

Instructions to Wives, Mothers & Their Husbands

By Gil Rugh

The issue of the woman's role in society was brought to our attention when Wellesley, a women's college in Massachusetts, invited President George Bush's wife to speak at their commencement exercises in May, 1990. Some of the ladies who attended Wellesley were unhappy with that choice. They said that to honor Barbara Bush as a commencement speaker is to "honor a woman who has gained recognition through the achievements of her husband, which contradicts what we have been taught over our years at this school."

There has been a strong reaction to this statement—much of it against the position of the Wellesley women. As believers, we can appreciate that. But I must be honest and say that—in many ways—I have been as disturbed by the response to their position as I have been by the position itself.

The statement made by the Wellesley dissenters is obviously in direct conflict with the Word of God. And yet, many who spoke out against it are no more biblical in their position. The typical response has been, "There's nothing wrong with being a mother. There's nothing wrong with keeping the home and supporting your husband—as long as you recognize that is only one of the choices available today. A woman has the right to make choices, and one of those choices is the role of mother and homemaker. As long as no pressure is applied to force her in that direction, we should see it as one of the options."

Sounds reasonable. But that is not the biblical position. God's plan and role for the woman is to be a wife and a mother, and a woman realizes the fulfillment of God's purposes and plans for her in that realm.

The Bible addresses the issue of singleness, but I'm not going to address that here. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul says that some are specially gifted by God for a single life, to be freed of the obligations of a home and family to serve Him. That is a unique consideration, but not God's plan, normally speaking. As you study what the Bible says about the gift of singleness, you see that it is not given to enable a person to have a career. It is given to enable a person to have the time to devote to the service of the Lord without encumbrances.

I want to focus attention on the realm of the wife and the mother. I will be highlighting a series of passages that clearly reveal God's plan for women.

Pressure in the Wrong Direction

It is not surprising that the world runs contrary to the Word of God. However, when the world strays en masse, we find believers trying to adjust to fit in to the world's pattern. For example, when my daughter was graduating from high school I found myself thinking, "What is she going to do? What will her career be? Shouldn't she be preparing herself to make a living?"

When I came to my senses, I realized, "She should be preparing herself to be a wife and mother."

However, my thoughts continued with, "What if she doesn't become a wife and a mother? What if she gets married and her husband dies? What if she gets married and her husband turns out to be a bozo and leaves her? What's plan B?"

Under pressure such as this we begin to direct our homes in a way that is contrary to God's Word. We subtly communicate to our children: "God's plan may not work for you, so what's your backup plan going to be?"; rather than telling them, "You need no backup to God's plan. God is the backup for His plan."

Personally, I did not teach my daughter to prepare herself to be a man as well as a woman, or teach my son to prepare himself to be a woman as well as a man. Instead, they must concentrate on being what God says they must be as a woman or a man. It is God's responsibility to work that out in their lives as they submit to Him.

This necessitates walking by faith. I cannot tell my children what life will be like for them in twenty years. But remember what Jesus said? "Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6: 34). Concentrate on today; God takes care of tomorrow. If my children cannot trust God for their tomorrows, He is not worthy of their trust for today, either.

Let's begin in Genesis 1 and look through the Scriptures at what God says about the woman as a wife and a mother.

Origin of the Woman's Role

"And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1: 27).

The Scriptures begin with a basic equality— an understanding that both man and woman are created in God's image, created for a personal relationship with the living God. But from there our discussion of equality becomes confused. The question, "Are men and women equal?" is like asking "Is an apple equal to an orange?" We say, "What do you mean, 'Are they equal? Equal in size? Equal in weight? Equal in taste? Equal . . .'"

It is difficult to discuss the equality of man and woman because we are pressured into making them the same. In doing so, we destroy them both. As soon as I try to make that orange an apple, I begin to destroy the orange. It loses its uniqueness, and I fail to appreciate it for what it is. That is what happens when we try to blend the roles of men and women. We destroy them.

