

Bible Study on The Christian Home – Handout 4 Developing a Christian Home Environment

**Grace Bible Chapel
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“An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.” Proverbs 31:10

What is the role of the wife and mother?

The role of a wife and mother has been greatly threatened and damaged in the past 50 years. The pressure, propaganda, and humanistic philosophies under the guise of improvements for women, skewed ideas of equal rights for women, and our societies increasing secular view of life has denied, confused, and in many cases destroyed the biblically defined role for women. As a result, to discuss the biblical role is often emotionally charged, and difficult because of so many preconceived notions. We must keep in mind that Satan desires to destroy the institution of the home. The statistics given in the first handout show his success. One of his primary actions is focused on destroying the home through the wife and mother. This is precisely what he did in the Garden of Eden. As we move closer to the time of Christ's second return, and the continual decline of society, we as Christians must not abandon the clear timeless teaching of the Word of God. We must be committed to establishing our homes on the Rock (Mat 7:24), trusting that God knows precisely what is best for us, in contrast to the passing philosophies of a Christ rejecting society. The role of the wife and mother is:

- To submit to the headship of her husband (Eph 5:22-24):
 - The idea of submission is not only a command for wives in relation to their husband, it is a true biblical attitude commanded and taught for all Christians regarding relationships in general, and God determined authority roles in particular (Phil 2:3-4; 1 Pet 5:5; Rom 13:1; Heb 13:17). The command for submission by wives to their husband is first an attitude, but more than an attitude. It is specific to the God decreed role in the institution of marriage.
 - The word **submit** is from the Greek word ὑποτάσσω (ὑπο "under"; τασσο, "to line up," "to get in order," or "to arrange"), which, in a military sense, means "to rank beneath or under." In general we as Christians are to rank ourselves under one another, not over one another (Mat 20:16; Phil 2:3). This order of submission in the family is commanded within the same context as the order of the Godhead. It is not based on one being superior to another (Gal 3:28), but for the sake of effective harmony and the benefit of effective service and functionality.
 - This submission by the wife is a role, just as Christ submitted to the will of the Father in His role. It is stated in Scripture as built on the order of creation (Gen 2:21-23; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:13-14), and the decree from the fall of mankind under the curse of sin (Gen 3:16). This order, role, and purpose of God supersedes and transcends all cultures, trends, and other philosophies.
 - This submission of the wife to her husband is an issue of obedience as though the wife was doing precisely the same as submitting to Christ Himself (Eph 5:22). God is the one who created and defined the role of the woman. This role is not something arbitrary or without purpose, but for the well-being of mankind through the sacred institution of marriage.
 - Life in society whereby multiple decisions, problems, opportunities, and variables exist to challenge daily living requires organization and structure. God has provided the perfect order in His Word. Just as Christ is the head of the church, so is the husband head of the wife and family (Eph 5:23). The church does not operate independently of, or in opposition to the will of Christ. Neither is the wife to function independently of, or in opposition to the will of the husband. This is the design of God so that the function of the home will be wise, harmonious and consistent.
 - The husband is the “savior of the body” or home, as the responsible head to keep the home established, safe, peaceful, stable, and joyful (Eph 5:23).
 - The husband is accountable before God for his headship of the home (Eph 5:24).
 - The wife is to submit to her husband in all matters of their relationship (spiritual, physical, social, and financial), and in all matters of the home management (Eph 5:24). It is not the wife's leeway to pick and choose when she will submit, and when she will not submit. This submittal is intended for matters that do not violate God's will or commands (Acts 5:29).

