

**THREE
LITTLE WORDS:**

OBEDIENT

SUBMISSIVE

NURTURING

Or

The Kingship of Jesus

Over All Areas of the Life

of a Christian Wife & Mother

**Dedicated to Sarah & Elizabeth,
so that they may understand the truth
before they reach the age of 47.**

*Written by the wife of Ignacio
and mother of Sarah & Elizabeth,
Janis Garcia,
in April 2004.*

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Ann Beroth and Darlene Frank for their shared wisdom
and willingness to review the rough draft.
The NASB was used in all quotes, but many versions
of the Bible and various commentaries
were used during research.

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, even
when he is old he will not depart from it.”*

Proverbs 22:6

Remember these words:
obedient, submissive, nurturing.
You will need them later!

This study of God's Word is written for my daughters, Sarah and Elizabeth. As women, we were created by God in a special manner, for a special purpose, and given specific instructions for our behavior. These instructions can ALL be found in the written Word of God, the Bible. How many times have you heard someone say, "I wish my children came with an instruction booklet!"? The good news is that we ALL came with an instruction booklet — The Holy Bible — and it's a few (a very few of many) of the passages that pertain to a woman's Godly behavior that will be the focus of our study today. So, let's remember the words "obedient", "submissive" and "nurturing", and focus on God's plan for us.

Do you often feel like your life is "running on fumes"? Are the squares on your calendar too small to hold all of your scheduled events . . . are there more spaces in your house which are off-limits to your guests than not . . . when you clean your house, do your children ask who's coming over . . . does your family look in the dryer FIRST to find clean socks . . . is Sunday morning a mad dash to iron clothes and find a bit to eat . . . does your garden get planted later than everyone else's . . . are you embarrassed by how little your children actually know their way around the Bible, and how it only becomes obvious when

someone else is asking the questions . . . how about those middle-of-the-night hours when you struggle with guilt over what you DIDN'T do that day . . . ? Feel free to make your own list; in fact, I recommend that you do so. It's very humbling.

The great news, however, is that God has provided an answer for every one of these problems, and the answer is JESUS.

As believers, we acknowledge the "sovereignty of God" and the "kingship of Jesus" over all of our lives. Let us beware, however, lest these become empty phrases, because the world will be very quick to pick up on that emptiness.

Before we can profess Jesus as the King over every area of our lives, we must first have a complete and precise understanding of what that means. This study cannot give that understanding to you, but the Lord can, and the best way to receive it is through a study of what His Word has to say about His expectations of us as His chosen women. Please stop and pray for God's understanding, before you read any further.

*“The unfolding of Thy words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple.”*

Psalm 119:130

OBEDIENT

Obedience to God, because Jesus redeemed and freed us.

“Therefore, GIRD YOUR MINDS FOR ACTION, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am Holy.” And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the BLOOD OF CHRIST.” I Peter 1:13-19.

Let's take a look at the word "redeemed" in verse 18, since that will be the focus of this first portion of our study. The Greek word "lutro" (redeemed, ransomed) appears only three times in the NAS/KJV/NKJV versions of the Bible, each time referring to our condition, as believers, in the eyes of God. It describes us in our own unique state-of-being. It means, quite literally, to “receive a ransom”. "Ransom or price paid for redeeming captives, loosing them from their bonds and setting them at liberty." The root word is "luo": to loose.

Redeemed, therefore, is what we must all desire to be. There are words which mean "to save", "to release", "to deliver", "to rescue", et al. These do not, however, carry such a full

description of what Christ has done for us. He *could* have done these things, simply bested the enemy (we know that He is able) and delivered or released us. He chose, though, to redeem (or ransom) us. He submitted His entire being for our redemption from the bondage of sin; a bondage in which we are not held by God, but by the father of lies (John 8:44).

God is, in no way, responsible for our sin or its effects. Because of His unfathomable love for us, however, he paid the price to set us free from that bondage that began with Adam. It is this act of Jesus, and the ensuing liberty, which brings us to our first calling as women: that of *obedient children to God Almighty*. By right of His having paid the ransom for our bodies and souls, we owe our first and greatest obedience to this Holy One.