Both men and women are made in the image of God—in that sense they are equal. But as we move on from this passage we are going to find that they are very different.

Genesis 1: 28 reads, "And God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. '"

You'll note in Genesis 1 the Fall has not yet occurred. There is no sin in the world. God created a man and woman in His own image, and He instructed them to be fruitful and multiply. It was His intention from the beginning of creation that a family be developed— and that children would be part of that family. This part of the role of woman was not affected by the Fall.

Details

Genesis 2 details the creation of man and woman. It is not a separate account of Creation. Genesis 1 gives a broad overview of Creation, while Genesis 2 centers on the epitome of God's creation—mankind.

First, the man is created out of the dust of the earth. Then, in Genesis 2: 18, God says, "It is not good for the man to be alone." This is the first time we are told that something in God's creation is not good. It is not complete as it is.

"I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2: 18). God's plan is to provide a helper for man. The word helper does not connote inferiority, because it is commonly used in the Old Testament to refer to God Himself. He is called the Helper of His people, the Helper of Israel. It is not a demeaning term or expression. In addition, the word suitable means "fitted to" or "complementary." God says He will provide the man with someone who will complete him.

At this point all the animals are brought before the man Adam to receive their names. At the end of Genesis 2: 20 we are told that from among the animals there was not found "a helper suitable for him." This should not have been a problem. If, as the scientists say, we are in the process of evolution, Adam could have picked out an ape or a half-developed monkey or something! But no, there is a great chasm between the animal realm and the human realm. And from among the animal world there is not a helper that is fitted to Adam.

So Adam falls asleep, God takes a rib from Adam's side, fashions it into a woman and brings her to the man. And Adam says in Genesis 2: 23: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Man was created first, and the woman was created out of the man. The woman was created for the man, but she is not inferior in the way that we often use the expression. She is the balance and the counterpart to the man, created in God's image to complete the man and enable him to be what God intends him to be.

Oneness

"For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2: 24).

The woman is made for the man, and the man is to be totally committed to his wife. God lays out His plan for the family in Genesis 2. A man is to leave his family and cleave to his wife. From that relationship they will multiply and fill the earth.

There is a relationship of oneness between the husband and wife—the only such relationship that God establishes among humans. I have that oneness, not only physically, but spiritually, with my wife. She completes me in a way that no other person ever could—and that includes our children, important as they are and as much as we love them. That is why the relationship of the husband and wife supersedes all other relationships. I do not have that same oneness with my children. We raise our children to leave us and have their own homes, but God intends that a husband and wife abide in that relationship of oneness until death parts them.

Results of the Fall

Sin enters the human race in Genesis 3, and though some things change after the Fall, the roles that God intended for the man and woman do not. God created them in His image, but different, to complement one another. As a result of sin, pain and hardship are brought into that relationship, pain that would have never been there without sin.

In bringing His judgment on the man and woman for their sin, God addresses the woman: "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children" (Gen. 3: 16).

It was God's intention before the Fall that the woman would bear children. He told Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply." He said that a man would leave his parents and cleave to his wife. But now the woman's process of bearing a child will include pain.

"Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3: 16). The husband would have been the leader regardless of the Fall. We will see that more clearly later. Because of sin, his leadership now takes on a negative dimension. Just as the woman would have borne children regardless of the Fall, so now the man's rule will be harsh—the word rule here denotes harshness. Man rules, just as he would have before the Fall, but his rule is not dominated by love for his wife. He rules with selfish motives. He misuses and abuses his authority.

You will note that in the woman's case, God's attention is always directed to the matter of her children and her husband. This is true even after the Fall. The woman's realm, role and domain are her children and her husband. These are her priorities. The career of a woman in light of the Scripture is her husband and her children.