- The responsibility of the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph 5:25). This kind of love is complete self-giving love. As Christ gave Himself completely, even through His horrid death on the cross for the church, the husband has a clear picture and example of the kind of love that must be rendered at all times as he regards, and interacts through life's circumstances with his wife. This kind of love is the only kind of love that will function appropriately with his wife's total submission (1 Pet 3:7). Being knowledgeable of, and committed to, this same kind of love role is the key to the marriage relationship, and the lasting function of the home. All other activity of the home fits under these two key roles – submission by the wife, and complete self-giving love by the husband.
 - The wife's submission must be honored with the obvious demonstration and backdrop of the self-giving love of the husband.
 - The wife's submission to her husband not only shows her commitment to the marriage, but her commitment to God, her trust in the Lord's Word, and her love for her husband.
 - The carrying out of the two roles in the context of the example relationship among the Godhead, and the example relationship between Christ and His church, will demonstrate a perfectly functioning marriage and home. It means practically that the husband and wife will be making decisions together. He will listen to His wife and seek to please her, and she will listen to him and seek to please him knowing that the final decision will be made in love and her best interest. The difficult matters will be overcome in the context of obedient daily living and trusting Christ. By doing this, the marriage and the home will function free from strife, disjointedness, selfishness, and unnecessary stress.
 - Where these two roles become obviously skewed – that is the wife no longer submits to the husband, or the husband has ceased to function in loving his wife completely as commanded; either of the offended side must seek to continue their own responsibility and prayerfully seek the Lord on behalf of their marriage and home. They should further seek counsel and guidance from church elders.
- The concept of mutual submission:
 - Even though the primary role of submission in the marriage relationship belongs to the wife, there is also a beautiful mutuality of submission that must be understood (1 Pet 5:5) as a necessary attitude. This submission for the husband falls under the understanding of his commitment of complete love. For example in 1st Cor 7:3-4 in discussing relationships of intimacy between husband and wife Paul commands a mindset of mutual submission for both husband and wife. This demonstrates the overriding attitude that should prevail within the marriage.
 - This mutual submission concept of each spouse placing the other spouse ahead of themselves does not negate the leadership responsibility of the husband, but it recognizes and fosters the mutual attitude of appropriate love that will be seen in a submissive desire to please one another. It is a basic principle of biblical love fundamental for the vitality of family life.
- To be the keeper of the home:
 - Studying the roles of the wife and mother in Scripture leads us to understand the wife's primary responsibility is to focus on her husband and her family.
 - At the creation of woman her purpose was described by God to be a helper for man (Gen 2:18-22). Without the woman man was described as incomplete.
 - The woman is different than man, but that difference is a complement (1 Cor 11:11). She was made to fulfill the needs, that which is lacking, and the inadequacies of her husband (Prov 31:12; Ps 128:3).
 - Under the headship of the husband, the wife is to function as the primary supervisor, keeper, and sustainer of the home environment (Titus 2:5; Prov 31:10-31).
 - Titus 2:5 makes it clear the focus is on working hard to make the home a place of warmth and love for the husband and the children. Anything less than this is regarded as dishonoring the Word of God, or being disobedient to God's command.
 - Proverbs 31 elaborates the many domestic duties, and further shows the appropriate freedom of the wife and mother to steward many tasks, and the high regard she appropriately receives from her family.
 - This keeping of the home environment is especially important when children are present. God has crafted the woman to deal with children in a naturally graceful compassionate manner (1

- Thess 2:7). In a general sense, whereas man finds his expression of value in ruling (Gen 1:26-28), the woman is designed to find her full expression of value in bearing children (1 Tim 2:15).
- The idea of keeper at home carries with it the concept of the wife and mother's focus being on her own home. The wife and mother is to spend her energy on her own family and affairs, and is to avoid busy body activity that may lead to interference or gossip associated with other families (1 Tim 3:11; 5:13).
 - She finds in her focus on her home environment a reward of praise and personal fulfillment (Prov 31:26; 28-29).
 - She works effectively, freely, and industriously in the home environment. She demonstrates such positive values as frugality, diligence, ambition, creativity, and trustworthiness in keeping her family fed, clothed, happy, and nurtured in wisdom (Prov 31:10-31). Such a wife and mother is spoken of as having a value far above jewels (Prov 31:10).
 - To be diligent to maintain a flourishing spiritual life (1 Pet 3:1-2; 7; 1 Tim 5:4; 14-15).
 - She must foster an absolute commitment to Christ (Gen 18:19; Josh 24:15; 1 Thess 1:9; Luke 4:8).
 - She must be committed to the Word of God to understand it, and be an example as well as teacher to the family (discussed under the next bullet). She will also be used of God as a helper to guide and support her husband in righteous ways (Prov 31:26; Acts 18:26; 1 Sam 25:37).
 - She is actively committed to a local assembly where the truth of God is taught, and sincere worship takes place (Heb 10:25). This is both for personal development and ability to be a blessing to the family (2 Tim 1:5).
 - To be the primary nurturer in rearing the children: She teaches (Eph 6:20; Prov 31:26-28; 1 Tim 5:13,14; Prov 1:8 & 6:20). She also has responsibilities to discipline (Prov 29:15; 30:17; Eph 6:1-2), and maintains the closest of relationship with her children (Prov 4:3; 10:1; 23:25).
 - To be her husband's lover:
 - The same principles apply here to the wife that applied when addressing the husband (handout #3).
 - The wife should be the husband's best friend (other than Christ). They should be heirs together of the grace of life (1 Pet 3:7). Her husband needs to know that other than Christ he has first place in her life (1 Pet 3:6). He should know that he comes before all others (children, parents, friends), and before any other interests that she may have.
 - The wife should treat her husband with chivalry. She should be respectful of his needs, and concerns – this is the true concept of love. She should treat his relationship with her as her most valuable concern outside of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 3:7; Prov 31:28).
 - The wife should be a physical lover according to the directions and example given in God's Word (1 Cor 7:1-5; Song of Solomon). This kind of love is intimate, tender, sacrificial, and appropriate. It is also discreet and personal between the married couple and should not be shared with anyone. The marriage bed is sacred.
 - To be her husband's #1 supporter (1 Pet 3:1-6): There are a number of proverbs concerning the tendency of some women to nag (Prov 19:13; 21:9; 25:24). Nag means to torment by consistent faultfinding. In any marriage, neither person will be perfect, and the more the spouses know each other the more they will see each others faults. The Scripture is clear that "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8). A nagging tendency should be nipped. It is destructive to the marriage relationship.

