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Womanhood



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "Womanhood," Steve Gregg explores the representation and roles of women in the Bible. While the Bible teaches equality among Christians regardless of sex, there are still cultural distinctions in society. Women in the Bible have played significant roles, ranging from giving birth to important figures to being the first evangelist. Though Paul's statements on women's roles have cultural flavor, he emphasizes submission to authority, including wives submitting to their husbands, and encourages older women to teach younger women how to be submissive and keepers of the home.

Transcript

The New Testament Role of Womanhood The New Testament Role of Womanhood The New Testament Role of Womanhood The New Testament Role of Womanhood There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, and there is neither male nor female. For ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Now, very clearly he's saying that all people who are in Christ have put on Christ, have become part of his body.

And just like the cells of a body or the members of a body, they may have different functions, but they're all valuable, and there's not some that can be said to be more expendable than others. In our human body, it may seem that some of our parts are more expendable, but the doctors are changing their views about that. It used to be believed that we had quite a few organs and structures that were vestigial and had no purpose, but now increased medical knowledge has shown that the body of the human being has few or no organs that can be said to be worthless.

And so in the body of Christ, it's the same, there are no vestigial organs or structures in the body of Christ, there are no useless members. Everyone has a gift, everyone has a function, and it doesn't make any difference whether that person is Jewish by birth or Gentile by birth. That doesn't change the fact that they have an equal standing before God, an equal value to God.

It doesn't matter that they be born male or female, or whether they're born in slavery or born free. Those things are not among the distinctions that God makes between people.

He makes distinctions between believer and unbeliever, and that's the only distinction he makes.

He's not a respecter of persons on any other basis than that. Now, we know that the Jews were respecters of persons in all these areas, especially the Jew-Gentile area, but also the male-female area. And when Jesus came, he came to a society where women were quite beaten down, you might say.

And the woman was considered to be like a possession, like chattel. And many societies besides the Jewish society had this impression of women. And Jesus surprised people by the way he related to women.

He had women among his followers, no other rabbi would permit women in his following. There were many rabbis with disciples, but none of them had female disciples, because it was considered by the Jews that women did not need to learn the law, because they were of no value to the kingdom of God. They were there for having children and for keeping house, and that's about what they were there for.

And so there was no need to teach them the laws. And that Jesus had many women who accompanied him in his travels, and were being trained under him makes it clear that Jesus had a different view of the situation than the prevailing social custom. We have said before, and you've probably heard in other places, that the devout Jews had a prayer of thanksgiving that they offered to God on a daily basis.

Every morning they said, God I thank you that I was not born a Gentile or a woman or a dog. Because they felt like those are about as low as you can go. To be a Jew was a high privilege, to be a Gentile was to be a dog.

To be a man was a privilege, but to be a woman was to be worthless. And so we can see that the society in which Jesus came was one where the women were far from liberated. And the Apostle Paul and Jesus himself, I imagine, are the two individuals in the history of the world who did the most to liberate womanhood.

Because it was Paul who made this remarkable statement, which would be remarkable in his culture, and in most of the cultures of that time, that he said there is no distinction between male and female in Christ, that all are one in Christ. Now we know that he did not mean by this that there are not separate roles. There are separate roles to be played, and that is emphasized in so many places in Scripture.

So the need today is for us to understand the equality that exists among all Christians, whether of any race or of any sex or of any social standing, there is a basic equality among all Christians. There will not be second class citizens in heaven who are of that position simply because they were born in a certain state, a certain condition. But that there is also a role for children, a role for women, a role for men, a role for slaves, a role

for free people.

There are various roles for different people. There is the role of the elder, there is the role of the deacon, there is the role of the deacon's wife that is singled out. There are all kinds of different callings in the body of Christ.

And since we are discussing the calling of women or the role of women, we are going to focus tonight on those passages that specifically refer to those things that distinctly refer to women's place in the New Testament period. And we need to understand, of course, without me even bringing it up, most of you have heard and are familiar with the fact that one of the key words in the Scriptures that is found in most of the exhortations to women has to do with submission. But that, of course, means that they are required to do what all people are required to do.

But they are required to do it also in a special sense. And we'll find out exactly what that sense is as we continue through the Scriptures. But I want to say that many times when we study the Scriptures and we see the condition that we are supposed to live under or the rights that we are supposed to forsake, we find ourselves really at variance in our own feelings toward what the Scripture teaches.

And, of course, that's why we need the Scriptures, because our own hearts many times are deceitful above all things. Who can know them? Jeremiah said, the heart of man is so deceitful, and of woman. And we also know that there's a way that seems right unto a man and to a woman, but at the end there are other ways of death.

And we live in an age where the Scriptural teaching on womanhood has been greatly obscured and attacked. And while I don't want to sound like an alarmist, I don't want to sound like a witch hunter or anything like that, I can simply state with, I think, accuracy that much documentation can be brought forward to show that the current woman's liberation movement has part of its inspiration in a religion called Wicca, which is another name for witchcraft, and that it is the goddess worship movement that has inspired the woman's liberation movement. Now that's not just something I'm saying because of my antipathy for that movement.

I'm saying that, and I would have never dreamed it up myself, I've read documentation to that effect, and whether the documentation is the most accurate or not, of course I can't say, but I do see that the result of the woman's liberation movement, which probably started in our parents' generation, has been confusion. It has brought tremendous confusion and a tremendous identity crisis on the women of our generation. And I tell you the truth, I pity the women of our generation.

Not because they're women, because there's nothing pitiable about being a woman, though the Jew would have considered that a pitiable condition, and I don't, and neither does Jesus. But I pity the women today because of the society that we live in and the

type of conditioning that you as women are exposed to on a daily basis from the world, because today we live in a time where there's tremendous deception, where there's tremendous lies of the devil being purported. And it is giving, of course, the main message that modern women are getting is that you are able to do everything a man can do.

You ought to have the same kind of jobs men have. You ought to not be treated any differently than men. And all this kind of conditioning, and while, of course, I would certainly agree with those who say that a woman who works at a man's job should get the same pay that a man gets if she's doing the same work, but beyond that I can't agree that women are made for the same functions, and that women have the same aptitudes in general, or that they have the same purpose as men.

We all have a purpose in the body of Christ, and a hand cannot say to a foot, I have no need of you. And at the same time, the hand cannot say, because I am not the foot, I am not of the body. There is a mutual dependency that is there because of the differences that exist from one member to another.

Now, of course, we're talking about sexual differences tonight, or that's basically what we're focusing on, but that applies to other kinds of differences. That I'm a teacher, and you might be a prophet, or a prophetess. It makes you and me different.

If you have the gift of discerning of spirits, and I don't have that gift, then we are different than each other, but that very difference is what makes it necessary for us to work together in the same body, to find out exactly what the limitations of our calling are, and to live within those bounds so that we might more perfectly fit into the plan of God for our lives, and be the kind of member of the body of Christ that God intends for us to be. Well, of course, that kind of talk makes no sense at all to the secularist, to the secular person. The main goal in life is to make sure that you don't have your rights violated, and that's just the opposite of the Christian attitude.

The Bible says that we're to be not transformed. This is Romans 12.2. It says, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And our minds have to be renewed.

We might as well get it through our heads that when we become Christians, we've got everything to learn when it comes to reality, because we have been conditioned for so long to believe the opposite of the things that the Scripture teaches. And I believe that even though I've been a Christian a long time, I still have a great deal to learn. And the attitude that will lead to growth among Christians, whether they're men or women, will be an attitude that I still have many changes to go through.

And so we need to come to this subject with humility and simplicity and clarity. And I want to say that most of the questions that arise over women's place, and most of the

problems that arise over disputes over women's place, would be solved without any reference to womanhood at all, or manhood, simply by people being like Christ. You see, women and men both have the same calling, and that is to be like Christ.

And if we had His characteristics, in greater measure, we would never have most of the problems that have come up, and have caused conflicts over this issue of women's roles or men's roles, or any of those things. In fact, if women, just like men, are expected to be, if women were more humble and teachable, and easy to be entreated, and willing to take affronts graciously, willing to turn the other cheek, willing to be the servant of all, willing to forsake their own rights, this is only what is the common requirement for all Christians, whether men or women. And there would be no conflict over what the Scripture says about women's role, if everyone in the body of Christ was the way Christians are supposed to be.

If we all were willing to take up our cross, to deny ourselves, to forsake whatever rights we feel that we have, and instead say, I have died, and my life is hid with Christ and God, and a dead man has no rights, I only have whatever God dishes out to me as my particular set of privileges, then we would have no trouble. We'd come to the Word of God as a hungry soul looking for instruction, and we'd have a teachable spirit, and this is what we need today. Now, this could be the most difficult word for a woman to hear, I suppose, though I don't know why it should be.

I certainly feel like it could be the most valuable word that you will hear at this school, because of the tremendous amount of deception concerning women's role, the tremendous amount of confusion, and the identity crisis that just being a woman in the 20th century must create, especially a Christian woman in the 20th century. Women today, of course, are trying in many respects in the world to fill the shoes of men, and yet are not equipped to do all the same things men are equipped to do. Now, when I say that, I'm not speaking in terms of whether they're as intelligent or physically strong, or any of those things.