The Woman's Role in Christianity

I don't know where you are in your thinking on this issue. You are not obligated to conduct your life in your home the way that I conduct my life in my home. As believers in Jesus Christ we are all obligated to submit ourselves to the instructions of the Word of God. In that sense, what you must do is the same thing I must do—look at what the Scripture says and determine if your life is being lived in obedience to the Scripture, and if not, make changes.

Paul gives some instructions regarding women and their responsibility: "Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve" (1 Tim. 2: 11- 13). The very order of creation in Genesis established the leadership responsibility of the man. It was not a result of the Fall.

Paul continues, "And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Tim. 2: 14). These two truths—the order of creation and the fact that the woman was deceived—are used by Paul to establish the man's responsibility as the leader. In fact, if we had read more of the details of Genesis 3, we would have noted that when God

brings judgment on Adam, He says, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree" (Genesis 3: 17, emphasis added). Adam's responsibility was to provide godly leadership, but he abdicated that responsibility.

What Can a Woman Do?

"But women shall be preserved" (1 Tim. 2: 15). The Greek word *sozo* is normally translated "to save." The King James version reads, "Women shall be saved ." This passage is not talking about eternal salvation, but about the woman's realm. What is the woman to do to find fulfillment? How does she realize her reason for existence? She cannot lead or teach as the man does. What is she to do? The woman shall be saved, shall be preserved— how? "Through the bearing of children if they continue in faith, love and sanctity with self-restraint" (1 Tim. 2: 15, emphasis added).

Now again, this is not how a woman gains salvation—by having children. The Scripture is abundantly clear on that. Salvation is by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of the Son of God. But here we see what a woman cannot do and what a man can do: lead and teach. What is left to a woman? Bearing children and living a godly life. Could it be any clearer than that?

Living by God's Design

We are just touching on some of the key passages, but it is clear that the woman's role is different from the man's role. Much of today's discussion centers on the idea that it is all right for a woman to be a mother, as long as you realize that she is free to choose from among many careers, motherhood being just one. And that is true for the woman who doesn't live her life in submission to the Word of God. But for men and women who are committed to Jesus Christ and to His authority, our options are limited by the Word of God. It is not an option that holds us back. It is an option that frees us, because the Creator instructs us, "This is why I made you. This is what I made you to be and to do."

If I took, say, a Bible, and decided to make a skateboard out of it and took it out on the concrete and started to try to skate around on it, it wouldn't take long to destroy it. Any mature adult would say, "Why did you ruin that book?" I'd say, "What do you mean, 'Why did I ruin it?' Look at that skateboard! How much fun it is! Skateboards have all the fun. I'm going to use the Bible that way." You'd say, "No. It wasn't made for that." So why don't we see God's design as clearly when we talk about the roles of men and women?

People who reject God's plan are out there destroying people, saying, "Leave us alone. We're setting them free." That's like a drug pusher saying, "I'm setting him free. Look at the fantastic high he's on," when in fact he is destroying someone. When we reject the instruction of God, we are on a path of destruction, and we need to be reminded of that as believers. These are not just alternatives. This is God's plan.

The Crucial Role of Older Women

We find more instructions for women in Titus 2, beginning with verse 3: "Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good." We just read in Timothy that women are not to teach. But we will see that the realm they are to be teaching in has to do with the domain God has entrusted to them—the home and the family.

Titus 2: 4 continues, "That they may encourage the young women." The word *encourage* literally means "to bring someone to their senses." It can also mean "to advise" or "urge." We desperately need some godly older women today to bring some of the younger women to their senses. We need someone to bring some of the older women to their senses! We have abandoned the scriptural pattern. And yet God says it is the responsibility of the mature, older, godly women to teach the younger women how to function in a biblical way. That they may encourage the younger women "to love their husbands."

Independence

Isn't it interesting where Paul starts—"To love their husbands?" The younger women ought to learn from the older women the kind of commitment and devotion that God says they are to have toward their husbands.

