

Women's Rights And Responsibilities

Introduction. Women are certainly important in the sight of God. In fact, Sarah and Rahab are mentioned in the great chapter on faith (Hebrews 11). We will look at the whole counsel of God concerning the roles of women (Acts 20:27).

Feminism has drastically altered our view of women in today's society. In the last few decades, all kinds of biblical teaching has been thrown by the wayside by feminists who want to pull women's roles out of sync with the Lord's teaching. The feminist movement will be felt most significantly in its influence on the family and, through the family, will affect the church. Weak families produce weak churches.

I realize that there are several varying views in the brotherhood of these issues, so I understand that you may not agree with all of these, but the need for biblical teaching on the subject of women is greatly needed.

I. ***Women In The Sight Of God***

- A. We must remember that men and women are spiritual equals (Galatians 3:26-29). God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35). He does not play favorites. Faithful women mean just as much to God as faithful men.
- B. Peter's statement in 1 Peter 3:1-7 sets the tone for the woman's relationship with the Lord and with man. Husbands are commanded to treat their wives as "heirs together of the grace of life." God's gift of eternal life has been graciously conferred to both the sexes.
- C. Peter also commands husbands to treat their wives "according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel" Paul uses the word "vessel" elsewhere to symbolize the body (2 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Timothy 2:20). Peter's point is that men must understand that women have weaker bodies, but they are not weaker in mind or in soul.
- D. A point which will be developed later but deserves a little time now is the point Peter makes in vs. 1. Being a spiritual equal with men does not negate the fact that God has in mind a submissive function for women.

II. ***Women In The Service Of God***

- A. In the church.
 1. Women were used as prophets.
 - a) This was a public capacity which had been foretold (Acts 2:16-18). In 1 Corinthians 12:28, prophets were listed second among the gifts.

- b) This was a very important position and women worked at it, according to 1 Corinthians 11:5!
 - 2. Women were used as teachers.
 - a) In John 4:28-29, 39, a women taught men who did not know about Jesus Christ. If they could do it then, they can do it now.
 - b) Women have the right to learn (1 Timothy 2:11). John 4:9-15 shows us that the Samaritan woman was asking Jesus directly and not one of her five husbands.
 - 3. Women were used as servants.
 - a) In Romans 16:1, Paul commended Phoebe, who was a servant in the church. This is the same word that is used for servant 31 times in the New Testament.
 - b) Also, in Romans 16:6, 12, there are other female servants who had worked hard in the Lord. Acts 16:14-15 gives the account of the faithfulness of Lydia as a servant.
- B. In the home.
 - 1. Women can serve in the home as wives and mothers.
 - a) This is one of the most powerful jobs a woman can have (Titus 2:3-5).
 - b) The power to teach a child the gospel is nothing to be taken lightly (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15).
 - 2. Women must not let the world downgrade this important function.
- C. In the community.
 - 1. Women can work. In Acts 9:36-39, Dorcas made them tunics and worked for the people around her. The picture of a worthy women in Proverbs 31:12-20, 24 demonstrates that a woman can work!
 - 2. Women can work but they must choose the correct priorities. They will answer to God for what they have chosen just like men will have to answer to God if they have chosen their careers over the well-being of their family (Proverbs 31:21-23, 28-29).

III. ***Women In Subjection In The Sight Of God***

- A. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, there is a clear statement of authority and responsibility and we cannot change it. This does not mean that women are inferior! Someone must lead and someone must follow. The Lord has chosen and we must abide by that decision.
- B. Sometimes men ride too high on this attitude that "I'm the man and what I say goes!" Paul goes on to explain in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 that men and women need each other. There is no reason to be puffed up. Peter warned in 1 Peter 3:7 that men who do not act the way they should will have their prayers cut off or hindered. Men must be very careful because this affects our relationship with God.

- C. Ephesians 5:22-24 gives instruction to women, but Paul gives much more instruction to men in Ephesians 5:25-33. This may be to avert the dangers which occur when Christian men exercise totalitarian rule.

IV. ***What Women Cannot Do***

- A. According to 1 Timothy 3:1-7, women cannot serve as elders. In 1 Timothy 3:8-12, women cannot serve as deacons and in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, women cannot serve as preachers.
1. There are many brethren, both conservative and liberal, who are advocating expanded roles for women in the Lord's church.
 - a) Leroy Garrett wrote, "To impose silence on women in today's church and say she can't teach a man appears to most Christians as a violation of 'the sense of scripture' and the one sure rule of interpretation, 'the spirit of Christ.'"
 - b) On July 31, 1988, the elders of the Bering Drive Church of Christ presented a statement to the congregation 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 scripture, leading prayers, leading singing and serving communion.
 2. Nevertheless, those of us who reject these attempts need to exercise care in our dealings with the role of women.
 - a) Male-female team-teaching programs have become more prominent in the last couple of decades. Having a woman teach when any man is present is a dangerous precedent to set and leaves an impression on young minds that women may teach a man in a public setting.
 - b) Another area of concern is the growing pattern of advocating women attending and participating (in varying degrees) in business meetings.
 - (1) No one is opposed to elders or the men in a business meeting gathering information from anyone in the congregation.
 - (2) No one is opposed to meetings with the entire congregation to gather or share information or opinions.
 - (3) It is contrary to scripture for women to participate in the decision-making. God has put man in the position of oversight both in the home and in the church.
- B. The word in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is translated as "silence" or "quietness" (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:12). There has been a lot of debate over how far this applies. "Silence" simply refers to the attitude of heart, not the physical act of speaking. I do not believe that it is wrong for

women to speak out in class, but that it up to the individual's conscience.

- C. A woman must not have a bossy, overpowering spirit (1 Peter 3:3-4). That violates the command of learning in "silence" or "quietness."

Conclusion. We are in the throes of a social movement that is an all out attack on the pattern God has revealed for the home. I hope this short lesson has helped us to focus on women's rights and responsibilities. So many teachings in the world today distort our view of the way things should be, and women are no exception.

I pray that all women would be able to see the plan that God has for them. It is not a degrading plan, but it includes blessings and opportunities which the Lord will bring about for them if they do His will. We must beware of the danger of being conformed to this world, especially to the perception of this world held by feminists.