There are women, some women are more physically strong than some men are. Some women are more intelligent than some men are. But God is not concerned about how qualified a woman is, or a man, for anything that they seek to be involved in.

What He's impressed with is not qualifications, but obedience. What He's impressed with is whether a person is fitting into the role that He has given them, and not whether they're excelling in all the worldly things that the world will be impressed by if you excel at. And, of course, you are under tremendous pressure as Christian women to excel in things which have been traditionally considered to be men's roles, because all the pressure of your peers, and many of your Christian peers included, is in this direction.

Well, what we want to do tonight is just look at the Scriptures. Now, it might be more advantageous if we had a woman up here giving this talk, because, of course, some of

the things I'm going to say are going to sound like they're traditional statements, because the traditional statements were based on clear words of Scripture. Therefore, I'm not asking you to submit to me on this matter.

I'm asking you to submit your minds and your hearts to the Scripture. If every Christian, male and female, would allow the Scripture to say what is so and what is not so, and what must be so, and is willing to submit their heart and life wholeheartedly to what the Scripture says clearly, then we will have very few problems, I think. And I'm not even suggesting that we have problems.

I know that there are some problems in terms of disputes, even here at this school, that have arisen over what women are supposed to be like. And in giving this word, I have in no way any desire to add any kind of fuel to either side of that issue. As I understand it, these problems have arisen mainly from ideological differences, which stem from differences of interpretation of things.

But some things can't be reinterpreted, or not very easily. Some things are rather clear. And those are the things we want to stick with as much as possible.

All right? Now, we need to ask ourselves, is it true what the critics of the Bible say, that God is down on women? That God has a low view of women? That the Apostle Paul was bitter against women? Many of you have heard this kind of an accusation against Paul. Some have said, well, from the things he said about women, he probably had a bad marriage at one time, and then was divorced, and then he was embittered, and so he said all those bad things about women. Well, as I said, there has been nothing that has liberated women more than the writings of the Apostle Paul.

If you want to see what women are like who have never been under Christian influence, and under Paul's influence, you may go to Arabia, if you'd like to, and look at a Mohammedan society, and just see what the women are like. In fact, the Islamic people in the Arab nations don't even want American women visiting. I'm not saying they exclude them entirely, but I've heard that there is tremendous resistance and desire on the part of the Arabs not to have Western women visit.

Why is that? Because Western women are far more liberated than women under that religion. Because that religion does not have the liberating message that the Gospel has. And the women under that society don't have the freedom in Christ that Christian women have, or women who have been raised in society that's been deeply affected by the writings of Apostle Paul, primarily.

And the reason is that the Apostle Paul thought highly of women. It's true that he put restrictions on women. He spoke very plainly about things that most preachers would be afraid to speak on tonight.

In fact, I'm very much intimidated very often to speak plainly some of the things that the Apostle Paul said plainly. But the Bible says open rebuke is better than secret love, and if the Apostle Paul had hedged about the issue and had minced words, then we wouldn't have a clear teaching in the Scripture on the limitations and the boundaries of the woman's role. And we have to thank God for the Apostle Paul, who's given us some information about womanhood that would have been lost in our society because of the deceptive influences of this age if we didn't have a firm and clear word in the Scripture about it.

And I hope that all of you can appreciate Paul for what he's done for the society that you were born in, and of course what God has done through him. Now, the Bible clearly teaches that God is not down on women. He has another role for them than he has for men in general, but he does not have a bad opinion of them.

In fact, we know that it was woman and not man that was permitted to bring the Messiah into the world. God specifically and deliberately overstepped man to bring Jesus into the world. The Bible teaches that in the transgression in the Garden of Eden, the woman was deceived, but the man was the rebel.

And the promise was made to the woman and not to the man that of her seed would come the Savior of the world. Her seed. Now, we usually think of the seed as the sperm, therefore to speak of a woman's seed is highly irregular.

Normally you'd think of the man's seed, his child being his seed. But of course God specifically overstepped man in this matter because of man's rebellion in the Garden of Eden and allowed woman to be the one through whom Messiah would come. And he said it would be the seed of the woman.

This is of course in Genesis 3.15. He said to the woman, your seed shall be at enmity with the serpent's seed and your seed shall crush his head and so forth. Well, he was speaking actually to the serpent, but he was talking about the woman's seed coming and crushing the serpent. Now, we find that Paul said in Galatians 4.4, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his son made of a woman.

Made under the law to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons. In Galatians 4.4, Paul specifically says that Jesus was made from a woman. That is to say that he was brought forth through a woman, not through a man.

He had no human father. And this, I must say, has got to be the highest privilege any human being in history could ever have had and that is to be the one who issued in the Savior. And to say that no man was given that privilege is to say something.

Now, I know that modern women in many senses, in many cases I should say, do not consider motherhood to be that much of a privilege. It's more of a drudgery. Raising

children is a pain in the neck.

And of course, the traditional role, as we might call it, of the woman being the housewife and mother, usually is conveyed to people as being a rather boring lifestyle where you're stuck with a bunch of screaming kids and you don't get to go out and have a lot of fun or anything like that. But the point is that motherhood is considered a great privilege in the Scripture. Women were considered to be cursed of God if they couldn't have children.

And as I said, it's the very ability of women to have children that made it possible for them to bring the Savior into the world, for Mary to be the mother of the Savior. Because God has equipped women for one purpose first. Now, there's other purposes too, and I hope people won't object too strongly.

But motherhood is the high calling of women in general. Now, someone said, are you going to gear this for single women? Of course, most of the women in our community here are single at this point. But as I said when that question was asked, we find in the Scripture the assumption that most women will marry.

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, he said, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and every woman have her own husband. But he said, there are some who will be called to be celibate. He said, if a woman can remain single to devote her whole time to serving the Lord, well then more power to her.

He says not everyone can do that, but he said some can. But he implied that that would be the rare one, that it's unusual to find someone who's going to be celibate all their life and to just serve the Lord more or less as a nun, because of course there's no relation with man to be had in that kind of situation, because the only purpose for relations with men in God's life is for marriage. Now, that sounds terribly old-fashioned.

I'm sorry, that is the revelation of the Scripture. The reason for relationships between men and women is to have marriage in view. And so we are all attracted to the concept of relationships between men and women, unless we've been affected by another unusual movement of our time, which would be the gay movement.

But if we are regular heterosexual people, we're all attracted to people of the opposite sex. The funny thing is, or the weird thing, or the terrible thing, is that in the church, this attraction to the opposite sex has sometimes not been accompanied by the natural desire to marry. There's been the desire only to have casual relationships and all this.

And this kind of thing is, frankly, unknown to biblical times. That God gave man and woman a joint ministry together is one of the clearest teachings of Scripture from the very time of the creation. It was not good for man to dwell alone.

And so he made a woman from the man who was taken from his side. And as unpleasant as this may sound to modern thinkers, the Bible indicates that the woman was made for

man. It says that very clearly in 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

When God made woman, he made her for man. And a woman without a man is an oddity in the New Testament. I'm not saying in our society it's an oddity.

It's a very common thing. But when we talk about the role of women and read the passages in the New Testament about this subject, we're finding writers who assume that most women want to marry and will marry. And that there will be that small minority who will remain celibate just to seek God with prayer and fasting and serving the Lord with all their hearts.

But Paul doesn't even indicate that anything short of that is a qualification for remaining single. He said to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and every woman have her own husband. But of course he mentioned there would be some exceptions.

So we simply see that the Bible assumes that marriage is in view. And of course, since no birth control was available in those days, it also assumes that motherhood would be the major role of a woman. Now there are other roles that women are involved in.

And before the end of this study, we're going to enumerate quite a few different ministries that we find in the Scripture that women have been used in, in the Old and New Testament both. And we'll find that God has other ministries for women too. But I just have to get this information out first because some people find it unpleasant and it needs to get through.

That God made woman to have children. That's not all he made her for. If you would study anatomy, you would learn that your body was made for having children.

And for glorifying God in other respects too. But if God didn't call you to be a mother, then you've got a lot of unnecessary equipment. You do have vestigial organs then.

Organs that are not for any use at all. But I don't believe that God is that kind of God. I don't believe he makes worthless equipment.

And I believe that we have to view this differently than the world does. The world views motherhood as a slavery. Well, good enough.

I view Christianity as a slavery to Christ. That's what Paul said. In fact, in that very, in that very chapter where he's talking about marriage and staying single and those things in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, he goes on to talk about slaves.

And he says, are you married? He says, don't seek to be unmarried. If you are unmarried, well then, don't worry about that. Don't seek to be married.

He's saying, for the present time, he says, it's good to be unmarried. And he said, if you're a slave, don't seek your freedom. And if you're free, don't seek to be a slave.

He says, because after all, what's the difference? He said, a free man has got to be Christ's slave, and a slave is Christ's free man, so it's all equal anyway. That our role in society is no longer an obsession with us, but what is our obsession is to be what God wants us to be. And in essence, then, we are slaves to Christ.

We are love slaves to Christ. We are voluntary slaves, and our greatest fulfillment will be found in doing what we know He desires. And if the role of motherhood or whatever seems like a slavery, well, then the next question is, is it the will of God? If it's not the will of God, then praise God, you get out of it.

