



Today's Woman

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I have grown up in a generation in which terms such as “women's lib,” “feminism,” “equal rights,” and “egalitarian marriage” are practically household words.

Our society no longer promotes God's values for the woman. Femininity, modesty, discretion, virtue, and graciousness are seemingly relics of a bygone era—as out of place in contemporary culture as the horse and carriage.

Instead, the “ideal” woman of our age is glamorous, sophisticated, aggressive, powerful, outspoken, career-minded, independent, self-sufficient, and sensuous. She needs no one and nothing. She is in control of her own life, as well as the people and circumstances around her.

In its more radical forms, the feminist movement is easily identifiable. We associate it with efforts to eliminate all legal distinctions between men and women. We think of attempts to abolish traditional family structures (such as monogamous marriage, husbands as providers, mothers as nurturers), and to replace them with deviant alternatives (free sex, homosexual marriages, no-fault divorce, etc.). We picture strident, angry women marching for abortion rights and salaries administered by “comparable worth.”

As Christian women, we recognize such efforts for what they are, and we deplore and decry the obvious attack on biblical standards.

However, the women's liberation philosophy has not confined itself to the secular arena. Many not-so-obvious elements of this philosophy have penetrated and permeated our Christian institutions and homes. A bevy of supposedly-Christian periodicals, writers, and speakers have subtly promoted the self-centered, rights-oriented philosophy that is at the heart of the feminist movement. Most of us as Christian women, as well as our homes and churches, have been far more influenced by this way of thinking than we realize.

Unfortunately, the Tempter's tactics have not changed much since his encounter with the first woman in the garden. As with the serpent's attack on Eve, he presents his philosophy today in subtle, deceptive ways that, on the surface, appear to be harmless enough.

He works through our culture and our own fallen flesh to persuade us that if we don't stand up for our rights, no one else will; that we have a right to be happy and fulfilled; and that a lifestyle of giving and serving is bondage.

On the other hand, he conjures up images in our mind of a “virtuous woman” as a mousy, helpless, timid, dull, utterly incapable, non-thinking robot—a lifestyle to be avoided at all costs.

The problem is, that as appealing and attractive as the devil can make his program appear, he is a liar. He is a deceiver. He is a destroyer.

For many years, as I have traveled and ministered to women and listened to them share their hearts, I have been grieved to watch the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual devastation suffered by Christian women who have been deceived. They have (perhaps unconsciously) rejected God's plan for their lives and gone along with the world's way of thinking. They have been duped into believing the lie of Satan. And they are paying painful consequences in their consciences, in their bodies, emotions, and spirits, in their marriages, and in their children and grandchildren.

Let me suggest that we must begin by *accepting* the basic fact that God made us women, and that He made us vastly different from men, not only physiologically, but also emotionally, mentally, and even spiritually. Womanhood is a gift to be treasured, valued, and received with gratitude. But it is a privilege that comes with certain inescapable responsibilities. Those responsibilities are rooted in the purpose for which God made us.

As soon as we begin to consider our purpose for living, we discover a fundamental difference between God's plan and man's way of thinking. At the root of the feminist philosophy is the view that the woman exists to please and fulfill *herself*, that she is an independent being, free to do as she pleases.

But we must recognize that from her creation, the woman was made from the man, for the man, and given to the man, to help him and to meet his needs. By being a helper, the woman finds her greatest fulfillment, because she is functioning as God designed her.

Everything about us—our appearance, our attitudes, our actions, our words—either helps or hinders the men that God has placed over and around us. We help them when we edify or build them up. We hinder them and pull them down, when we build ourselves up. “The wisest of woman builds her house; but folly with her own hand *tears it down*” (Prov. 14:1).

Whether we “build” or “tear down” our homes, we are influencing a far greater sphere than just those who live within the four walls of our house. By our attitudes, words, and behavior as women, we are wisely or foolishly making an indelible mark on our churches, our society, and on future generations.