As chosen women, we cannot expect *any* part of our lives to be orderly without this first part being in the BEST order. This means daily study of His Word; this means obedience to His Word when it doesn't make sense or seems undesirable; this means realizing that Christ has loosed us from the bondage of sin, being careful to reflect the joy that should come from that knowledge; this means constant, but heartfelt, prayer for others; this means gladly giving up what YOU want to do, in order to do what HE wants you to do; this means understanding that everyone who sees you sees Christ; this means a full acknowledgement of the Kingship of Jesus over EVERY area of your life.

" . . . walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:8b-10). If there is disorder or unrest anywhere in your life, you should look first

to your relationship with God. Are you indeed trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord?

SUBMISSIVE

Submissiveness to our husbands, as God ordained it.

“Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by

the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. And let not your adornment be merely external (braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses) but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.” I Peter 2:18-3:6.

THIS is when the idea of turning our lives over to Jesus begins to feel uncomfortable. Yes, we acknowledge Christ as Lord over our lives. Yes, we know that Christ died for us, so that we need not live in fear but, rather, in joy. However, this first knowledge has all been a gift. **“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”** (Ephesians 2:8-10, emphasis mine). How wonderful it is to receive a gift as lovely and everlasting as this!

God doesn't stop with the gift of faith, though; He has even planned our good deeds ahead of time. No decision or seeking-after on our part (we, who were dead in sin) could ever achieve this; “it is the gift of God”. God's gift doesn't stop there, either; He even provides the means for us to perform these “good works”, most important of which is our instruction book: His Holy and Inerrant Word. This Word has much to say about the

responsibilities which we inherit, as His chosen women, when we receive His gift of faith.

This leads us to the second part of our acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord over all areas of our lives: *submissiveness to our husbands*. There are so many passages which deal with this that it's hard to know which to explore. Let's begin with Genesis (where, in fact, we should always begin a study of our relationship with God):

“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him. . . . So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place. And the Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. And the man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’” (Genesis 2:18,21-23).

“And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” (Genesis 1:31).

God ordained the role of a wife from the beginning of all life, and he saw it as good. It is not something which we can adjust to suit our own desires; it is the will of God. We were not created as inferior beings, somewhere between man and animals; rather, we are equal to man in the eyes of God, designed to be spiritually one with our husbands but to fulfill a unique function. The responsibilities of a husband and wife are equally important though decidedly different. This difference has been ordained by

God and is part of what we acknowledge when we pray “Thy will be done”. May the Lord’s Will be done as we look at God’s specific words of instruction to wives.

SLAVES?

The word “submissive” (hupotasso: to place in order, to place under in an orderly fashion) appears three times in I Peter — 2:18, 3:1 and 3:5. The first time, it is used in reference to servants; the second and third, to wives.

This is a good time to address the issue of some Christians’ belief that God calls women to be slaves to their husbands. The Greek word “oiketes”, used here for “servants”, means: a servant “of the household, belonging to the family, but not necessarily born in the house”.

When Isaac explained to Esau that his blessing had just been given to Esau’s brother, Jacob, he used the same “oiketes”: “Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants . . .” (Genesis 27:37). It does not state, or even imply, that Esau was to be the slave (doulos, in the Greek) of Jacob. (Of the five Bible translations in our home – NAS, KJV, NKJV, NRS, NIV – the NIV is the only version which substituted the word “slaves” for “servants”.)

This is important for all of us to remember: God is not calling wives to the unwilling submission of a slave. Rather, He requires the *willing* subjection of a wife to her husband’s authority, be he believer or not. This action (willingness) is one of

a woman's responses to God's gift (faith). A response *expected* by God, very clearly stated by Him in His Word.

INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE

When Peter's letter was written, many newly-Christian women believed that their conversion released them from marriage to a pagan or Jewish husband (marriage between the only two races acknowledged by God: believer and non-believer).

God is *clear* in His answer to the issue of a "mixed marriage": don't enter into it in the first place (II Corinthians 6:14). If, however, a wife should come to faith before or without her husband, He has given her more clear instructions in the third chapter of I Peter. Not only is she to remain in the marriage, but she is to remain under her husband's authority, exhibiting a gentle and quiet spirit, "without being frightened by any fear" (3:6).

Does your husband neglect Bible Study/prayer time with the family? Does he refuse to go to church with you on Sunday? Is he unreasonable about what you do with *your* time? Does he insist that you let someone else raise and train your children? Does he insist that you become the financial means of support in your house?