If it is the will of God, then you embrace it, just as Paul embraced his chains, because he knew that that was what God had for him. It wasn't what he would have chosen for his own life, but it was what God chose for him. And it's very clear that he said he rejoiced in his infirmities and in his persecutions and all the things he was suffering.

Now, we see that many women were greatly privileged in the Scripture to give birth to important people. Among them, of course, was Sarah, who gave birth to Isaac, who fulfilled one of the great promises of the Old Testament about Abram's seed. We find that Moses' mother had the privilege not only of bringing Moses into the world, but of training him in his early years.

And because of that early training which she had, that influence on his life, she was able to bring about the salvation of her whole race. Because her child was trained up to be loyal to God and to the people of God. And when God put him in a position of authority, that woman's influence is what really made the day.

Because Moses was tempted with all kinds of other things, but his mother's training stuck with him. And of course, it's an old cliché now to say that behind every great man there's a great woman, which usually means his mother. And yet, I don't really know that to be untrue.

I don't know very many great men who don't have great mothers, but the point is that a woman has the privilege of being the first influence on a human life. That is, the life of their child. And of course, the father is to be an influence also.

Because the father in the traditional home goes out and works and earns some money all day, and the mother stays home and takes care of the children and trains them, we find that the mother ends up having a lot more influence on the early years of a child's life than the father does. And that is a privilege. It may not seem like a privilege, it may seem like a lot of work, but then it's work for God.

And work for God is a privilege in my opinion, and I frankly like to work for God, even though it's not always the things I'd rather do. We find that Hannah was blessed of God to bring forth Samuel, and she had prayed and sought the Lord and wept and fasted that

she would even be able to have a son and give him to the Lord. And she did, and Samuel became the first of the great prophets to Israel and the last of the great judges.

And we find, of course, Elizabeth having John the Baptist. And when it was announced to her that she would have a child, it said that her prayers had been answered and her reproach was going to be taken away because she had the reproach of not being a mother. And of course, that was the angel who implied that this was the reproach that was being removed.

And the angel certainly saw things from God's perspective. It was a reproach, it was considered a curse from God to not be able to be a mother. And when Mary came and visited her, Elizabeth said, what a privilege it is for the mother of my Lord to visit me.

Now, she didn't say what a privilege to have Jesus come in his fetal form to visit me, but what a privilege to have a woman who is blessed to be the mother of my Lord to be with me. You can see that the Bible speaks highly of motherhood, though the world tries to put it down and zero population growth and a whole lot of things like that. Those movements are definitely trying to make it look like you're a bit out of touch with the times, not in touch with reality if you think it's good to have a lot of kids.

But that's not what the Bible says. The Bible says that children are like arrows in the hands of a mighty man. And that he's as blessed as the man who's got his quiver full of them.

Meaning, to have a lot of children makes you useful for God because they're like weapons against the enemy. And if you can train up godly children to be missionaries for God, then you've done something that is the best you could ever hope to do with your life. I myself feel like there's no greater thing that can happen than for my daughter to go to the mission field and to die there.

I mean, she's got to die sometime. If she could die somewhere, I hope she dies on the mission field. And to me, I very gladly give my children for that.

As the Lord gives them to me, I want my children, every one of them, to go on the mission field. If they don't, I'll be disappointed. Doesn't mean I won't love them, but I'll be disappointed because I feel it's a great privilege to bring forth mighty workers for the kingdom of God.

And women have that privilege and have the privilege of the early training of such. And that is a lofty position in the eyes of God. And if we look down on it because our society says, ah, two or three children, anything beyond that, you're going to be too tied down.

Well, aren't you supposed to be tied down to God's will if his will is for you to raise children? Great. If it's not, then don't. But the question is, are we seeking our own will or God's will? Are we laying down our lives and taking up our cross and saying, what God

wants is what I want, and I don't care how much it costs me.

We find that God thinks highly enough of womanhood that he personifies wisdom as a woman. In the book of Proverbs, where wisdom is the most highly exalted virtue in the book of Proverbs, it is invariably personified as a woman. The first place where we find that is Proverbs 1 and verse 20, I think it is, where it says, Wisdom cries in the streets, and she says this and so.

And we find then throughout the next ten chapters, wisdom is personified as a godly woman and not as a man. It's interesting, though, the New Testament says that Jesus has become unto us our wisdom. In 1 Corinthians 1.30, it mentions that Jesus is become unto us wisdom and sanctification and all that.

Nonetheless, Solomon doesn't personify wisdom as a man, but as a woman. And in Proverbs 31, which is the chapter about the virtuous woman, it says that there's words of wisdom upon her lips, and the law of kindness is in her mouth. And so, God sees women as potentially having tremendous amount of wisdom and influence upon other people for wise conduct.

And of course, there's also reference to foolish women in the book of Proverbs. Mostly, they're described as harlots, but there's also reference to cantankerous women and how their contentions are like a continual dropping and things like that. So, not everything Solomon says about women is good, but he certainly has some very positive approaches to womanhood that you can find in the Proverbs that do reflect God's attitude.

Also, a virtuous wife is said to be a crown to her husband. In Proverbs chapter 12 and verse 4, it says a virtuous wife is a crown to her husband, but she that maketh ashamed is like rottenness to the bones. And so, a wife has tremendous power over her husband.

Not that she's supposed to be wielding tremendous amount of power, but she has the power to crown his efforts or to be a reproach to him. And it's very possible for a man, his whole ministry, to be affected by the virtue or lack thereof of his wife. It says concerning the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, her husband sits in the gate with the elders of the city.

Now, that means that simply because she's a virtuous woman, her husband is in leadership. We know that a man whose wife is not virtuous can't be in leadership. It says that in 1 Timothy and in Titus.

A man has an unvirtuous wife who's not in subjection to him, he can't be in leadership. So, a woman has the power to crown her husband and his ministry or basically to be rottenness to his bones. And it does say in Proverbs 18, 22, that a man who finds a wife finds a good thing.

It doesn't say finds something worthless or finds a piece of property or chattel, but he

finds something that's good, he says, and obtains favor from the Lord. Again, marriage is in view here. And if marriage is not something that you yourself feel like you're called to, well then, maybe you have to be married to the Lord.

Because you're not meant to be alone. It's not good for a man to be alone. It certainly isn't good for a woman to be alone.

If you're not married to another person, then you should be married to the Lord. And that means that you spend your whole time serving the Lord. That's the only thing that Paul indicated was the out from really serving in the normal role of a wife.

Now, there may be some of you who are called to that particular thing, but that's not the case with all people. In 1 Peter 3, 7, husbands are told to love their wives. They are told that they are to honor their wives as the weaker vessel.

And it says that if they don't do this, their prayers will be hindered. Now, that certainly looks like God is standing up for women. If he will not even answer the prayers of a man who is not honoring his wife properly, then God seems to be very much on the woman's side.

He's not down on women. He tells the husband, you'd better honor your wife as the weaker vessel. Now, a lot of people object to being, a lot of women object to being called the weaker vessel.

And we'll talk about a little later what I think that means, but let me say this much, that to say that a woman is a weaker vessel simply means that she is in more of a position for God's strength to be made manifest in her because Paul said that God chooses the weak things to confound those that are strong and chooses the foolish things to confound those that are wise. And he says that in his weakness, God's strength is made perfect. So if it's true that women are the weaker vessel, then they have the greater opportunity to manifest the strength and the power of God in their lives, more than a strong person.

And we'll examine what I think that means just a little later here. The women in the New Testament very often had privileges that men didn't have. The first evangelist to the Samaritans was a woman.

And so unusual this was that when the disciples who had gone to find food and had bought some food in town came out and found Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4, it says they marveled that he talked to a woman. But they didn't dare say, why are you talking to this woman? But they were amazed because no rabbi would stoop so low in that society as to speak to a woman in public. Yet Jesus conversed quite openly with her, the same as he'd converse with a man.

And she had the privilege of going out and bringing the whole city around to hear him, of whom many of them apparently were converted. She was the first evangelist to that

area. Now later, Philip went there and had a great revival in Samaria too, but that woman had been before him.

She had had the privilege first. We find in the genealogy of Jesus, in Matthew chapter 1, four women's names. Now I admit there's a lot more men's names than that in there, but a striking thing is that Jewish genealogies never included the names of women.

If you look at the genealogies of the Old Testament, you will never find the insertion of the name of the mother of anyone, only the father. But four times in the genealogy of Jesus there's reference to so and so begat so and so by such and such a woman and gives her name. Those four women, by the way, are Tamar, Ruth, Bathsheba, and who's the fourth one? I'll have to look it up.

Tamar, Bathsheba, Ruth, and I've got it. I'll have to look at the chapter itself because I don't have it memorized, I guess. And Rahab.

Those are the four women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus. Now it's interesting that none of them were Jewish. And three of them had scandalous reputations.

Rahab is said to have been a harlot. Bathsheba was known for her adulterous relationship with David. Tamar was the one who played the harlot with Judah and had deceived him and had, well, we know the story, had an incestuous relationship with him.