Attitudes That Build Up

1. A solid home must be built on a foundation of a *permanent, unconditional commitment*. (“She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life” Prov. 31:11.) The world says, “You don’t have to put up with him. You ought to find somebody who will treat you right.” But the godly woman is in her marriage to *give*, not to *get*, and she will keep on *giving* regardless of the cost.
2. The woman who has yielded all her expectations to God, has a *grateful spirit*. On the other hand, the demanding, right-oriented woman feels that she is owed certain things, and her expectations can never be satisfied. She chains her husband, children, and others to expectations they cannot possibly fulfill.
3. The godly woman is “clothed with *humility*,” that heart attitude which causes her to “esteem all others better than (herself).” The proud woman tears down her home, as well as others, by putting herself, her needs, and her desires before those of others.
4. A wise woman builds her home with a spirit of *meekness*, or yielding of all her rights to God. The foolish woman is easily angered when she feels her rights have been violated.
5. The woman who *trusts* in God, will be able to respond to her husband's authority *submissively* and *obediently*. The woman who resists the direction of her divinely-appointed head, whether by overt rebellion or an internal heart attitude of stubbornness, threatens the security of her home. A woman's drive to control the man is part of the curse that resulted from the Fall (Gen. 3:16). A home can be destroyed by a domineering, manipulative woman who is driven to control. *Yieldedness* builds a home.
6. The spirit of a home is built by a woman who radiates *joy*—joy that is rooted, not in her external circumstances, but in the confidence that God is “the Blessed Controller” of all things. The self-centered woman infects those around her with her spirit of discontent and bitterness.
7. The *merciful, forgiving* woman “covers a multitude of sins” with her love, and is quick to overlook trespasses committed against her. A foolish woman tears her home down by keeping score and insisting on retaliation.
8. The godly woman *reverences* her husband, not necessarily because he is worthy of honor but because she agrees that God has designated that man as her head. The woman who tears down her husband with an attitude of disrespect is exalting herself and foolishly tearing down her home.

9. The *loyal* woman will build up her husband and children by speaking well of them to others. A critical attitude will destroy the spirit of the home. The foolish woman will compare her mate unfavorably to others and will allow herself to fantasize about the “ideal” man to whom she would “really” like to be married.
10. “Above all things,” Paul exhorted, “have fervent *love* among yourselves” (1 Peter 4:8). One of the most important things older, godly women are to teach younger women is to *love* their husbands and children (Titus 2:4). The loving woman will not seek her own interests, time, privacy, and fulfillment, but will totally give of herself to meet the needs of others, without expecting anything in return. Self-seeking, on the other hand, is an ugly, cancerous, destructive influence in a home.

Words That Build Up

1. The wise woman lifts the spirit of her home by speaking words of praise to God, and words of *sincere appreciation, gratitude, and admiration* to others. Critical, belittling words wound the spirit and destroy the atmosphere of the home.
2. Whenever necessary, the humble woman will set an example for those around her by being quick to admit when she has failed and to *seek forgiveness* from those she has hurt. The proud woman is quick to identify the failures of others, but unwilling to confess her own faults.
3. Perhaps the most powerful means a woman has of influencing her family and others to be righteous, is faithful *prayer* on their behalf. Indeed, one author suggests that, “quite possibly the destiny of our nation is decided over the kitchen sink in unseen prayer rather than in the President’s cabinet.”
4. A home, a church, and a nation are built up when women speak words of *wisdom* (Prov. 31:26), that is, when our words are governed by the Word of God. But the foolish woman is unwilling to restrain her tongue and is quick to speak her own mind, regardless of whether or not her opinions are scripturally valid.
5. The godly woman will minister to those she loves with words of *kindness* (Prov. 31:26). With tender, encouraging words she will bind up broken spirits, strengthen the weak, and help to heal scars of rejection and hurt. The foolish woman, on the other hand, inflicts deadly, damaging wounds with her tongue. Angry, harsh, disparaging, demanding, impatient words tear down the lives of all those she touches. Perhaps the greatest damage is done in her own marriage as she responds to offenses with verbal threats to leave her mate. Such threats, even if never carried out, plant seeds of disintegration in the marriage, that can only be removed by humility and repentance.