I read an article recently on the front page of one of the popular newspapers. It dealt with women in the working world. A number of these women were interviewed and the idea that came out repeatedly was this: I would not give up the independence that my job gives me. One lady blatantly said, "I would not go back to being dependent on my husband." These were women who were married, and the repeated declaration was, "My job frees me from being dependent upon my husband."

This is what the world admires and promotes— independence in the marriage relationship. Isn't this what has happened with our divorce laws? Now men walk away from their wives and the majority of them enjoy a higher standard of living after their divorce. Why? Because they are no longer obligated to their home. They are independent—and so are the women.

All this is directly opposite of God's plan. What did God say when He created a man? "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." He created a mutual dependence between the man and the woman. But in opposition to God's plan, the world encourages people to be independent. The result has been the destruction of our homes and our families. We're left saying, "What is going on?" Today we constantly hear of the need for more child care, and people want the government to get involved. Why? Because there aren't any homes left to do it! Some Christians suggest, "Wouldn't it be easier just to go back to having homes?" "Oh no," is the response. "We just need the right agencies."

God's plan is always right, and man is always opposed to it. The woman is supposed to be dependent on the man. He is the provider and protector. So the world plants a seed in women's minds with, "What are you going to do when your husband dies?" I hate living on the brink, knowing that my wife is just waiting to see if I'll wake up in the morning! What will I do if my wife dies, now that's the bigger question! The only thing I have ever done with our stove is boil water! I've never turned on the washing machine. I've never turned on an iron. I've never made a bed.

I am not saying every husband has to be such a clunk! I am saying that I am totally dependent on the wife God gave me, and she is perfectly suited to me. I am dependent upon her, and she is totally dependent on me. So who is going to provide for her if I am gone? Who is going to be responsible for that home if I am not around? All we can do is walk by faith. I cannot plan for the tomorrows, except by being obedient to the Word of God. And as I walk in obedience to the Word of God, that is the only plan for tomorrow I need. He knows about tomorrow. If He chooses in His grace to take me, can He not take care of her?

I am concerned about what we as parents are communicating to our children in our homes. By our deviation from the Word of God, we are unintentionally telling them that you really can't trust God. What we really want to be modeling for them is that you must commit yourself totally to God, trust Him, and walk by faith in obedience to Him. That is not the way the world lives, but we are called to walk by faith, not by sight.

Relearning the Basics

"Encourage the young women to love their husbands" (Titus 2: 4). What does it mean to love your husband? Young women need to learn the specifics of working that out in a home. If you are going to move in and be one with another fallen human being, there's going to be conflict and difficulty. The Scripture says you have to love him! But where are the older women to model it? Where are godly women to give instruction in that?

"To love their children" (Titus 2: 4). Today we are more than willing to farm our children out to anyone and everyone. What a tragedy! What a travesty! What could be more important than our children? "Well, a nicer home, a little better income. Some vacation. Besides I have to start storing up; my child's already three, and I don't have a college fund! By the time he gets to college it will probably cost ten million dollars for four years! You can't start too soon, you know!" Under pressure we become confused. We don't sort things out. We come up with good reasons to set aside God's plan, and then we wonder, "What is wrong with our homes?"

"To be sensible." Being sensible means to function biblically. Our young women and young men (Titus 2: 6) need to learn this, because the world wants to pressure them in the other direction.

"Pure." This word doesn't need any development. Where is the purity of our young people? It's gone! We need to be raising our young women in purity. The older, godly women, you note, are responsible in this area. Perhaps part of what has happened to the purity of our young women is the absence of the influence of older, godly women. I'm not saying this to berate the older women, but to emphasize the importance God gives to the woman in her realm and her role. When that important, exalted position is lost, everything begins to crumble and crumple into decadence.

The Woman's Rightful Realm

"Workers at home" (Titus 2: 5). This is a literal translation of the word. The woman is to be busy at home. Can the Scripture be any clearer? The older women are to teach the younger women to be workers at home.