As far as Ruth goes, nothing wrong is recorded about her, but she was a Moabitess and it was forbidden that a Jew marry a Moabitess, and yet she married David's grandfather. And so she was David's grandmother, or great-grandmother. But the point is that Jesus so associated with women in his ministry that even his genealogy takes time out to mention some of the women that were part of his background, and many of them were women of tainted reputations.

And, of course, I think Matthew's intention in bringing this up is to show that Jesus had an outreach and had relationship to all people and was willing to even be associated with women and with people who were not Jews, as none of these women were, and with people who even were renowned sinners. That Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh and lived among us and was associated with people who were not the highest in society. Besides that, when Jesus rose from the dead, the first person to see him and to hear his voice after he resurrected was Mary Magdalene.

The first person to see Jesus risen from the dead was a woman. So, it's not as though God doesn't think highly of women. But when we get to those passages which speak about the special roles of women, you might get the impression, because of the conditioning we've had, that God does not look favorably among women.

But let's put it this way. God looks realistically at everyone. God has some unflattering things to say about men, by the way.

And, in fact, you'll find that most of the unflattering stories about people in the Old Testament are about men, who are wicked men. There were certainly more men who made trouble for God than there were women in the Old Testament. But there were some women, too.

And when God speaks about a situation, he speaks with absolute realism, and we have to assume that he knows more than we do about it. We're a bunch of punks. Most of us are under 30.

And God has been around many thousands of years. He made man. He made woman.

He knows what their physical composition is. He knows what their psychological capabilities are. And he is, in his mercy, given relative roles to the various groups, which are consistent with their abilities and their callings.

And so we need to understand, as we read the Scriptures, if we find anything there that doesn't please us, then we have to say, well, I guess it's me and not God that has to change, because God knows more about it than I do. Now, we want to look together at 1 Corinthians 11, and I want to talk now for a little while about divine order, God's divine order. Now, everyone knows what that means.

1 Corinthians 11, 3, But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. Now, what we have here are three links, or four links, actually, in a chain of command. You know what a chain of command is, don't you? In an army, or in a corporation, or in any kind of endeavor where there are tasks to be performed by a large number of people, there are those who answer to others.

It is said in Matthew chapter 8 that Jesus encountered a centurion, and the centurion said, my servant is dying. Jesus said, I'll come and heal him. The centurion said, oh, I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Just say the word and I know he'll be healed. You don't have to come over. Because the centurion said, I myself am a man under authority, and I say unto my servants, and to those under me, go, and they go, and I say do this and they do it.

And he says, therefore I know that you also have authority, and you can say something and it will be done. And Jesus marveled at the man, and he said, boy, I've never seen faith like this in all of Israel. The man was not a Jew.

He said, among the Jews I've never seen faith like this, like this Roman has. Well, what was he saying? The man said, I'm under authority, and I have people under me. And I understand the authority structure.

And Jesus commended him and said, boy, you've got a good grasp on the situation here.

What it was, was that Rome was governed, of course, by an emperor. And the emperor had people that he assigned to positions of authority under him, and then below them were others.

And you had centurions at a certain level down on the chain of command. And they had a hundred soldiers under them, and those soldiers then had to answer to the centurion. But the soldiers also had authority over people.

They were a peacekeeping force in the society. So they had authority over citizens. Now, the thing is, as long as everyone was answering to the right person above them, then the chain of command was linked.

That if a soldier told me to carry a burden for a mile, and Jesus made reference to this very fact that this could happen, that a soldier could take Joseph, a citizen off the street, and say, carry this burden for me for a mile. Jesus said, carry it too. But the reason you'd have to carry it for a mile is because that soldier was under authority.

He was under a centurion, and that centurion was under someone else who was under someone else who was under the Caesar. Therefore, as long as everyone stood under the proper authority, the chain of authority was connected, and the power of Caesar could be exercised right down to the last man because it flowed through those channels. But if anyone was not submitted to the person over them in the chain, if the soldier was not submitted to his centurion, who was over him, then he had no authority at all.

He was just another man on the street. He might have a uniform, but he's got nothing to say. He has no right to say anything to me about what I should do because he is not connected to the line of authority that goes back to Caesar.

He is not in authority because he's broken the chain, and any link that's broken breaks the chain of command. Now, Paul refers to four links in a chain of command from God and going down as far as woman, but it actually goes further than that. He basically said that God the Father is the head of Christ.

Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman. Now, he could have gone further and said, of course, answer to the mother and the father, the man and the woman, and you could have taken it further, perhaps. But the point is that there is a chain of command.

Paul said it is there. He said, I don't want you to be ignorant about it. I want you to know this.

I would have you to know this. Well, do you know it? Well, what it means is if we're going to walk in the authority of Christ, we have to know what our place is. We have to know who it is that we answer to and who it is that answers to us because we are links in a chain, and we probably have links that are below us and links that are above us.

For example, I answer to an eldership of a church. They are above me. I am submitted to them.

And I have authority in this school, and I have people that I put under me to do certain things. And as they do the things, as they function in the roles that they've been assigned to do, then, of course, people have to submit to them. And so people who are submitting to those who are under them are actually ultimately submitting to the eldership that I answer to, who hopefully are answering to God.

But the point is that the authority flows through those channels. But if we say that I don't accept my position in this chain of command, then the order is broken up. Now, God is an orderly God.

It says in 1 Corinthians 14, God is not a God of confusion, but of peace, or a God of order. We can see in everything that He's created, there's symmetry, there's order, there's regimentation. And you know what I'm getting at.

Part of the order that everyone has to be in is that every man has to answer to Christ. And the woman answers to the man. Now, of course, the word man can mean husband, and the word woman can mean wife, and it's probable that Paul was thinking in terms of husband-wife relationships and not in terms of single men and single women.

Because, as I said, Paul did not consider that there's going to be women who remain single very much unless they're absolutely given over to the full-time service of Christ. And so, I don't deny that Paul was talking about husbands and wives, though he doesn't necessarily use those terms. He could also mean men and women.

But what we do see is that the woman, at least in the family situation, is answerable to her husband, or answerable to the man. That has to do with the order of command. Now, that is also part of the curse.

And a lot of women feel exactly that way about it. It's found in Genesis chapter 3, when Adam and Eve sinned, there was a curse pronounced on each of them. One on Adam, one on Eve, and one on the serpent.

And upon the man, it was said that he would have to slave and toil for his food, that he wasn't going to be able to just sit back and pick berries and live at ease anymore. He was going to have to toil and work for a living. That was essentially what his problem was going to be.

And the woman, her problem, her curse was going to be that she would have to be absolutely subject to her husband, and he would rule over her, and she would have sorrow and childbearing. Well, someone might say, well, in Christ we're not under the curse. The curse has been removed in Christ.

Well, not exactly. The Bible does say that the curse of the law has been removed, but this is not the curse of the law. This was a universal curse on humanity, and we do not find that Christian men are exempted from working for a living.

Paul said those who don't work should not eat. It's clear Paul felt we're still under this particular curse until the Lord comes. And it says in the New Earth, in Revelation chapter 21, the curse shall be removed.

There shall be no more curse in the New Earth. Until then, we still live under the provisions of this curse. Now, if woman had not had the role that she did in the temptation story, in Genesis chapter 3, perhaps things would be different in the role relationship.

We don't know. I mean, that's just a big if. I mean, there's no way to know whether things would be different.

But we know this, that because of the trouble she got into, God said, from now on, I'm going to have to set up a more strict order. And the woman's going to have to be ruled over by her husband. Now, this rule is obviously not something that's been repealed in Christ.

Because all the writers of the New Testament after the time of Christ still appealed to it. Still said that it was abiding. Peter said so.

Paul said so. And Paul said so in many places, in fact. And we know that Paul was not trying to come down on women.

But what he was saying is God has a certain order here. And things have to be done orderly. And when people were left to do whatever was right in their own eyes, the world lapsed into chaos and anarchy.

And God doesn't approve of that. And in his body there is order. He's not a God of confusion, but of order.

And that order includes restrictions placed on everybody, men and women. We all have certain things that we're not allowed to do. And certain things that we are allowed to do.

And the only problem that arises is when we want to do one of the things that isn't part of our privilege. That is not part of the things that God has given us to do. Now we say, well, why doesn't God let women do this or that or the other thing? Well, you can ask him why he doesn't.

But you can't get a different answer than the Bible gives. You can't say, well, he has changed his mind since then. Now some of the statements Paul made about women seem to have a cultural flavor to them.

And because of that, a great number of Christians feel that the statements Paul made about women's role in the church are not really binding today because Paul was writing to a very different kind of society. Because women had a very different kind of a role in that society. And simply to avoid having a bad testimony and offending people, Paul told the women to fit into that kind of a mentality that the worldly society had.

But if that's the case, if in fact God wanted women to be totally liberated as we have them today in our society, but he was only acquiescing to the way people thought in the world and telling women to live in subjection to their husbands, well then he was doing something very unusual in light of the fact that he otherwise told them not to conform to the world, but to be transformed by the renewal of their minds. If he was telling women to do this because society felt it was right, then it's a very strange thing indeed. Because if it was wrong for women to be in a submissive role and that they were really supposed to be doing all the same things men do, but Paul was just acquiescing to the pressure of the times, then he was actually bringing women into a bondage which was not from Christ, but which was conforming to the world.