Should wives and mothers work outside the home?

Titus 2:5 is the usual reference for a discussion on women working and seems to most directly address the question:

- What does the passage mean when it says "workers at home." Worker & home are both the word – oy-koo-ros – (translated "household" 1 Tim 3:15; and families in Titus 1:11). This same word is simply repeated twice in the Greek in this passage. Scholars say it means domestically inclined, or focused on the home. Because of the word meaning "domestically inclined," the word "work" has been added by some translators as a reference to duties at home. Thus adding "workers at home" is an arbitrary translation and should not be confused with our culture in which so many women are doing the antithesis – that is being employed (working) outside the home. When studying this passage, there are differences even in the following good Bible translations:
 - NAS Titus 2:5 to be sensible, pure, **workers at home**, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.

- NIV Titus 2:5 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.
- NKJ Titus 2:5 to be discreet, chaste, *homemakers*, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.
- In the culture when this was written, a wife being employed outside the home was not an issue, and therefore could not be the direct intent of this passage. However, there were other “out-of-the-home” issues. Although there is not a verse directly using the same word configuration in an exact context, we get a clue as to what Paul likely had in mind in a similar context with his words to young widows in 1 Timothy 5:13:
 - The focus here was not on employment outside the home but on not being meddlesome, but tending to personal responsibilities and home, and not making ones self a nuisance and busybody by spending a lot of time in other people’s homes, while at the same time neglecting their own responsibilities. This is also an issue today, but is not culturally as significant as the issues caused by women employed outside the home. The similarity is that in both cases the wife who is not tending her own home may be neglecting it for some other priority.
 - Because the reference is not directly aimed at employment outside the home, we cannot make this passage a command (as some have) for not having a job outside the home.
 - We can however, make it a strong reference for the focus and priority to be on the responsibilities of the home – that is clearly the command and expressed concern.
- Proverbs 31: describes the activities of the godly wife, and these include purchasing materials and food, buying property, planting a vineyard, and doing business. Look especially at Prov 31:16 where she purchases a field. This shows some outside the home innovative activity. So we cannot dogmatically say the Word commands women not to work outside the home as the wife and mother of Prov. 31 manages some outside work (although this is obviously not a full-time occupation), and it is associated with the well being of the home. Certainly it does take her physically outside the home at least to some measure. In this sense she is not strictly working at home, i.e. in her house—though most of her activities outlined in Proverb’s 31 are specifically in the home. Some have argued then that as long as the wife working outside the home is ultimately benefiting the vitality of the home (as Prov 31:16 seems to be) it is acceptable. However, there are other variables that also must be considered that are not present in Prov 31:16.
- There are three major, and any number of minor issues regarding woman working outside the home. “Outside the home” being defined in our culture as being employed outside the home in the work force environment:
 - One of those issues we have already touched on with Titus 2:5 – that is the home is the first priority for the wife and mother. When working outside the home, it places great pressure on this priority. Not only is the working wife not present during most daylight hours in the home, but when she is, most of her energy has already been expended with her job. It is extremely difficult for her then to prioritize the home or practically maintain excellence as a wife, mother, and steward of the home environment.
 - A second issue of major importance has to do with the headship of the family. In Ephesians 5:22-23 we are told “the husband is the head of the wife.” Also, in our Titus 2:5 passage “being subject to their own husbands.” This is God’s order for maintaining precise operational efficiency in the home along with appropriate peace and harmony.
 - For the husband to maintain this role, it can be placed under great stress in an environment where husband & wife are both working outside the home. It can even sometimes generate unhealthy competition, and where the wife is additionally answering under the headship of a boss through the work place, diminish the role of the husband. Often the wife will find herself more diligent under the headship of her boss than her husband. At other times she may find herself at odds with the wishes of her husband because of her outside job. This kind of duel headship relationship over the wife interferes with the family function and often leads to serious problems.
 - The necessary commitment and focus required in working outside the home also acts more often than not diametrically in opposition to the fostering of the relationships needed in the home environment. It also exposes the wife to other people who may tempt her to inappropriate behavior, or lead her astray from the headship of her husband.

