

BIBLICAL FEMININITY – Is it relevant today?

The role of women in the home has been under attack for many decades. Exactly what it means to be a godly woman and finding her rightful place in God's created order has always been a quest. Women have longed to know how to be fulfilled and how they can play a meaningful part in society at large.

Before the advent of television, Hollywood, the Internet and other mass media, women had less difficulty accepting with a happy heart the role of home-maker, wife and mother. Even those curious to know what other avenues they may be able to explore suspected that ultimately raising a family and being married may be the keys to happiness.

The challenge of determining the meaning of true Biblical womanhood is not unique to our, or our mother's, generation. Though it is harder for us today, as we are bombarded by a cacophony of ideas, opinions, and trends, it is not unique to our time. In Proverbs we find the lament "*Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies*" (Proverbs 31:10). So even then Biblical femininity was hard to find.

How is this relevant today?

The relevancy of women being keepers of the home today is under serious pressure. Women who are able to stay at home to raise the children are considered rare and 'lucky'. Financial pressures often make it necessary for two incomes, and instead of this being seen as a tragedy for the family, it is considered normal even within the church.

Parents who have had the privilege of raising intelligent daughters consider it 'a crime' not to send them to university to study. So even at a young age, girls are taught that the only way for them to 'matter' is if they compete in the marketplace with men.

Any reading on the subject of Christians who were martyred for their Faith will tell us how they led their lives contrary to what was the norm of the day. They did not attempt to be relevant, but instead obeyed God's commands. God requires women to submit to their husbands; for husbands to honour and love their wives; for women to keep their homes, love their children, welcome strangers and to care for the poor. Together, the husband and wife were to train up the next generation of Christians amidst the pagan Roman Empire. It was in this context of severe persecution of Christians that godly men and women chose to obey rather than conform.

Considering what our Christian ancestors endured, how can we think of making excuses? How can we even consider it normal to neglect our family and home by valuing career over our loved ones? Does this mean we are to be in the background and irrelevant? How can we practice our God given gifts and talents as married, or single, women today?

Resting in God's plan

A godly keeper at home is not a lesser human being, a mindless robot, or a placid doormat. She is not to be without opinion. Her input regarding the running of an efficient household requires creativity and planning. Her place in society is not ruled by the culture, but by God's unchanging Word.

An unmarried young woman is not to be kept stifled and left ignored just because she is single. She can flourish by serving in the community and church, and by practicing her unique gifts and talents within her extended family.

Rather, Biblical womanhood is a role so important that it deserves a closer look. In most of Society, and even within the Church, the depth and breadth of what it means to be a keeper at home is overlooked. The minimization of this role has been a priority of the feminist movement for decades.

Being a godly wife and mother, or a single Christian woman desiring to marry is considered old fashioned. The empty charm of feminism lures many a woman away from the true fulfillment that God intended when He created her. God could have simply created Eve from the dust of the earth. She could have been an independent creature who could keep Adam company if she so chose. Yet God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, and from his ribs he fashioned Eve. Eve was Adam's glorious completer. If this is what God planned, why do we so strive to find other avenues of fulfillment?

The Tug of War

The economic realities we live in today, can frustrate a family's plan to enable the wife to be a keeper of the home. It takes careful and wise planning to live on one income. For some, it may not be possible until debts have been settled. But the Proverbs 31 woman referred to in Scripture can use her creativity in starting a home business or use her talents in assisting a home-run family business.

An entrepreneurial spirit in the home allows for the development of any number of exciting business ventures. As the children grow to maturity in the home, they can be encouraged to assist in the business and will develop useful skills they will eventually need in the work place or in the home. Making this all possible requires a woman willing to do things as God intended. His ways are perfect.

Surveys of women in the work place indicate that at least 44% would be willing to take a cut in pay to spend more time with their children. The 'Alpha Mom' is an impossible standard to maintain, no matter how easy movies make it look. The realities of running an efficient household, which is a pleasure to live in, take effort, time, creativity and hard work.

The other unfortunate by-product of women working outside of the home is that children often end up considering outsiders as their confidants. The important stage of adolescence, and the skills required to navigate this time successfully is all too often under the tutelage of a counselor, social worker, or peer. This has created a sense of individualism within the family, where each member 'does their own thing'.

The domino effect of mom's attention and energy being out side of the home has negative consequences on the family unit, the church unit and ultimately communities at large.