"Well, what about her career?" Her home is her career; her husband is her career. I don't know how many times I've heard, "I don't know what I'd do if I had to stay home all day." Well, I'm not an older woman, so I can't help you a whole lot! But the Bible tells us that the older women are to be teaching the younger woman how to be workers at home. That should solve the problem of not having enough to do. The problem is that some of the older women don't know how to be workers at home either! We have been infiltrated by society's values so that we have to come back and ask, "What is the woman's role? What is her realm? What does it mean to be a worker at home? How do you keep busy at home? What do you keep busy about?"

One lady shared with me not too long ago, "I'd go crazy if I had to stay home all day with the kids." What did she need? She needed a godly, older woman to help her and teach her what it means to be a worker at home.

What has happened to the home since the wife has moved out into the working world? It has crumbled and collapsed. Why? There was a mutual dependence. The husband went out and provided for that home. The wife stayed home and kept that home. Now both go out and provide—for what? There is no home. There's a house where people live, but the home has been shattered.

I remember about thirty-five years ago, I did an interview with a well-to-do man on the East Coast as part of a school project. I asked him, "What is wrong with our society?" He said, "The problem with our society is there are too many houses and not enough homes." I never forgot that. And here we are years later and the problem has been multiplied. People think if they buy a big house, they have a lovely home. No. If they buy a big house, they have a big house. But follow the biblical pattern and you have a lovely home no matter what kind of house you live in.

"Subject to their own husbands" (Titus 2: 5). Isn't that interesting? Older women are to teach younger women about being subject to their own husbands. Why? Because there is a constant battle going on. We see this in the world. What is the feminist movement saying? "We have to throw off the leadership of men. We have to demonstrate that a man does not lead or rule over a woman. A woman can be everything a man can be. A woman can be as good a leader as a man. A woman . . ." and on and on. It shouldn't be surprising that when you come to the Scripture it tells the godly older women to teach the younger women about being subject to their own husbands.

Another problem with the wife working outside the home is that she is most likely placed under the authority of another man—her boss. My wife is submissive to me. She has learned to be submissive to her own husband. My wife is my responsibility. Can I throw her out there and force her to learn to be subject to any other man? One man in her life is enough!

Our society is frantically trying to make the women hard and cold and masculine and the men compassionate and goopy and feminine. They say, "Won't it be wonderful when the men are like the women and the women are like the men and there's no difference?" Why would that be wonderful? If we could make all the oranges like apples and all the grapes like apples there would be only apples! Boring. Who wants that? You would end up destroying them both.

What's at Stake?

The last part of Titus 2: 5 reveals the purpose of all this teaching: "That the Word of God may not be dishonored." God's honor is at stake! That is why it is so serious.

It shouldn't be surprising that the world is doing exactly the opposite of what we have just studied. In the flesh, mankind is not subject to the Word of God. The unbeliever is not able to be subject to the Word of God, nor is he able to please God. That is why Paul is so concerned that we function biblically in our roles as men and women. Otherwise we will be involved in dishonoring the Word of God. Often we pray, "Oh Lord, use me to honor You." Then we walk out in disobedience to His Word, thinking, I wonder if God is being glorified in my life? God has spoken clearly on the subject. If we do not function the way He has set forth for us, we dishonor the Word of God.

What about all the "extenuating circumstances?" Everything God instructs us to do could be nullified by what we call extenuating circumstances! However, as believers we know when God instructs us, there are no extenuating circumstances. God never commands or instructs us to do something He does not enable us, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to do. That is our hope and encouragement. For us to live the life He demands requires grace beyond ourselves. We must have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

The Despot of the Home

First Timothy 5 warns women about the danger of idleness. It is not enough to say, "Well I don't have a job outside the home—that makes me a godly woman!" No, that makes you a woman who doesn't have a job outside the home. In 1 Timothy 5: 14 Paul gives instruction, and note the similarity to what we have just read in Titus: "Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach," (emphasis added).