- A third issue is the demanding attention of children in the home. Going back to Proverbs 31:15 – she provides food. She is caring for the clothing of the children in verse 31:21. She is involved in instruction of her children in verse 31:26. In verse 27 she is on top of everything going on with her household, and as a result “her children rise up and bless her” (31:28). A full-time mother working outside the home cannot give the energy and attention to her children as described in Proverbs 31. At best she must scramble to make up for lost time, and will be in a position of having to make many compromises because of her divided attention and personal exhaustion.
- In many if not most cases the children are placed with daycare workers who spend prime time with the children. This is obviously not equal to the influence, love, or commitment of the mother.
- Finally, the energy, emphasis, time, and dynamics of a wife working outside the home can place a great strain on the relationship between a husband and wife. As her focus is to be on her husband this is virtually impossible in most working outside settings.

Considerations:

- The honest question that must be answered is, can the wife maintain the headship of the husband in the home, an appropriate focus on her relationship with him, keep the home properly functioning & maintained, and foster proper care of children with the obligation of working outside the home? The maintaining of order in the home, rearing children, and allegiance to the husband is Scriptures first priority. To neglect these priorities is neglecting God’s clearly established pattern. Just as it is impossible to serve God and mammon, work can become an adversary for the home. This can dishonor God.
- Even though there is no direct command specifically not to work outside the home, there is an issue of focus, priorities of responsibility, and Godly design.
- Interestingly, many wives and mothers who have once worked outside the home have found they can live economically working at home just on their husbands income as well, almost as well, or in some cases better than with two salaries. This is because with the value of the second salary must also be deducted all the accompanying additional expenses (transportation, clothing, hair care, daycare, and extra taxes). Also, the family must trust God – is God able to meet the families needs?
- Many circumstances play a role in all of the decisions about the correctness of a wife working: severe economic problems, health issues, the degree of home responsibilities, whether children are present and their ages, the strength of the marriage relationship, and the attitude of the husband who is head of the home.
 - For example, there can be: illness of the husband, disability that causes the husband to be unable to work, extreme family hardship, and of course separation in a marriage will likely cause the wife to work out of necessity. These are matters of necessity, not choice. All options should be carefully considered.
 - In new marriages, young couples often both work because the home may be a simple apartment that requires little attention, there are no children yet, and starter jobs are normally lower paying. Both working seems reasonable, but even in this there are stresses on the marriage as described above. These matters should be addressed by the couple and discussed candidly. Recognizing that these may place stress on the marriage, and being on guard for them can help the couple react by changing course when problems are identified.
 - In a family where God has not provided children, or where an older couple has grown children, the husband may agree to the wife working outside the home. This should only be considered where the wife’s home focus, marriage relationship, and home responsibilities as the higher priority are maintained in some agreed manner where they do not become a factor.
- **Conclusion:** The Bible doesn’t directly address or state that a wife should never be employed outside the home. However, the Bible places a priority on the woman’s responsibility of focus on the marriage relationship as a helper, as a homemaker, under the one headship of the husband, and the high calling of rearing the children. It is difficult to justify how these top priorities cannot be negatively impacted when the wife is employed outside the home. The families making these difficult decisions should carefully consider, and of course seek first of all to honor the Lord.