to them, and let the men treat the women as God requires them to do. This will strengthen both the home and the church.