Remember that our first "allegiance" is to be obedient to the Word of God. If, however, issues arise which do not require our disobedience to God, then we are called by God to set aside our wishes to the authority of our husbands. Not an easy task (not even easy to remember, let alone do), but God has given us the best of example for encouragement: Christ's suffering and death.

This is where the “in the same way” (3:1) comes in. The two examples to which this phrase refers are Christ as pictured in his suffering and death *and* to believing servants with unbelieving and unreasonable masters.

In the midst of all this, we are called even further to be chaste and respectful in our behavior, gentle and quiet in spirit, and unfrightened (3:2,4,6). The only way that we can even hope to become this woman is to follow the example of Christ and put our trust entirely in “Him who judges righteously” (2:23).

Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed (Joshua 1:9)! Before we say that no woman can possibly do all of this, and that God has been an “unreasonable master” in expecting these things, remember that He provides Sarah as a role model for us (3:6). We all know that Sarah was very human and certainly less than perfect; but she was, in God’s eyes, an obedient wife and, therefore, worthy of honor. May we strive to “become her children”.

WHO DOES WHAT?

Marilyn Rea, a speaker at the annual CHEO (Christian Home Educators of Ohio) convention several years ago, gave a wonderful seminar on the meaning of being a submissive and Godly wife. It was the first time that I had ever heard the issue addressed (sad to say, even though I had been attending church regularly for many years at that time), and I was impressed with her confidence. She spoke not as someone putting forth an issue

for debate, but as a woman who was certain that what she said was no less than God's truth. Her demeanor was not dynamic or captivating, but her words were piercing.

At one point, she shared a story about the number of women who object to the portion of her presentation where she exhorts them to be submissive to their husbands in *all* areas of their lives (the *all* being the point of objection). According to these women, their husbands have no idea what their wives' lives are like, don't have a clue about keeping a schedule on a calendar, and have no idea how much their wives actually *do* every day. Marilyn's response came quickly: "I am here to tell you, ladies, that if your husband goes to the dryer for his clean socks and has eaten hot dogs at dinner for the last three days, then he knows *exactly* how full and busy your life is! Before you accept anymore positions or schedule anymore field trips, you should be asking your husband to help you make those decisions!"

Please don't think that this is about who pays the bills or decides on when to buy shoes for the family. Is it unscriptural for a woman to keep the checkbook straight? Should a wife be allowed to shop for groceries on her own? Can a woman pray with her children? These are all concerns which I have heard from friends who were struggling with how to handle this *new* concept of being submissive to their husbands, husbands who often hadn't read the verses which relate to *their* duties as loving husbands.

These things, and other practical daily chores, are certainly part of what a husband and wife have to deal with. Fortunately, for those of us who have been blessed with believers for husbands, the answer is simple. Prayer and the searching of God's Scripture

will take us into His presence, where we will find the answers to even these simple questions.

As we saw in the book of Genesis, God created a helper suitable for Adam. In that same way also, he has created us to be helpers to our husbands. That means that we will share our husbands' responsibilities, and that will mean something different in each home.

Does it mean that we have the right to usurp our husbands' authority, just because we think that he isn't doing something right? *"But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything."* (Ephesians 5:24)

Do we have the right to talk about him behind his back, exposing his faults to the world? *"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear."* (Ephesians 4:29)

See what I mean? The answers are all there, even about the checkbook – just keep looking.

DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

If our life as a Christian wife is not one of obedience to God and *willing* submission to our husbands' authority, then the rest of what we do will not be pleasing to God. It will be difficult to find order in our days and nights; our calendars will not reflect an organized keeper at home; our children will be difficult to train; and we will have little real peace in our hearts. God clearly tells us, in the 66th chapter of Isaiah, that our outward worship is

worthless, unless our hearts are pure in their desire to do His will. Since He has created us for a specific purpose – that of helpers to, not masters over, our husbands – then it goes without saying that His wrath is great when we try to sidestep or bypass His will.

In Titus 2:2-5, God gives instructions for our behavior (as women, not just wives), both things to avoid and things in which to excel: avoid gossip (more literally, accusation, slander, verbal assault) and too much wine, be dignified and sensible, be sound in faith and love, love our husbands and children, work at home (literally, housekeeper, one who looks after domestic affairs with prudence and care), be kind, train the young women to be like-minded, and be subject to our own husbands.

