

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE
Lesson 12
The Many Sides of a Christian Wife

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. What is a liberated woman? Is it a woman who is free to run her own life as she pleases, independent of God and any male influence? Feminists would say that a woman is free only when she is equal to, independent of, or superior to the man.
- B. The impression is given that marriage, caring for a husband, raising children and being a homemaker are drudgery and no longer acceptable to the nuclear age woman.
- C. Biblical Christianity takes issue with the feminists and holds that the primary role of a woman is to be a wife and a mother. This may not be her only role, but it is her primary one. God has created a woman so as to have her find her deepest satisfaction in her husband, children and home. This does not mean a woman cannot work outside the home if the situation demands it nor have a career, but real fulfillment comes only as she is a homemaker.
- D. Feminists keep repeating that motherhood and the home does not present the modern, well-educated wife with an adequate challenge. Feminists shout loudly that a homemaker is a drag and not worthy of a woman's emotional power and creative talents. However, Christians keep on saying that motherhood provides a woman with the challenge of the highest order, one that will tax all her wisdom, utilize all her emotional qualities and often put to work whatever other skills she may possess. There is nothing sinful about mothers working outside the home under certain circumstances. But it is ridiculous to suggest that it is necessary because a mother's work within the home is dull and meaningless.
- E. Feminists say that being a wife, a mother and a homemaker is no longer relevant for the nuclear woman and she needs to work outside the home to find satisfaction.
- F. Christianity says a woman finds her deepest satisfaction in her husband, children and home in any age whether she works outside the home or not.
- G. It is not easy for Christian women to accept what the Bible teaches on the place of the woman because they are being taught by the secular world that a woman should be as free as any man, do what any man could do and be free from the agony of housekeeping and raising children. Yet, God says the woman has a key role in His plan for the family unit. There is no substitute for a good wife and an unselfish mother. Someone has said, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world". But today too many women have stopped rocking cradles!

II. A WOMAN'S PRIMARY PLACE IS IN THE HOME

- A. *"So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan."* (1 Tim. 5:14)
 - 1. Young widows who do not marry have a tendency to get into trouble. Therefore, they are to marry, have children and guide the house or manage the house.
 - 2. The Greek word translated "manage the house" is from two words: *irks* which means "house" and *despots*, which means "lord" or "master."

3. The wife is to be the ruler, guide or manager of the home, but not the head of the family. This simply means the home is to be the wife's domain, the place where she has much authority under the headship of her husband. As one woman put it, "I am the head of the kitchen and my husband is the head of the house." Perhaps it could be better said this way, "I manage the house and my husband manages the family."

Our American scene suffers from an obvious lack of homemakers. On the one hand we see cop-out husbands who fail to exercise leadership of any kind let alone spiritual leadership, and on the other hand career-women wives who are not making homes for their families—the result: lots of houses but very few homes. The greatest career to which women could aspire, in God's book, is to be the "ruler" at home as God intended, especially when we consider that as a mother, she has the greatest influence on the lives of the children in those important early formative years (Smith, Love Story).

- B. *"Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God."* (Titus 2:3-5)
 1. The older women who are mature in Christ are to train the younger Christian women to love their husbands, to be in subjection to their husbands and to be busy at home (workers at home).
 2. Younger women must be taught how to be good homemakers. If these things are done, then the Word of God is not maligned or blasphemed by the unsaved world. How a woman treats her husband and children and how she keeps her home is a testimony to the non-Christian.
 3. The housewife, who does dishes, sweeps floors, changes diapers, makes beds, picks up after the kids, and does the shopping every single day, could and often does become bored with the whole miserable routine. However, a Christian homemaker must get all of it into a divine perspective and see that this is one very important aspect of her ministry which God holds her responsible to do as unto the Lord.
 4. Practically speaking, unwashed dishes, dirty clothes and an unkempt house are out of keeping with the Christian faith.

II. A WOMAN'S PRIMARY GOAL IS TO PLEASE HER FAMILY.

Proverbs 31 gives us a record of the ideal wife. She is the truly liberated woman. However, we must remember that this is the ideal woman, for all women fall short of this ideal. However, it should be the desire of every woman to meet this ideal. The woman in Proverbs 31 is in no way suppressed, but leads a full, meaningful, exciting and productive life as a wife, mother and businesswoman.

- A. The Wife's Value (10-12)
 1. *"A wife of noble character who can find?"*
 - a. The Hebrew word for "noble" means "efficient with high moral qualities." Literally, it means "a woman with many parts." She is many faceted with many parts or sides to her personality.