This passage answers the question, "What are you going to do if your husband dies?" Does the death of a spouse change God's plan? "Uh- oh, we have to go to plan B! My husband died! I've got to get training and work on a career and . . ." No. What does God say? Get married, bear children, and rule the home. That is the woman's domain.

That word for "keep house" is the root of the English word, "despot." The wife is the despot of the home. I need to understand that as a husband as well. As the leader, I need to encourage my wife so that she understands the overwhelming importance of her position. I need her to do what she was designed to do. She doesn't have time to be off someplace else. It's a full-time responsibility!

People ask, "Well, what are you going to do when your nest is empty?" I keep telling my wife, "When the kids are gone, you'll finally be able to give me as much attention as I really need!" I'm looking forward to the empty nest—as much as I love my kids—but I've had to share my wife with them. And, praise the Lord, she's not only been a good wife, but a wonderful mother. That's her realm, and she's the despot of the home. Our children do not rule our house; my wife does. And if they have any conflicts with her, they are in trouble with me. Why? She's the despot, not them. As long as they are in our home, they are under her domain.

Does that mean I don't love my children? No! But I have to be biblical. I want to model for them a biblical home so when they go out they will begin their households wisely. I want my son to know what it means to be a biblical husband who supports his wife and establishes her importance in the home. I want my daughter to know what it means to be a wife and a mother and have the responsibility for the home. They are not going to learn it from the television. They are not going to learn it from the world around them. If they don't learn it from us as believers, where are they going to learn it? They're not!

What is happening to the generation being brought up today? They are wandering off like the world. There is no more crucial area for us than that of the home and the exalted position of the mother. We just don't appreciate that. We don't realize its significance—that from the very beginning God created the woman for that particular function. How can we send our wives off to "make a living?" Anybody can make money; but only one person can be my wife, the mother of my children and the keeper of our home.

The world believes that if you make money or if you have a job that has influence and power, then you really have something. But read the Book of Ecclesiastes to put that idea in biblical perspective—to see the emptiness and futility of man's work. Work is what man is called to do, and Ecclesiastes instructs the man to do it, but of itself, it accomplishes nothing. When work is done as an act of obedience to God it has biblical significance.

The Working Woman of Proverbs 31

A study on the role of women would not be complete if we didn't stop at Proverbs 31 and look at the "real estate lady."

"An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels" (Prov. 31: 10). It is a lot harder to find a good wife than it is a good business partner. Proverbs 18: 22 reads: "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord." It is God's grace that brings the suitable wife to you.

Proverbs 19: 14 tells us: "House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord." Do you see the elevated position given to the woman and the wife? You can get money and riches from your parents; but God has to give you the right wife. This puts the wife in a totally different realm, on a plateau that we as men fail to appreciate and protect. She is a gift from God to be honored and treasured.

Look again at Proverbs 31. "An excellent wife, who can find? Her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. She looks for wool and flax, and works with her hands in delight. She is like merchant ships; she brings her food from afar. She rises also while it is still night, and gives food to her household, and portions to her maidens" (Prov. 31: 10- 15).

Here is a wife who is busy at being a worker at home. Does that mean she never leaves the home? No. "She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard" (Prov. 31: 15). Aha! I knew she was into business!

But wait a minute. Many of those in the feminist movement who claim to be biblical use this passage to show that the rest of the Old Testament is out of step, that the Old Testament is patriarchal. But notice if you please that everything this woman is doing is associated with making provision for her home. They didn't have grocery stores in those days, and yet the woman still had the responsibility of providing food for her home. She planted a vineyard not with the purpose of building her independence from her husband and embarking on a career, but to provide for her household. She is making provision in advance for what the needs of her family will be, whether it's clothing or food. Her home is constantly on her mind.

Behind Every Great Man

"Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land" (Prov. 31: 23). Our society would say, "Oh, great. She's home making clothes and he's sitting in the gate! Just another way of putting women down." But this verse implies that her husband has an influential, important position because of the kind of wife he has. The evidence of being an effective wife is not that she sits in the gate, but that her husband does.