Does it really matter? After all, the world tells us that housekeeping is an old-fashioned thing that our grandmothers used to do, because they didn't know any better or were held down by their tyrannical husbands. On the contrary, the Lord has decreed the duties and responsibilities of each wife, just as he has decreed that man and wife will become one flesh in His sight (Matthew 19:6).

In Titus 2:5, God tells us that we should do (or not do) these things “that the word of God may not be dishonored”. The opposite, then, would be that the Word of God would be dishonored by our not tending to our responsibilities as submissive wives. Interestingly enough, the Greek word for “word” in this verse is “logos”, the same word which is used in several verses as a name for Jesus Christ. We cannot help but see the connection with John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

We need to always remember that our behavior, when we call ourselves Christians, is a reflection to the world of that “Word of God”. Thus, our loving subordination to our husbands is necessary, in order that Christ “may not be dishonored”. Can we achieve this on our own? Never. Can God give us the strength to achieve this? Absolutely.

Once again, God slowly and patiently shows us our need for the Kingship of Jesus in *all* areas of our lives. As chosen women (particularly, wives), we cannot expect any part of our lives to be orderly without this second part being in the *best* order. If there is disorder or unrest in your life, then I suggest that you look first to your relationship with God and then to your relationship with your husband. Are you indeed trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord? Are you doing it with a glad heart?

NURTURING

*Nurturing Wives and Mothers,
because God created us for just that purpose.*

This portion of our study started out to be a look at the third “role” of a Christian woman. I believed that this would be a woman’s third area of allegiance to Christ – the third great responsibility of a Christian wife and mother. However, as I sat down to form my thoughts and prayed that God would form them for me, my study of His Word quickly revealed that our role as mothers is merely an extension of our role as wives. This

revelation brought home the understanding that, just as God designed a human body that functions best when all its members are in place, the family's raising of children works best when all of *its* members are in place.

This is not to say that there are not special instances of God's grace when one partner is missing, but it *does* work best when the family unit follows the pattern designed by God: one Godly man and one Godly woman bearing Godly offspring.

Let's begin with a concordance (I used both the Strong's KJV and the NASB) and look up the word "mother" . . .

"Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching; indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head, and ornaments about your neck." (Proverbs 1:8). *"My son, observe the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother;"* (Proverbs 6:20). *"For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well."* (II Tim. 1:5). There, now you have it! The only passages that I could find in the Bible that even mentioned a mother teaching her children.

This was disturbing to me. All these years, I had labored under the idea (my own, of course) that God had called me to teach my children. I looked again, using *different* words, in case I just wasn't looking in the right place — a fruitless search.

Now, let's do the same with the word "father" . . .

"And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse." (Malachi 4:6)

“And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:17)

“And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm ‘Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee.’”

(Acts 13:32-33)

“... for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.” (Exodus 20:4b-5)

“Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them. Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.” (Colossians 3:18-21)

“A wise son accepts his father’s discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.” (Proverbs 13:1)

Notice the theme? There are many other passages of like message; I would encourage you to sit down with your concordance, *with your children*, and do a word study on the words yourselves.

As I mentioned before, I viewed the teaching/training of my children as something that I did because God had commanded me to do it. By just reading the passages written above, it is obvious, though, that I teach my children because I am doing what my husband wishes me to do.

My husband is the one who will ultimately stand before the throne of Christ and answer for the raising of his children and grandchildren (and so on and so on), not me. This bears repeating: it is my husband who will answer to God for the training of our children – *not me!* I will have to answer to God for my diligence (or lack thereof) in sharing my husband’s responsibilities, in being a “suitable helper”. What an opportunity to truly honor God’s name by responsibly representing my husband!

REPRESENTATIVES

We live in a world that reverences “representatives”: Miss America, the Vice President, the wife of the famous actor, the President’s daughter, the forward of the leading football team, the pitcher of the best baseball team. All of these people are merely representatives of someone or something, and yet we revel in their presence. How much more, then, ought we to honor the worthy wife and mother, who holds the greatest title of representative, one ordained by God Himself at the beginning of life?

We judge athletes, artists and actors against the same who have gone before them. If I am judged, therefore, against Sarah and Hannah and others, I would strive to be like them, for I do not want my husband to be shamed by his wife. *“An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who shames him is as rottenness in his bones.”* (Proverbs 12:4).

WHERE WAS ADAM?