Actions That Build Up

1. A home is built by acts of *obedience* that spring up out of a heart of submission and trust in God. In this area, perhaps more than in any other, the wife, by her obedience or disobedience, influences the lives and behavior of her children. Paul warned that if wives do not obey their husbands, the words of God will be “blasphemed.” Both those within the home and outside will reject the Word that they have seen rejected by a resistant, rebellious woman.
2. A wise woman is *diligent* in *servicing* and meeting the needs of her family and others. She “eateth not the bread of idleness” (Prov. 31:27). She has devoted her life to serve those she loves, while trusting God to meet her own needs. To serve is the peculiar realm of women as “helpers.” In fact, Jesus' relationship with the women who followed Him was distinct from His relationship with the male disciples in one very remarkable sense: He ministered to men; but the women ministered to him. In the gospels, whenever ministry is spoken of as being rendered directly to Jesus, it is the ministry of either angels or women.

The heart attitude of a servant is beautifully illustrated in Mary's response when the angel told her she had been chosen to bear the life of the Son of God. Knowing the inconvenience and sacrifice that would be required of her, Mary humbly replied, “I am the Lord's servant; may it be unto me as you have said.” The woman who seeks to be served and who resents her call to servanthood will tear down her home.

3. A godly home requires a woman to be *morally pure* in every respect. She cannot fill her mind with suggestive or unholy paperback books, magazines, music, or television programs, without inviting the attack of Satan on her home. Even many “Christian” romance novels and magazine articles can cause a woman to live in a dream world of fantasizing, rather than filling her mind with pure, loyal thoughts about her own husband.

In her relationships with men, the wise woman will be discreet, rather than aggressive, bold, or flirtatious. She will flee every situation or relationship that could possibly undermine or threaten her relationship with her husband.

4. Finally, a wise woman recognizes and delights in her call to *have children*, and to be a *teacher* and *nurturer* of the children God gives her. She fulfills the scriptural direction to be a “worker at home” (Titus 2:5), and is willing to sacrifice the “fulfillment,” challenge, freedom, or extra income offered by a career outside the home, in order to devote herself to her primary calling as a wife and mother.

Lydia Sigourney, a Christian educator of the last century, wrote regarding the responsibilities of young women as mothers. She said to men, “Hold them accountable

for the character of the next generation. The strength of a nation is in the homes of its people.”

Jochebed will never be given recognition in the history books. This Jewish mother had direct influence over her child for 4–5 years at the most. But with eyes of faith, she visualized the unique purpose that God had for her child. She disciplined him in the ways, the will, and the Word of God. She taught him that the pleasures of sin are only temporal, and that obedience has eternal rewards. Eighty years later, Moses faced a choice. He could have spent the rest of his life in the Egyptian palace, enjoying its fame, luxury, ease, and prosperity. He chose, instead, to identify himself with the stigma and the oppression of God's people, resulting in the salvation of an entire nation. I believe the roots of that decision were to be found in a committed, teaching mother.

Call to Repentance and Restoration

As with every other area of life, God's way of thinking is *exactly the opposite* of man's way of thinking. Now, as never before, there is a desperate need for us as women to identify where we have gone wrong, to commit ourselves to God's plan for our lives, and to *be different*—to let our lives offer an alternative to selfish living, and to counter the powerful voices of our age that would attempt to deny and defy the God-created order for men and women.

It is never easy to swim against the tide, but that is exactly what we must do if we are to recapture the ground that has been lost by our foolish, sinful choices.

I personally believe that our attitudes, values, and behavior as Christian women have done incalculable damage to the spiritual condition of our homes and churches, and ultimately, our nation.

It was the woman, not the man, who was first deceived, who acted independently of God and His hand-picked representative over her life, and who used her influence to draw her husband into sin with her.

I am convinced that before we will ever experience the genuine revival for which we long in our homes and churches, we as women will have to repent and return to the purpose and function for which God created us.

May God grant to us a fresh outpouring of humility, brokenness, obedience, and faith, so that He can use our lives as instruments of righteousness and revival, for His glory!