Any time you see a man in a position of influence it is a testimony to his wife. It's tragic that so many men, when they get to a position of power and influence, throw away the wife who was so essential to getting them there. But that's the way the world functions. Yet, even we as believers don't have a true appreciation of her importance in getting us where we are. People ask, "Well, what does your wife do that's so important?" She's my wife! She's the mother of our children. She keeps our home. "What's the impact of her life?" Look around! Every week she influences hundreds of people! She's influencing everyone who reads this message!

Why? Because anything I do is a direct result of her influence and impact on my life. The two have become one! It's not a matter of, "Well, this is what my husband does, and I've got my own thing over here." There is only one thing. We are one. The impact of my life is the impact of her life. Her influence in our home is my influence as well. So the idea that the husband has to be at home, that he has to be with the children as much as the wife is with the children is another way of breaking down the biblical pattern. See what the world has done? It has destroyed the oneness. Now engaged couples make "prenuptial agreements"—they agree to keep their lives separate. It doesn't bother me that the world does that; it greatly disturbs me that professing Christians pursue that way of life.

In marriage a woman gives her life to her husband. That is why it is such a travesty when a husband abandons his wife. He is to be the protector and provider. That is why God says, "I hate divorce . . . and the man who deals unfaithfully with the wife of his youth" (Mal. 2: 15, 16). God hates men who treat the wives of their youth unfaithfully, who divorce them. There are a lot of people hated by God in the world today, according to Malachi. We as men need to recognize our responsibility, the treasure that God has entrusted to us. A wife is someone whose worth is far above jewels, and yet we fail to manifest the appreciation, to provide the kind of protection for that wife that God says we should. We are in rebellion against Him.

The Honor of Being a Woman

"Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised" (Prov. 31: 30).

That is what counts. The world's emphasis is on beauty—on the externals. When worldly men arrive at success, what do they do? They leave the wife of their youth for a younger woman. God's evaluation is, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain." Is there anything more pathetic than seeing some of our Hollywood stars fighting the aging process. They will do anything to maintain their fading beauty. There is something pathetic about the sixty-year old woman trying to compete with the youthful beauty of the twenty-year-old. If all there is to life is our physical appearance, that's sad. "But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised."

Peter says, "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman" (1 Pet. 3: 7). Note, the woman is a weaker vessel. We can't talk about equality here. We are different. We have to live together according to the knowledge of what God says about a woman and about a man. She is a weaker vessel.

"Grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Pet. 3: 7). Could God be any clearer about the significance of the woman as a wife and a mother? My very spiritual walk with God depends on how I treat my wife! Do you live with your wife in an understanding way, (literally according to knowledge)? Do you live in light of what God says about the role of man and woman? If not, then you have problems, not with your wife, but with God. Your prayer life is destroyed. Your prayers are hindered. Can you come as a hypocrite and say, "Oh, God I want to talk to You about something" while living in rebellion against Him, while rejecting what He has to say? That cannot be!

Check Your Foundation

It is exciting to be able to come to the manual given to us by the Creator and ask, "What is the role and realm of a woman?" and to appreciate the importance and significance of being a wife and a mother.

Foundational to all of this is having a personal relationship with the living God. If you don't have a personal relationship with God, you cannot submit to His Word. You cannot obey Him. You cannot be pleasing to Him. But He's made provision to cleanse you from your sin. It doesn't matter what your home has been like or what your conduct has been like. He says, "I want to forgive you. I want to cleanse you. I want to make you a new person." That is what He offers to every woman and every man today. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on a cross to pay the penalty for our sin. We are a people who have lived in rebellion against God. By His grace He paid the penalty for our sin in having His Son die for us. Now He calls us to believe in His Son for our salvation. As a result of believing in His Son, we are born into His family. As members of His family, we live our lives under His authority, under His control, and under His loving care.