And I don't believe Paul did that. I believe Paul was not beyond making mistakes, but I don't believe that some of the main things he taught reflect any misunderstanding on his part. And it's interesting how many times this issue of women's role comes up in Paul's writings.

Is it because he was bitter against women? No, it's because he was protective toward women. He was concerned about their welfare. He was concerned about how the devil might deceive them into thinking things that would bring them into dangerous areas.

He said in 2 Corinthians to the church there in the 11th chapter in verse 3, he says, I'm afraid for you. Now he's talking to the church as a whole, men and women. He says, I'm afraid for you that as the serpent beguiled Eve, so you might be perverted from the simplicity which is in Christ.

It's such a simple order that God has set up, but when people start resisting it, then things get confusing and complex and then troubles arise. But let's see what that order is. We see that the curse that came upon man and woman at the time of the fall included this particular role relationship.

The woman had to be ruled over by her husband. We don't have any evidence in Scripture that this has been repealed, that women no longer have to have any pain in childbearing, that men don't have to work for a living anymore, that the serpent doesn't have to crawl on his belly anymore. He still does, doesn't he? The coming of Christ hasn't changed any of those things, and the epistles which were written after the coming of Christ do not imply that the other part of the curse was repealed either.

Woman is still to be ruled over by her husband. Now, if you think that I'm gloating over

this because I'm a husband, you don't know me very well. I'm not an extremely authoritative kind of person, and a lot of times I'd rather let someone else make the decisions.

And for me, it's as much a hardship as anything is to be in the role of leadership in my home. Now, I'm not saying I'm not the right man for the job. I'm not saying my wife would make a better spiritual leader in the home than I am, but I'm saying that it's a lot easier not to be in leadership.

And people who long for leadership apparently have not had a good taste of what it's like. And let me read you some more Scriptures, or actually I'd like you to read them with me. Let's look at 1 Timothy chapter 2, one of the couple of really controversial Scriptures where Paul had some things that women nowadays often chafe at.

Of course, none of you will, but a lot of women today aren't as meek and teachable as the sisters we have here. But, 1 Timothy chapter 2. We're going to look back at this chapter on another point a little later here. He says in verse 12, well, verse 11.

We'll start verse 11 and read through verse 15. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I do not permit a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man, over the man, but to be in silence.

For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression, notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety. Now, we find Paul saying that he does not permit a woman to teach, or to usurp authority over a man.

As I travel and teach in different countries, a lot of countries have a lot of churches where women are pastors, even in our country there's a lot of women pastors of some churches, especially in the Pentecostal movement. And I frequently am in the position to open the floor up to questions and answers from the Bible. One of the questions that almost always comes up in every place is, what about woman teachers? What about 1 Timothy chapter 2? And all this stuff.

And it's a very hard question to answer, because it's not 100% clear what Paul has in mind here when he says to teach. Because it seems that Paul may be referring to a specific position in the church of eldership, of pastorship, of teaching in that sense, which he would not permit a woman to have. And the reason being, because it's disorderly.

The reason it's disorderly, he gives. He doesn't give a cultural reason. He doesn't say, now the people will be offended if we have women teaching.

He gives an absolute reason. Not a cultural, temporal reason. But the reason he gives is because the woman was not first formed.

The man was first formed. And then the woman. And what he argues from that is that the man must have the priority in the church.

It's got to be a patriarchal, not a matriarchal society. And I can see the value of his statements, and I can appreciate them, because women tend to be more zealous for God, or in greater numbers, than men. I don't know if everyone would find this to be true, but in my travels, it just seems to me as I go from church to church and place to place, there's a lot more women than men.

In discipleship schools, not this one, we're pretty evenly divided, actually, on that matter. But as I travel for YWAM and other groups, as I see young groups, there seem to be more women than men. Now, the men that are in them tend to be good ones, and sometimes the women in them are flakes.

Though a lot of them are good ones, too. But I'm saying that in larger numbers, women seem to come out to prayer meetings than men do, and to worship services. And I think most churches have more women than men on their walls and in their services.

Now, it's also true that women seem more eager to help out in church than men are. I don't know if it's because men are so busy at the office all the time, but it's much easier to get women to volunteer to teach Sunday school than men, in many cases. There may be some exceptional cases, but it would be very easy to fill all the positions of authority in the church with women, because it's easier to get women to volunteer than men.

And I can see that this has probably always been the case. No doubt it's something that has to do with the nature of men and women. Men are more macho, they think, and they feel like they have to submit to Christ and to love Him and to be fervent in love toward Him because He's a male figure.

It sounds, you know, they feel in many cases more reserved in that, where women feel totally unreserved in giving their love to Jesus and expressing it. And it may be some of the good qualities about women that has called forth the necessity here, because women would very quickly fill the ranks in the offices of the church, and very easily it would turn into a matriarchal organization, a matriarchal society governed by women. Now Paul says that's not the way it's supposed to be.

Man was made first, and that means that man was first given dominion, and woman was made as a helpmate for man. In the other place, in 1 Corinthians 11, he says woman was made for man, not man for woman. And that being the case, it is a reversal of God's order for women to be in leadership roles.

Now, is that what Paul was talking about, or was he talking about just teaching in any case? What about a woman just sitting down with a man and correcting him, teaching him some things? Is that included here? Well, I don't really know where to draw the lines

on this kind of thing. Obviously a woman is entitled to witness to a man, or to counsel, or to exhort, or to rebuke, just like a man is, I think. At least I don't know that not to be the case.

But the real question is the usurping of authority. That's the real issue here. He says, I don't permit a woman to teach or to usurp authority over a man.

For a woman to have authority over a man in the church, or over any man, was considered to be a reversal of divine order. And it's clear that that's what's on Paul's mind when he says, because the man was formed first, not the woman. Now, if we think that sounds pretty chauvinistic, then we've got to change our minds.

God doesn't have to change His. If God says, I made it this way, and that's the way it's got to be, well then frankly, I think we need to just submit to it, and things are going to run a lot better if we do. Now, the fact that there are women who seem to be in authoritative roles in the church, and in missionary organizations, a lot of missionaries are women.

As I said, it's easier to get women to go than men. The mission field probably has a much higher density of women missionaries than men missionaries. But, I'm not here to answer for that.

I'm not here to say that they're right or wrong to do that. What I'm saying is, Paul said he would not suffer a woman to teach or to usurp authority over a man. If I find a woman teaching, I'm not going to be there as her rebuker.

I'm going to see if God is using her, and if He is, then I'll say, God, this is between you and her. If you're gifting her, then that's between you and her. But, I'm not going to give my approval, or the Bible does not.

And, I don't have any criticism of woman teachers, except that some of the ones I've heard have gotten into a pretty funny doctrine, but some men have too. But, Paul implied, also in this place, that the woman was deceived, in verse 14. And, that's part of his reasoning.

He's concerned that if women are doing the teaching in the church, more deception might enter in. He makes a point of the fact that the woman was the one deceived at the Garden of Eden. And, that doesn't let the man off the hook and say he was good.

He wasn't. He was the rebel. But, it still means that Paul did not think that women should be entrusted with this heavy responsibility of determining church doctrine.

Because of the proneness he felt there would be to deception. Now, this is not the same thing as saying that they're stupid. Because, we know that's not true.

Many women excel in academic fields. But, we're not talking about stupidity or intelligence. We're talking about proneness to spiritual deception.

And, some very brilliant people have started the cults, and made it very clear that they were very prone to spiritual deception, though they were intelligent people. The fact that their cults have survived so long, some of them for hundreds of years, have shown that there was a lot of intelligence in the founders. But, a lot of deception too.

A lot of those were men. A striking number of them were women. Many, many cults have been started now by women.

And, have been female dominated. Now, that is not supposed to be some kind of indictment against womanhood. But, it's simply to say that Paul may have known more than we give him credit for, about the dangers of women in leadership in the church.

In fact, he did. He knew quite a bit about it. If we'd like to turn to 1 Corinthians, chapter 14, we'll see an even more unsavory statement to the mind of the modern thinkers of the world.

And, if there is a statement of Paul about women that seems to have a cultural backdrop, which may make it applicable more in one situation than in another, then this may be the one. The one we just read, where he said, I will not permit a woman to teach you your super authority over men. There's no indication that culture had anything to do with that.

There's no indication on Paul's part that he's even deriving his thoughts on the basis of what people currently felt about women. It was because of what happened in the Garden of Eden. It was because God made man first.

There's a divine order that's being interrupted. There's something from God's viewpoint, not man's viewpoint, that's being disturbed here. It's God that's going to be offended by the interruption and the overturning of his divine order.

Now, in this case, it may be more questionable because there was a particular situation in the church in Corinth, apparently, that isn't in modern churches, that might have called forth this particular exhortation. In 1 Corinthians 14, verse 34, Paul says, well, look at verse 33. It says, For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. Now, do you think Paul figured this was going to go well with the women when he said this? No.

He thought there was going to be violent objections. He expected tremendous objections, and so he answered those objections in the next verse. He said, What? Came the word of God out from you? Or came it only unto you? If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

Now, if Paul was not speaking as the oracle of God, in the mouthpiece of God in this case, then he was speaking very arrogantly. What arrogance it would take on my part to stand here and say, Listen, if any of you think you're a prophet or spiritual, you better acknowledge that everything I'm saying is the commandment of God. What a tremendous arrogance that would be.