- b. Proverbs 31 shows the ideal woman is using all of her gifts and talents for her home and through her home. The question implies it is very hard to find this kind of wife.
 - 2. "*She is worth far more than rubies.*" No price can be put on her value. She is priceless or invaluable.
 - 3. "*Her husband has full confidence in her.*" Her husband has great confidence in his wife to make decisions and manage the home while he is gone. He has an implicit trust in his wife. She has earned that trust through faithfulness.
 - 4. "*And lacks nothing of value.*" She manages so well the funds given to her by her husband that he has no fears she will misuse the money or cheat him. This certainly indicates that some women may be able to handle finances very well.
 - 5. "*She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.*" The women's life is oriented towards her husband and she seeks always his best interests because she is his helper. She is willing to live for her husband.
- B. The Wife's Activities (13-27)
- 1. "*She selects wool and flax.*" A good wife goes out of her way to find bargains and money saving devices to better her family. The Hebrew wife found the best deals on wool and flax and the modern woman is to find ways to save money for the family.
 - 2. "*And works with eager hands.*"
 - a. Much of a woman's work is with her hands and she is to learn to do her daily chores with cheerfulness, realizing this is God's will for her life. She finds creative ways to make boring tasks more exciting and she comes to grips with her basic attitudes and abandons self-pity about doing the menial tasks around the home.
 - b. A creative woman seeks to get the daily chores done so she may have free time to do many other things that she would rather be doing.
 - 3. "*She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.*" A good portion of every day for a Hebrew woman was meal planning. There were no modern devices and she had to look for food bargains and still maintain quality. Food and meal planning is to be done in a creative manner by the ideal woman.
 - 4. "*She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family.*" She is up before the sun rises to make sure her family is properly fed. Women should be early risers and make sure, if possible, the husband and children have had a nutritious breakfast before going to their daily activities.
 - 5. "*And provides for her servant girls.*"
 - a. The Hebrew housewife often had servants to help her get the chores done, and she made sure these servants were taken care of effectively.
 - b. You may be saying, "Well, if I had a servant or two today, I would get a lot done too!" However, you have servants today that the Hebrew wife would have given her right arm for—refrigerators, ranges, freezers, dishwashers, automatic washers and dryers, radios, TV, microwave, a car and the list goes on.
 - c. One good thing about these modern servants is that they do not talk back and they are never lazy.
 - 6. "*She considers a field and buys it.*" A woman may work in real estate if her husband approves. He does not squelch her in some business ventures because she is doing it to better her home.

7. “*Out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.*” On her real estate earnings she plants a vineyard and makes a profit. She had a small business she could operate out of her home.
8. “*She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.*” She takes care of her health because she knows she cannot take on any extra-curricular activities if she cannot give her best to husband and family.
9. “*She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.*” She is pleased with her ability to take care of her family but she must put in long hours to accomplish her goals.
10. “*In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.*” She works at sewing and other things when she can. Undoubtedly, she did this kind of work in the evening so she could communicate with her husband at the same time.
11. “*She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.*” The ideal woman makes a profit, but she shares her profit with those in need beyond her family because she knows it is more blessed to give than to receive.
12. “*When it snows, she has no fear for her household, for all of them are clothed in scarlet.*” She has made provision for the winter by sewing red flannels and red quilts for the whole family.
13. “*She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.*” She sews her own clothes and she dresses beautifully. She is in style and is able to wear fine clothing because she makes it herself (no labor costs or middleman profits).
14. “*Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.*” The “gates” refer to the city hall, the place of local government. The idea is that her husband, because he has such a good wife, has risen to a place of prominence in the city. She is also known and respected by the elders because of her treatment of her husband.
15. “*She makes linen garments and sells them and supplies the merchants with sashes.*” She is a professional seamstress and sells her wares to make a little extra money for the family. Yet, she does it within the home.
16. “*She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.*” She is a woman of spiritual strength and moral quality and she laughs at the future because she has made preparations for her family. She trusted God for the future, but she also prepared for the future.
17. “*She speaks with wisdom.*” She is a woman of wisdom who is creative and intellectually alive. She has wisdom and common sense. She is aware of life around her and is a challenge to her husband.
18. “*And faithful instruction is on her tongue.*” She is shrewd and yet a very sensitive person to others.
19. “*She watches over the affairs of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.*” The ideal woman is not lazy. She is productive and is always concerned about the welfare of her family.

C. The Wife’s Praise (28-31)

1. “*Her children arise and call her blessed.*” The kids know their mom loves them and is doing everything within her power to help them. The children call her “super-mom!” Her children will be highly influenced to follow Christ because of her example.

2. "*Her husband also, and he praises her.*" The husband senses he has the greatest wife in the world and is very proud of her. Men, do we praise our wives privately to them and publicly to others? Do we tell our wives they are the greatest?
3. "*Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.*" A man sees that his wife is his perfect counterpart and he praises his wife for her many-sided personality.
4. "*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.*"
 - a. Beauty, while nice, is only skin deep. The most important thing in a wife is her love for Christ and her willingness to do the will of God.
 - b. The ideal woman's secret to life is her commitment to Christ, who empowers her for her multiple ministries in and through the home.
5. "*Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.*" The ideal wife does not have to praise herself. Her works will be well known and others will praise her.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. What are the many sides to a modern Christian woman? She must be a wife, lover, mother, homemaker, maid, manager, chauffeur, seamstress, baby sitter, good Samaritan, counselor and, if necessary, she may be a working woman, business woman and farmer. She is truly multi-sided.
- B. This message must have raised questions in the minds of some: Should a Christian woman work outside the home today? A young wife without children should have no reservations about working at secular employment if she so desires, and an older wife whose children are grown should also consider employment if she desires it. However, women with young children should do all they can to avoid employment outside the home.
- C. The idea that women should not hold jobs is false. Here is a prominent city elder's wife in Proverbs 31 who does. The key to whether a job is fitting or not lies solely in whether the job helps or hinders her family.
- D. What about women having careers? A woman may have a career as long as it does not interfere with the development of the family. A woman could be Prime Minister, a member of Congress or even the President of a country, but when she comes home at night, she is a wife who is in submission to her husband, and she works faithfully for the welfare of her family.