A Biblical perspective

She is created in the image of God, and of equal value and worth (Gen 1: 26-28). Because a Christian woman trusts in God's wisdom in establishing perfect order for His creation, she can willingly submit to her own husband as unto the Lord (Ephesians 5:22-24). Her opinions and ideas are used for God's glory, not her own, and she is praised by her children and husband (Prov.31:23).

Proverbs 31 reveals to us how a godly housewife impacts her community in creative and unique ways. She ministers first to her family, and then proceeds in blessing those in need around her. A woman willing to use her creativity can make the home a place of refuge for a tired husband, a hub of creative learning for her children and a place of fellowship for the saints and the strangers. All this, she does with a cheerful heart, resting in the knowledge that God's order and plan is wise and wonderful.

Stacey McDonald, in her book *"Desperate Housewives Passionate for God"*, summarizes it well:

"If the world can convince us to acquire a taste for the futile blandness found in a self-centered marriage, to be content with recreational motherhood, and to prefer a sterile, disposable version of home 'economics', then we will miss the beauty and poetry that is ours in the heavenly magnum opus of a God-glorifying, well-ordered home. So, as women, we must reject this vain impostor and instead embrace the magnificent feminine artistry of godly womanhood. We must daily sculpt our children into Kingdom treasures (Psalm 144:12) and use the culture-binding palate of the home to create a breathtaking masterpiece that spans generations."

Many of us can lament the fact that we do not live in the right circumstances to practice this type of Biblical Femininity. Our immediate response is to think of this as 'OK for other women and their families'. It is true, situations differ vastly. But this fact should not allow us to maintain stagnant in our quest to acquire a standard of womanhood that is Scriptural. It should not allow us to give in to the 'me centered' culture around us, but should give us the freedom, joy and peace in doing what God planned all along. Following His plan is true respite and liberation. Whitewashed Feminism is a prison all too many women find themselves in. They feel the pressure of the work place, the stresses of raising children, running a home and maybe

having enough energy left over for their husbands. These phenomena, affecting 'the alpha mom', create women who are often bitter, resentful and end up selfish as they try to find time for themselves amongst the pressures. In the end, everyone suffers.

May God give our families, our churches and our communities, men with Biblical insight and courage to help women rediscover the roles which they are best suited for. May our pulpits be again filled with leaders who profess Scripture alone, and may we have the wisdom, strength and courage to not settle for less than true Biblical Womanhood.

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Recommended sites and Books:

ladiesagainstfeminism.com
christian-civilization.org

Passionate Housewives Desperate for God
By Jennie Chancey and Stacy McDonald

Created to be his Help Meet
By Debi Pearl

What is a Family?
By Edith Schaeffer

Common Sense Christian Living
By Edith Schaeffer

When Perfect Isn't Enough
By Nancy Kennedy

Job descriptions for women found in Scripture:

- Serving as midwives (Genesis 35:17; Exodus 1:15-21)
- Demonstrating hospitality to strangers and saints (Genesis 18:6; Acts 16:15; Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 5:10)
- Serving God's prophets (1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 4:8-38)
- Providing wise counsel (Judges 4:4-9; Proverbs 31:1, 26)
- Teaching children (Proverbs 1:8 and 31:1, 26; 1 Timothy 5:10; 2 Timothy 1:5)
- Creating works of art (Proverbs 31:13, 19)
- Planning wisely for the future (Proverbs 31:21)

- Crafting beautiful garments (Proverbs 31:32)
- Producing items in the home for the marketplace (Proverbs 31: 18-19, 24)
- Augmenting the family estate through wise purchases and use of materials (Proverbs 31: 16)
- Giving to the needy and creating clothing for the poor (Proverbs 31: 20; Acts 9:36-41)
- Assisting her husband with the family business (Acts 18:3)
- Opening the home to the Church (Romans 16:1, Acts 16:14-15)
- Mentoring younger women (Titus 2:4-5)

This is a summary of the message presented by Lenora Hammond at the **Reformation Resurrection Conference** in Denmark, July 2010. An MP3 "**EUROPE FOR CHRIST**" includes all Dr. Peter Hammond's messages, with translations into Danish, Lenora's Biblical Femininity article with Danish translations, Peter's **Reformation Conference** presentation in Sweden and **Muslim Evangelism Workshop** presentation in Belgium.

These 26 messages are all available on one audio MP3 from:

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