The thing that made Paul so credible is that even Peter said the things that Paul wrote were scriptures. And for Peter to say that really means something. Because Peter was the least likely guy to give Paul that kind of a position, after conflicts they'd had.

And also the fact that Paul seemed to usurp in a sense, or be raised up to be more prominent than Peter, when Peter had been the prominent one. You might think jealousies would keep Peter from giving Paul that kind of distinction. But Peter recognized that Paul was writing scripture.

And Paul was able to say with boldness, If anyone is spiritual, or thinks they are, or a prophet, then they'd better acknowledge that what I'm saying is from God. It's not my own opinions I'm giving here. Sometimes Paul said, I am giving my own judgment.

As one who has found favor from God to be faithful. Occasionally he distinguished and said, Now what I'm saying here, I don't have a commandment from the Lord about it. But this.

But in this case, he says, this is a commandment from the Lord. And he knew it wasn't going to be popular. He said, What? Did the word of God only come out from you? I mean, are you the originators of the word of God? Are you the ones who have control over what God says? This is from God, he said.

Now, whether this was a word from God for that particular church in that particular situation, or whether it was a word from God for all churches of all times, that's where the dispute may enter in. But we know that when Paul said, Don't let the woman speak in church, they're commanded to be in silence, there were some qualifications to that. Because even in the same epistle, in chapter 11, he indicated that if a woman prayed or prophesied having her head covered, it was all right.

He indicated that if she did it without her head covered, it wasn't okay. But if she did it with her head covered, it seems as though he was giving women the right to pray or prophesy, implying that they weren't necessarily to keep absolute silence in the church.

But some have said the reason that Paul made these statements in this place are that the church of Corinth was meeting in a meeting house, perhaps a synagogue, as the church often did meet in synagogues, where the seating for women was separate from the seating for men.

In some cases the women were in the balcony and the men on the floor, or else the two groups were on different sides of the room from each other because the Jews set up their seating arrangement that way. They didn't want to sit with the women. Got cooties, you know.

So they wouldn't be near each other, and apparently women in the early church, probably in the Greek world especially, tended to be disorderly, and if they didn't understand something that was being said by the speaker, the speaker might shout across the room to their husband and say, hey, what do you mean by that, Harry? What's he talking about? And this of course would cause a disturbance even if one woman did it, but if more than one did it would be a real problem. So Paul, it is sometimes argued, in answer to this particular situation says, let your women keep silence. If they want to know anything, let them ask their husbands at home, and don't let them cause a disturbance.

Now, I don't know what to do with this passage because Paul says it is the commandment of the Lord. He says plainly, this isn't from me, this is from God. Now, as I said, it could be that God had this word to the Corinthian church.

Paul did not expect this letter to be read by other churches. Many things Paul said in this letter particularly seemed to apply to the Corinthian church alone. For instance, he told them to eat their meals before they come to communion.

Why? Because in that church, they were coming so hungry that they were pushing each other out of the way at the love feast and grabbing for the food, and some people were going away hungry and some were going away drunk. Paul said. And so the instructions he gave about eating your meal at home and then coming to communion applied to that particular church in that situation in a way that it doesn't apply to every church.

I don't think we need to think that it's necessary for us all to eat our meals before we take communion, but that was a necessary thing in that church because of abuse. When Paul told them to let only two or three speak in tongues, we don't know if that's for all churches of all times or whether that's because they had such a problem with disorderliness in speaking in tongues in their church. And Paul said, this is what I'm telling you to do because Paul had to bring order in the church.

And certainly when he told the women to wear head coverings, that appears to be a cultural thing that the church of Corinth was having a problem with. The prostitutes in Corinth shaved their heads. The respectable women wore long hair and also head

coverings or veils.

And some of the Christian women in the church of Corinth apparently wanted to be liberated, and so they began cutting their hair and not wearing coverings. And Paul said that they're associating with the prostitutes. He implied that it's a ghastly thing that they were doing and that they shouldn't do anything without their heads covered.

And if they didn't cover their head, they're dishonoring their husbands and so forth. Now, whether that is an eternal truth or whether that's something that's especially applied to that culture, these are areas that are open to debate, and I'm not going to debate them. If someone wants to say they're eternal principles, I won't argue it.

Maybe they are. If someone's going to say that they apply to all churches, I'm not going to say they don't. Maybe they do.

We don't know. Paul didn't say this is just for you or that it's for everyone. But if someone wants to say, well, I believe that's a cultural situation there and that this particular problem that the church of Corinth was having called forth these strong exhortations from the Lord through Paul to them to straighten up their act, then I won't argue against that either.

That may be the case. What I'm saying is I'm not going to argue about this passage. It's very clear there could be a cultural backdrop for it that explains it, or it may be that it's eternal.

But we know this. The passage about women teaching is not based on a cultural situation. It's based on God's eternal order, at least since the creation.

So, whether women are to keep silence in the church or not, frankly, I believe the Holy Spirit gifts women with prophecy and with other gifts, and we'll see that in the Scriptures there are many gifts that women exercised in the early church, and we'll see what they are in a moment. So, I don't believe absolute silence in all churches among women is what Paul is necessarily demanding in this place. He's trying to bring order in a disorderly situation.

Now, let's look at 1 Corinthians 11. This is that place that talks about the head coverings. And the reason I'm turning here is not to tell you that you need to wear head coverings, but to tell you what the principle of covering is.

Now, I may be opinionated on this point, and you may disagree, and I suppose you have the right, but I believe the command for women to wear head coverings is not applicable in our society. I don't think that our society has the same evaluation of head coverings. I don't think that it means the same thing now as it did then.

And I don't think that the spiritual principles that Paul was concerned with are expressed

in the same motives of style and so forth as they were then. So, I don't believe that women literally have to wear head coverings, but I believe there's a reason why this chapter is in this book and has been survived throughout the centuries while the Bible has been persecuted and all by the Catholic Church and others. God preserved this chapter along with the rest because it's part of His eternal word, not because we're to take it in the terms of wearing head coverings, and God forgive me if I'm wrong about that.

Maybe we are. But as I understand it, that's not what this chapter is trying to tell us today in the 20th century. What this chapter is talking about is another principle of which head coverings were a very interesting example or symbol, and that is the covering that comes upon a person, the spiritual covering of a person who is rightly related to the proper authorities that God has put over them.

And in this case, of course, it was wives and husbands. The principle would apply to anything. If it was a man relating to the elders of his church, or if it was an elder relating to the body of elders to whom he had to submit.

Whoever is in authority, a man on the job submitting to his boss, or a person in school submitting to the administrators of the school. When you're in a position where you're under someone in authority, this principle of covering, I believe, exists and must be heeded. And the example in this case is between man and woman because this is probably the most basic relationship that's common to humanity where there's a submission and authority relationship.

But here, we're in that passage that we looked at a moment ago, 1 Corinthians 11.3, but I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoreth her head.

For that is even all the one as if she were shaven. In other words, it means the same thing. The same kind of women who didn't wear head coverings in that society also shaved their heads.

They were the unsubmitted women. They were women who didn't have a covering, a male, a man who was their spiritual protection. They were prostitutes, in fact.

And if a woman wants to go without a head covering, it's going to make the same statement to society as if she shaved her head, because that's all the respectable women who wore head coverings. And the head covering symbolized submission to their husband, just like we now have wedding rings. When a woman's wearing a ring, it means that she's related to a husband.

If she's not wearing a ring, she's advertising that she's not related to a husband. And so forth. The term Mrs. is the same thing.

In our day, of course, the term Ms. is being substituted because I'm not sure why, but I guess the women's livers try to imply that to make a distinction between married and unmarried women is to degrade one or the other. I'm not sure which. But the term Ms. is much more applicable.

I guess Mrs. is degrading because it implies that a woman is under a man because she takes on his name, Mrs. Greg or Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Jones or whatever. It means that she loses her identity to her husband, and certainly that is degrading in the eyes of those who don't understand the principles of God's Word. But it's not degrading to those who understand that the woman is portraying to the world the relationship between the Church and Christ.

Anyway, wearing wedding rings or having for a woman to call herself Mrs. something or another by her husband's name is the counterpart to this thing in our society. A woman who didn't wear a veil or a covering was essentially advertising that she was not married, not in submission, not covered. And so, he says in verse 6, For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn.

In other words, it wouldn't make any difference. She might as well shave her head if she's not going to be covered. It's going to make the same statement.

But if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, then let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head for as much as he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man. For man is not of the woman, but the woman is of the man.

She came out of him, not vice versa. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman was created for the man. If that rubs you the wrong way, then you've got to break.

You've got to say, this is the Word of God. And the Word of God knows more than I do. And this isn't something that I'm reveling in as a man.

It's just a fact that I have to be true to what the Bible says. And I cannot water it down to be popular with my female Christian sisters. It's unpopular to some.

I don't know why it is. And we'll see that it's actually a wonderful privilege a woman has to be covered as opposed to being uncovered. But it says, For the man is not from the woman, but the woman is from the man.

Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Now this is the

verse that is interesting.

Power actually refers to a symbol of authority. The word power should be translated authority. And what Paul means is a symbol on her head.

Like her covering on her head is a symbol of being under authority. And what he's saying there is the woman in the church ought to wear such a symbol. Because of the angels.

Well, what does that mean? Well, it could mean that the holy angels of God are so zealous for God's will and for his order that they are aghast when they see his order violated and overturned. In which case, the angels would be ashamed to see a Christian woman who was not rightly related in the plan of God for her life and was not submitted to her husband. And therefore, she should have a covering.

Or there's another interpretation which I favor. And that is that it's not talking about the holy angels at all. It's talking about the fallen angels.

It's talking about the demons. And there are cross-references for that that are worthy of looking at, which we'll see. But let me tell you what I believe this means.

I believe it means that the demons whose whole character is rebellion are always looking for a rebel who will be in their backyard. A person who is rightly related to God through whatever authority system God has put them under or in is in a safer place than the person who is not. An example of this would be sheep in a sheepfold because, of course, the leaders whether they're husbands or elders or whatever of Christian groups are supposed to be shepherds.

Well, in the Middle East, the shepherds at night would take their sheep into a sheepfold. And the sheepfold was a hedge or a wall that was built several feet tall, an enclosure that had an open doorway. There was no closing door on the thing.

And at night, the sheep would be driven into the sheepfold, and then the shepherd himself would sleep across the opening. And this was so that if a robber or a wolf or a bear or a lion wanted to come and get the sheep, they would have to go through the shepherd. He was the door to the sheepfold.

And remember Jesus talking about himself as the good shepherd, and in the same chapter, which is John chapter 10, he calls himself the door of the sheepfold. Because the shepherd was the door. He slept in the doorway.

If any harm was going to come to those sheep who were in the right place related to that shepherd, then that harm was going to come to the shepherd first. And it makes sense that if there is some kind of an authority structure, for instance, elders in a church who are in authority, that the devil will want to take his best shots at them. Because if people are submitted to them, then by knocking them out, he can take the whole group.

The shepherd and the sheep will be scattered, the Bible says. So the shepherd is the vulnerable one. The shepherd is the target of the enemy.

And that applies to anyone in the body of Christ who is in a position of authority over another. If you are a mother, then the devil will take shots at you to get at your children, to get you to give them a wrong impression of Christ or whatever. If you are a wife, then of course you will be somewhat protected from things that will come upon your husband.

Because the devil is not an idiot. He knows that if you are submitted, that the person you are submitted to is the better target. Because if he can get him, then he gets you both.

Now, you need to trust God, of course, that your husband will be safe or will be kept secure by the Lord and will watch out for the enemy. But the point is that the place of covering is a place of submission. And it's a place of security.

As the sheep who are in the proper sheepfold under the shepherd are safe from the attack of enemies. So, the woman who has the authority on her head, as Paul says, need not fear what the angels, the fallen angels, will do. But to the person who is not submitted, there are a few things that are said about the fallen angels in relationship to that person.

If you look, for instance, at Proverbs chapter 17, we get one of those places. Proverbs 17 and verse 11. Now, this statement is not about women, but men.

But I believe it applies to humanity in general. Any human being. It says in Proverbs 17, 11, An evil man seeks only rebellion, therefore a cruel messenger, or in Hebrew, a cruel angel, shall be sent against him.

The person who seeks rebellion, which is the opposite of submission, will have a cruel angel, or we would take that to be a demon, I suppose, sent against them. Now, that seems to correspond with what Paul said, that the woman ought to be under authority. She ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels, or for fear of these cruel angels that can be sent.

Now, it's not just a trip that puts women under fear. Everyone, male or female, should be concerned that they rightly relate to the proper covering that God has given them. Whether it's the elders of the church, or whatever.

But the point is, if we're not under the proper authority, then we are in danger, apparently, from these angels. We find in 1 Samuel 15, and verse 23, that Saul had violated the command of the Lord. 1 Samuel 15, 23.

And Samuel said to Saul, Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. And we can see that rebellion, which is resisting whatever authority God has put over us, in this case it was Samuel, God's prophet was put over the king, and he had resisted him. Rebellion is like

the sin of witchcraft.

Why? Because both are satanic. Satan's sin is rebellion against God. And there is nothing more directly satanic than rebellion as a principle in our lives.

Now, I'm not saying that there aren't things to resist. There are things to resist. We should resist evil.

We should resist sin. We should resist temptation. We should flee from certain things.

There is resistance to be offered to certain things, but rebellion, no. Even the apostles, when they were told to not preach anymore in the name of Jesus, knew that they couldn't obey those authorities that said so. But they weren't rebellious.

They said, we must obey God rather than men. They couldn't obey the authorities because that was against what God said. But it wasn't rebellion in their hearts.

It was submission to God that made it necessary for them to not submit to man. So there are times when submission to man would be wrong because of the violation of the will of God. But in general, rebellion as an attitude is never safe.

It is the realm of the demons. And a person who lives in rebellion and has that rooted in their character is in danger. And frankly, I don't really care to use that as a scare tactic, but if that's what it works as, then fine.

Now we want to talk about the divine order in the home. Okay? Let's look at some of the common scriptures. We'll look at three of them.

And then we're going to move on to another point. Ephesians chapter 5. In case anyone thinks this isn't a thoroughly established principle in scripture. Ephesians 5.17. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart unto the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.

And he is the Savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Now, to what extent should the church submit to Christ? Well, in everything.

And to the same extent, the wife is to submit to her husband. She is not his partner as a partner in a business. Partners in a business have equal say about things.

They try to get to a point of agreement. They have to before they can make a decision because they're co-owners of the situation. Well, a man has a partner in his wife, but not that kind of partner.

A man has a helpmeet in his wife. And he is the head of his wife, even as Christ is of the church. And if a wife doesn't like that, well, she can go back in the world if she has to, if that's the only way she wants to live.

But she cannot be in the will of God unless she is willing to accept that particular role. Just like the man cannot be in the will of God if he doesn't do what a man is supposed to do. And there's a lot of men who don't want to do what they're told to do either.

Tonight we're talking about women, not men. But I'm saying that it doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman. If you rebel against God's commands to you about your role, then you're in rebellion.

And you're in danger. And you're a disgrace to the kingdom of God. Because there's portrayal of the wrong order.

There's going to be a picture of an unsubmitted church to Christ because that's what the wife is supposed to be portraying. In Colossians 3.18, Paul said, My wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as it is fit in the law. In other words, it's a fitting thing.

It's the right thing to do. To not do it is unfitting. It's not right.

Okay, now we want to look at what Peter said in 1 Peter 3. We get some interesting points here and that's going to get us into our next subject here. 1 Peter 3, the first six verses. We already made reference to verse 7 on another point.

It says, Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives, while there behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Now, interestingly, Peter makes it clear that this attitude of submission to husbands applies even if your husband's not saved. He says, if any husband does not obey the word, the way to win them is not by preaching his ear off, but by submitting to him, so that he will be impressed.

He will be won. Now, I can give you a list of testimonies as long as you're on of women who say that this is how their husbands were won to the Lord. I've heard dozens and dozens of them over the years.

Of women who literally led their husbands to the Lord, not by preaching, or leaving tracks on the toilet, or any of those things, but by submitting to their husbands and causing their husbands to marvel. One story that I recently heard was of a woman who

was a devout Christian, and her husband was not only a non-Christian, he was vehemently opposed to her being a Christian. And he was aggressively hostile toward her Christianity.

He came home one night, he was a drunkard as well, and he came home really drunk, and he was abusive, and he found her praying. And he had beaten her in the past, and he'd done awful things to her, but in this case, he went out into the garage and got a bucket, and he filled it with water, and he came and he just put it upside down over her head, and dumped water over her head. And she got up, and she went into the bathroom and dried herself off, and then she went back to her prayers.

And she didn't say a word, she didn't defend herself in any way, she just continued to be reverent, she just continued to be chaste and holy, and her husband was won. That night, he broke down, and he went and he joined the church, and he was baptized and he quit drinking, and he became a Christian, and he began to follow the Lord, just from that one thing. Well, probably not from that one thing, there were many other times where hot coals were being heaped on his head, because she was not returning evil for evil.

And Peter implies that this is something that women can bank on. He said, if you submit to your husbands, you might have a husband who is disobedient to the word, but by doing that, you can win him. He may be won by your behavior.

Your chaste conversation means your chaste behavior, coupled with fear. Now it says about Christian women, and this gets us into our next point, how to adorn the gospel of God. And this has got to be our main desire, whether we're man or woman, our main desire has got to be, am I adorning the gospel of God? In other words, when people hear the gospel, and they think of me, because they know that I'm a Christian, and I'm a person who has responded to the gospel, does my life and what they see in me adorn the gospel? Is my life like an ornament hung on the gospel, that people say it and say, that is really the right thing.

That is really good. That is really beautiful. That is really right on.

Well, how do we adorn the gospel? First of all, we've got to make it our priority to adorn the gospel instead of ourselves. And that is what Peter goes on to say to the women here in verse 3. He says, who's adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plating the hair and of wearing of gold or putting on of apparel. But let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

For after this manner in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, whose daughters you are, as long as you do well and are not

afraid with any amazement. Now, it says here that Sarah is the example of a godly woman. She called her husband Lord, which implied that she viewed him as her master, as her Lord.