We all know the story about Eve and the fruit in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Eve falls prey to Satan's temptation, and her husband joins in her rebellion against God. Does God give Adam permission to divorce Eve and then create another wife for Adam? Does God punish Eve but let Adam stand on his claim that he was just an innocent partaker, deceived by God's representative (verse 12)? It's all about representatives, isn't it?

“Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.’” (verses 16-17).

Who was entrusted to the care of the garden? Who was appointed to cultivate it? To whom was the warning given? Eve was not created until *after* these things were appointed to the care of Adam. God does not tell us that, after her creation, He then gave Eve the same duties or warning. In fact, he does tell us that she was created to be a “suitable helper”; God obviously expected Adam to watch over his wife.

In verses 2-3, we see that Adam *had* shared God's warning with Eve: *“And the woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.’”* She *knew* what God had said

(regardless of which one of them had added “or touch it”), and she obviously knew what He had commanded!

In verse 6, however, we see that Adam was negligent in his care of his helper: *“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”* Adam was not off thinning the strawberry beds, he was with her. Notice where Adam was: *with her*. He knew God’s command, watched Eve break that same command, did not exercise his dominion, and willfully joined in the sinful behavior.

Does a husband stand as God’s representative? *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”* (Genesis 1:26-27).

Is a husband to stand in God’s stead and lovingly rule over his wife, as Christ rules over the church? *“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’”* (Genesis 2:18). *“So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.”* (Ephesians 5:28-30)

Did Adam fulfill his responsibilities? No. Did Eve fulfill hers? No. Could God have simply spoken the world, and its two people, out of existence, as He had spoken it *into* existence (Genesis 1:3)? Without a doubt!

Instead, however, he gave the promise of a Savior, even *before* he ejected Adam & Eve from the garden. In fact, this promise was given in the form of a curse on the serpent: “*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.*” (Genesis 3:15).

Despite what a modern moviemaker would have you think, this was not a prophecy of a scene between Christ and a snake in another garden. This was God’s promise to His chosen people that He would bring them back into His presence, through the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. “*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?*” (Psalm 27:1).

GUARDIANSHIP

As for the guardianship of our children, *we* have been entrusted by God – in the same way that Adam was entrusted with the care of Eve and their children – to endless vigilance on their behalf. Can we, therefore, be content to simply teach our children a few good Bible stories, drill them in their ability to list the books of the Bible in order, make them memorize a passage here and there, or set the timer and send them to their room for fifteen minute of Bible reading?

Adam knew what God had commanded: the diligent care and tending of the shepherd for his charge. Adam was to have dominion over all, yet his first failing was his neglect of the woman who was “bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh”. “*(but*

if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?) I Timothy 3:5.

Just as God does not bring us to salvation and then leave us on our own, a husband is to remain ever-diligent over his loved ones. Adam did not remain so, and he was punished accordingly, as are *all* men for all generations to come. Eve was also punished according to her sin, (different punishment for different sin), as are *all* women for all generations to come. The punishment that is hardest to bear, though, is common to both men and women: that of being excluded from God's presence in this lifetime.

Your teachings as a parent will affect generations of children that you will never know. Those children may not even know your name or how they are related to you, but they will *know* you through what you leave (or do not leave) for them: a knowledge of God and a recognition of Jesus Christ as Sovereign King over every area of your life.

ANSWERS FOR "MODERN" QUESTIONS

What does this mean to us, as women living six thousand years after that first sin and two thousand years after the coming of the promised salvation? Is there application that will help us to be better mothers and teachers of our children? Rest assured, there *are* answers to all of our daily questions and problems. It's all there, but we won't find the answers unless we know what God has to say. Immerse yourself in God's Word, and you will not find yourself left wanting!

JACOB & ESAU

Let's look for a moment at the story of Jacob and Esau. Jacob would like to reconcile with his brother, Esau, and they are about to meet for the first time in many years. Jacob has many flocks to move, as well as his children with their four different mothers. (The Bible is *not* promoting polygamy or extramarital relationships. God is simply showing us how He can work in and through sinful men, which must be a comfort to us all.) When they get close to each other, Jacob fears for the reception which he will receive from Esau, so he sends the children to the protection of their respective mothers.

“Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. And he put the maids and their children in front, and Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, ‘Who are these with you?’ So he said, ‘The children whom God has graciously given your servant.’ Then the maids came near with their children, and they bowed down. And Leah likewise came near with her children, and they bowed down; and afterward Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed down.”
(Genesis 33:1-7)

There are *many* lessons in this story, but we will only concern ourselves with the picture of Jacob and his care of his children and wives. He sent his children to their own mothers, turning the care of those children over to his “suitable helpers”, until he would call for them later.

He entrusted the mothers with a *great* responsibility, for a shepherd does not turn the care of his lambs over to just anyone who happens to come along. He must have viewed his wives *very highly*, to delegate that much responsibility to them. He exhibits great care, even to the placement of the children for their safety. When Esau asks Jacob whose children they are, Jacob tells his brother that they are a gift from the Lord. Jacob’s children (*with* their mothers) then come forward, to be introduced to Esau.

The understanding of this part of a familiar story was startling to me. Notice that Jacob *gives* the care of each mother’s children to *the mother*, not to a ruling body of government or another woman who has more time or patience. There is no “daycare” area or Jehovah School. He does not give all of the children over to the care of the maids, so that his wives may engage in their own pursuits (as do so many men today, by turning the raising of their children over to the local church or state school).

We can infer that the mothers did not leave the children to increase the wealth of the family or to find their own quiet time, since they are present with the children and are presented to Esau. The truth is plain to see: God had given these children to Jacob, and he, in turn, had assigned the safekeeping of them to their mothers. Contrary to what the world would see, *we* (as Christian

women) see both man and woman fulfilling God's ordained purposes – very different in nature, but perfectly complementing each other in that perfect way that only God could have designed.

HOW MUCH SAY DO I HAVE?

Am I saying that a woman has nothing to say about the raising of her children or their “education”? Certainly not – just the opposite, actually! What I *am* saying is that the ultimate *responsibility*, for everything which that entails, belongs to the husband. If we are truly our husband's helpers, then we will have a great deal to say about our children's education. Our husbands would not ask us to care for these “gifts from God” if they did not implicitly trust us to do our best.

Many important decisions go into the raising of our children. Since God ordained that a husband and wife should become as “one flesh”, those decisions should be made together. Since we have already learned that *all* of the answers are in the Bible, then it goes to reason that we should be – *together* – looking for those answers in God's Word.

As for the Christian wife's authority, remember that a husband delegates *his* authority to the helper given to him by God when he turns the care of his children over to her. In the worldly workplace, the owner of the company will often hire a manager to see to the running of his business. *All* employees, including the manager, have to answer to the owner, but the owner has given some of his authority to the manager to see to the orderly running

of his business. Does this mean that the manager must go to the owner every time they need to change the paper in the copy machine or arrange for training of the employees? Such a method would soon be the ruin of the business, and neither the owner nor the manager would have a living for very long.

In the same manner, God's design of the family unit does not mean that we, as mothers, cannot make decisions on our own. Hopefully, our husbands trust us as much as Jacob trusted Rachel with Joseph. Since we have also been designed in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), we have been created to be intelligent and discerning (among many other things), which traits will help us to be the best kind of helpers to our husbands.

Does a mother have to ask her husband before she can change a grammar book or handwriting course? Does she need to get permission to take the children to the park to play? Is the buying of new shoes a matter for both partners to decide? The answer is simple: yes, and no!

Have you and your husband agreed to decide on everything together? Then the answer is "yes" to all of these (and other) questions. If your husband has delegated more of his responsibility for the daily decision-making, then the answer is "no". The key, though, is in how much authority you *have* been given by your husband. It goes right back to *his* being ultimately responsible for you and your children.

I have many friends who are content to turn *all* decision-making over to their husbands, and their homes are orderly and their children a credit to the family. I also have as many other friends who make most of the day-to-day decisions on their own,

and *their* homes are orderly and their children delightful. Both methods honor the Lord, when the husband is still exercising his supreme authority over the family unit as a whole.

ELKANAH, HANNAH & SAMUEL

A great example of a husband delegating his authority, while still retaining his headship, is found in the story of Samuel.

“And it came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I have asked him of the Lord.’ Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, ‘I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord and stay there forever.’ And Elkanah her husband said to her, ‘Do what seems best to you. Remain until you have weaned him; only may the Lord confirm His word.’ So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh, although the child was young . . . Then Elkanah went to his home at Ramah. But the boy ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest.” (I Samuel 1:22-24, 2:11).

Hannah felt secure enough to put her intentions forward to her husband, and Elkanah validated her use of the authority which he had granted to her. I Samuel 2:11 shows that *both* parents took the boy to live with Eli. Two individuals, working together as one,

seeking to do God's will. *“And He answered and said, ‘Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?’ Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.’”* (Matthew 19:4-6).

May the Lord preserve all Christian spouses in their oneness, in all their decision-making, in their lives together.

THE NURTURING OF A TITUS 2 WOMAN

God has set down, in no uncertain terms, a list of qualities that best describes a Christian wife and mother. By now, we must all be familiar with the phrase “Titus 2 woman”. (It is, in fact, in danger of becoming one of the trite phases of our generation.)

Unfortunately, when many people hear this phrase, a certain “look” comes to mind, an outward appearance or choice of clothing/hairstyle that denotes a woman's being recognized as a “Titus 2 woman”. I would suggest that anytime that we start to judge a woman's heart by her outward appearance that we have lost true sight of what's important to our Almighty God.

There is also a growing tendency these days to give the title “Titus 2 woman” to a Christian woman of any age who exhibits Godly behavior. That is not, however, what God tells us. The Greek word “older” in verse 3 is “presbutis”: an aged woman; it refers to age alone. I know that there is often a lack of “aged” Christian women in our lives during these times, but that does not

mean that we are to back up the “age requirements” of God’s Word. Just like there is a tendency to try and make “elders” of men in their 20's and 30's, turning a similarly-aged young woman into a “Titus 2 woman” is just another example of trying to twist God’s Word to suit our own needs. It is that very same “sin of contortion” which has allowed the religion of evolution to creep into so many Christian churches and homes, so we need to be ever on guard against manipulation of the Scriptures.

(By the way, is this part of Scripture *only* for older women? Certainly not! This is worthy advice for even the youngest of girls. They will be so much better off if they grow into this woman slowly and surely, rather than coming to it late in life, when it is much more difficult to learn and mistakes have already been made. The younger women are called to be learning these things, so that they may, in their turn, become the teachers. *“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.”* (Proverbs 22:6). Also note that this is not only instruction for a mother’s behavior to her daughters, but for the behavior of *all* older women to *all* younger women.)

Let’s take a look, then, at what God “sees” when he thinks of this older woman (verses 3-5).

TITUS 2:3-5

• ***Reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips*** — Like the older men in v. 2, women should be “dignified” in their behavior. I think that this warning about “malicious” gossip is particularly noteworthy. God usually lists gossips with liars and

fornicators, so this is an admonition that cannot be read too often.

- ***Nor enslaved to much wine*** — Like the men in v. 2, women are to be “temperate”, self-controlled.

- ***Teaching what is good*** — Like the men in v. 2, women are exhorted to be “sound in faith”. The difference lies in the fact, though, that the women are being exhorted to teach the younger women, whereas the men are called to a more general teaching.

- ***Teaching what is good, that they may encourage [train] the young women to love their husbands*** — Whereas God exhorts older men to be “sound in love”, He very specifically directs a woman’s love to her husband and children. The Greek root word for “love” here is “philos”: loved, dear, befriended. Do we treat our husbands as well as we treat our friends? The best way which we have to teach other women to love their husbands is to demonstrate it in our own marriages. If we are always talking about how irritating or sloppy our husbands are, or playing them up to be fools or tyrants, then we cannot be teachers. To teach, you must first exhibit a thorough understanding of the subject.

- ***Teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women . . . to love their children*** — Again, we have this same word meaning “loved, dear”. Do you treat all of your children as though they are loved and dear? Do you whine about having to spend a long weekend with them? Do they always get on your nerves when needing “something to eat”? Does it drive you crazy when they want to be held? Is it easier to just teach them to be “independent” than to help them deal with all of their hopes and fears? What about when they just can’t remember the “six-times table”? Love your children — they are gifts from God!

• ***Teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to be . . . sensible and pure*** — The Greek word for “sensible”, in both verses 2 and 5, is “sophronos”: discreet, sober. The Greek word for “pure” is “hagnos”: not only chaste but virginal, modest. Modesty must be applied to all aspects of our demeanor: behavior, speech, hair, clothing, courtship, etc. It should be a great governor in our choices in clothing, music, books, movies, et al. Does this carry an understanding of a certain uniform of dress? Is a woman only modest in a dress? What about slacks? Does your head need to be covered? What exactly does it mean to cover your body or your hair; how much is enough? Again, we may safely go back to Isaiah 66, where God warns us against worshipping the outward trappings. As in every other area of our lives, our husbands should be involved. Let your husband be your guide, if he is a Godly man; you might be surprised at how strong his feelings *are* about women’s speech and dress. Get your concordance out again and do a study on the issue of modesty. God has given us clear examples and instruction in His Word – you will not be left confused.

• ***Teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to be . . . workers at home*** — This is the part of verse 5 that most preachers either ignore or skim right over. The Greek used here for “workers” is “oikouros”: house keeper, a keeper at home, one who looks after domestic affairs with prudence and care. We have to be very careful *not* to force the Scriptures to fit our own desires and ideas. God’s Word specifically says that older and younger women are to be KEEPERS AT HOME. When the angels appeared to Abraham,

Sarah was “in the tent” and able to cook their lunch (Genesis 18:6). Tabitha had been able to clothe “all the widows” in Joppa, being a woman “**abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did**” (Acts 9:36-39). How many others can you find? Take a closer look at Proverbs 31, a great part of any study on being a keeper at home. If you can become everything that this king’s mother thought her daughter-in-law should be, then you are truly blessed among women!

Strangely enough, Proverbs 31 is the Scripture that people use most often to support the idea that a woman/girl *is* permitted to work outside of her home. However, what we often fail to understand is that this woman’s buying is done for the benefit of her housekeeping and the selling is done only after her household is in a state of perfection! Where did this woman learn to do all of these things? Temple school? College? Youth group programs? This kind of housekeeping and family care would have been impossible to accomplish if, as a young girl/woman, she had been working at the local “Burger ben Judah”.

The sound teaching of anything comes with much study and practice. We must constantly ask ourselves, “what *are* we training our young women to be?” If the boy in a family would like to be a carpenter by trade, he is not trained during his childhood to be a piano teacher and then sent off to his first day on the job, where he will be expected to learn his carpenter’s trade by trial-and-error. If the girl in a family feels called to be a wife and mother, why would we then train her to be something else? Her trial-and-error learning is the sadder of the two lots, actually, affecting many more generations than the boy’s mistakes ever will.

“Workers at home” or “keepers at home” . . . God’s message is the same and must never be “formed” to fit our own worldly views.

• *Teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to be . . . kind, being subject to their own husbands* — The crowning touch to the list, which brings us back to the beginning of our study!

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” Revelation 19:7

REFLECTIONS

It was early in my children’s lives when I realized that their fussiness (aside from obvious needs) meant that I was being fussy; their whining meant that I had been complaining a lot; their tendency to bicker meant that I was either not paying attention to their needs or that I had been argumentative in front of them; this could go on and on. When the children had a less-than-wonderful moment that had no obvious origin, it was nearly always simple for me to find the fault in my own behavior. I am not saying that I have been responsible for every bad moment of behavior in my children, but I will take “credit” for many of them.

For many of those early years, it was an issue of my obedience to God. I was a very selfish creature and had been well-trained to look out for myself. God had to use the sharpest of pruning shears on me, and I did not go to my knees very easily. One of the most effective methods that He used for this training was the mirroring of my bad behavior in my children. I would

suggest that, if things are not running smoothly in your home, that you look to your relationship with God, who expects obedience.

The next step was even more difficult for me, and I still have a long way to go. Submissiveness to *anyone* was not something that I had been trained to be. Submissive to a *man*? Not a concept in *my* understanding. As a product of a self-sufficient, women's-liberation world, the step of becoming a submissive wife has been the most difficult.

God's Word has been my source of instruction and consolation. Godly women who have graciously instructed me by word or example have made His Word seem very real and practical. Having now come to a point of willingness to be my husband's "suitable helper", I can only say that there is a freedom to being the person that God designed me to be that nothing in this world can offer. I would suggest that if your life is not running in an orderly fashion but that your relationship with God seems to be in order, then look to your relationship with your husband.

If your life is not well-ordered, neither will be the lives of those around you; if you are not filled with the joy of the Lord, then neither will others be.

I want my daughters to be the best wives and mothers possible (provided they are called by God to be such). What a blessing it is that we live in a time when we are *free* to teach them the things which God has commanded! With the help of God, my prayer is that our husbands will not be embarrassed when they stand before the throne of Christ . . .