And it says, that's a good example. That's not a bad thing. He said, that's right.

That's good. He says, that adorned her. That was an ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

And he said, that's not only something men like. That's in the sight of God of great price. Now, you might not care what men think about you, but you ought to care what God thinks about you.

And it says that a woman should not concentrate on her outward adorning. It does not say that she should not braid her hair, or that she should never wear any kind of jewelry. It doesn't say that.

Because if it means that, it means that she shouldn't wear any clothing either. Because it says, let not her adorning be clothing, or plating of hair, or wearing of gold or silver, or those kinds of things. So, obviously, it's not forbidding the use of these things.

It's saying, don't focus on this. Don't let these things be the adorning that you are concerned about. Now, it's not wrong to dress in a way that you feel is nice, and clean, and pretty, or whatever.

That's not an evil thing, unless it is your main adorning. Is that the adorning that you're focusing on? Many women do, and many men do. Nowadays especially, men are getting as vain as the women.

I think in times past it wasn't so much, but now with the men's hairstyles looking as effeminate as the women's, and a lot of the disco thing and everything that came through, and I don't think that's very big anymore, but some of the various movements, men are trying to look as pretty as the women are. And this exhortation belongs to men too, but it especially belongs to women who have classically been concerned about their looks. And why? Because, of course, men are carnal, and men like pretty women a lot of times.

And so women feel like they need to be pretty. But what you need to understand, now that you've come into the body of Christ, it may be true that some Christian men are still carnal and still attracted to women on the basis of their outward appearance, but that's not the kind of man you're going to be happy with anyway. The kind of man that you will want to please is a man who thinks like God thinks.

A man who's a spiritual man. A man who values the things that God values. And God values the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit.

I have never met a Christian man who I consider to be advanced in any sense in the gospel who was attracted to a woman who didn't have this ornament. You would be surprised. Jesus said, Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the earth.

Well, you'd think it would be the aggressive and the stubborn and the ones who demand their own way and the ones who carry the biggest guns that would inherit the earth. But he said the meek are going to inherit the earth. You'd be amazed at the power of meekness.

Esther, in the book of Esther, was chosen to be the queen because of her submissive attitude. And the queen she replaced was expelled for her rebellious attitude. Vashti.

And Esther had the king wrapped around her little finger. He would have given her anything. On several occasions he said, Ask for anything you want.

Half the kingdom, I'll give it to you. And she had power. She had influence because she was willing to be the kind of woman that God wanted her to be instead of trying to take that power herself.

In the sight of God, a meek and quiet spirit is of great value. And in the sight of a man of God, it's no different. A man of God will see it the same way.

To adorn yourself outwardly and to neglect the inner adorning, to not care whether you have a meek and quiet spirit, but to be constantly embellishing your outward appearance is to focus on that which has no value to God or to godly men. And so this is a warning from Peter. Women, you only live once and then you have to go to the resurrection.

As Fred Bob constantly says, you're not going to look good forever. When you get old, you care a lot more about how you feel than how you look. And women, he talks about movie stars, you know how concerned they must get when they get their first wrinkles.

Well, it's inevitable. You've got two choices. You can die young or you can get old and wrinkled.

And if you're concentrating on outward beauty, you are concentrating on that which is vanishing and which will not last forever. No matter how many facelifts you get, you're not going to fool everybody. In fact, you're not going to fool anybody.

Like Mae West or whatever her name is in her 80s with her facelifts and stuff. Men, Christian women need to be focusing on what God focuses on and that is the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. And so they can adorn the Gospel instead of adorning their outer man.

Let it be the hidden man of the heart because that is what's going to adorn the Gospel of

God. Look at Titus chapter 2. This is where we actually get the expression adorning the Gospel. And it's actually in its context talking about servants submitting to their masters and thus adorning the Gospel.

But in the same passage, that is in the same chapter, there's reference to women submitting to their husbands and of course it's all part of the same thing, adorning the Gospel. It's Titus 2 verses 3-5 and verse 10. The aged women likewise exhort, should be supplied, exhort that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things, that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

And then in verse 10, about servants not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior in all things. Now your behavior is going to adorn the doctrine of God. If you submit to God, if you seem to be obedient to God and you're under His guidance and His authority, you will adorn the Gospel.

Otherwise you will not. Now it says here the older women should teach the younger women and I often wish that there were more older women to be around to teach younger women because I have a lot of young Christian women tell me that they need older women to tell them how to be a Christian woman. After all, some of you were part of the Jesus Revolution many years ago and there weren't many old people in that group and we're kind of the vanguard of a generation that didn't have a lot of examples in older women.

And it is true, we could use more. Now the sad thing is, occasionally when you find older Christian women and you come to them for counsel, they don't give you the counsel that Paul said they should give. Look at the counsel, he said the old women should teach the young women.

A lot of old Christian women don't give this kind of counsel. They give opposite counsel. But the women are supposed to teach the young women verse 4, to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, that means wise, chaste, keepers at home, and they're to be homemakers, good and obedient to their own husbands.

Now that's what older women are supposed to teach the younger women. Now someday you're going to be old women unless the Lord comes or you die. And this is what you're going to have to teach the younger women in the church if you're still in it.

Lord willing, all of you will be. And so you better learn these lessons. You can't teach it if you don't know it.

Because you may be the generation that spawns or disciples a whole new generation of young Christian women who will be raised in a much more difficult time than we're being

raised in to appreciate the values of God and the role of women. But if we can't learn to appreciate it ourselves in our age, how will we set any kind of example for the next generation that's coming up? In 1 Timothy chapter 2, we have another case where women, that is the behavior of women is described as it's supposed to be. It says in 1 Timothy 2, verses 8 through 10, it says, I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting, in like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broided hair or gold or pearls or costly array, but which becometh women professing godliness to adorn themselves with good works.

Now it says, to adorn yourself with good works is becoming to a woman who professes to be godly. Now all of us profess to be godly or seek to be godly, but there are certain behavior patterns that are becoming to those who profess themselves to be godly or to be seeking godliness. And among them are the way that we adorn ourselves and of course we all put on clothes in the morning, that's required, but our choice of clothes or jewelry or whatever can be chosen to bring attention to ourselves or to not bring attention to ourselves.

And it may seem rather old fashioned again to say that people should dress in such a way that doesn't draw attention to themselves, but that's exactly what the Bible implies. It's not our purpose to draw attention to our bodies, but to our spirits. That we're supposed to have a meek and quiet spirit, we're supposed to be adorned with good works.

And that this is something that's appropriate for women who profess godliness. So shamefacedness is another thing. My wife once did a study in a concordance on shamefacedness because she was determined to find out what it meant.

I think this is the only place in the Bible it appears. And she found that it has something to do with modesty around men or something like that. I don't remember the exact definition, but it had to do with actually being not forward in the company of men, but basically more reserved.

And that's what the scripture means there. And since it is in the word of God, we have to consider that that is something that is appropriate for Christian women. Now, I want to go from this subject of behavior and dress, and I want to go on into the subject of women in ministry and what ministries are open to them in the scripture.

We saw Paul forbidding a woman to teach or exert authority, usurp authority over a man. So what is left? What can a woman do? Well, let me give you a list. And we'll give you some scriptures.

We won't look them all up because of the hour of the night now. It's getting late, but I will give you this list. Obviously, the first thing that women can do, though it's not much

appreciated in our society, but it's tremendous privilege, is to raise up godly children, to have children, to be a mother, is the number one function of the majority of women in the body of Christ.

And that should not be viewed as a lowly thing. If your children are raised to be godly, then you've done something that worldly women can't do, and you've served God in a mighty way. You've shot arrows at the enemy that he can't stop.

Okay? And so Genesis 3.15 is an example of that, how the woman would bring forth the Messiah. The seed of the woman would come. There's an example of how a woman could be used of God to change history simply in the role of motherhood, in the role of raising up leaders for the world.

Okay, another thing women can be used for is leading worship. As far as we know, there's no forbidding of it, and in Exodus chapter 15, verses 20-21, we find Miriam, the sister of Moses, taking a tambourine and leading the people, the sisters especially, but all the people, I think, in worship. So to be a worship leader, to lead people in singing, apparently is something that women have the privilege of doing, and that's a very fine ministry.

Another ministry that women are entitled to, apparently, is prophecy and prayer. That is, intercessory prayer, which is more of a ministry than we often think. It's not the most desirable ministry, because we don't get a lot of fame and fortune for it.

We don't get a lot of recognition for how much we pray, because no one knows but God how much we pray. But it's a mighty ministry, and Jesus said, if you go into your closet and don't tell anyone that you're doing it, and just pray privately, then your father who sees in secret will reward you openly, but if you brag about how much you pray, then of course you got the reward you want, and that's the appreciation from people. If you want the appreciation from God, that's another story.

Prayer is not the kind of ministry that makes people famous, generally speaking, because it's a private affair. But it's a mighty, mighty ministry, and one that's neglected. And women have the right to pray and to prophesy, according to the passage we read in 1 Corinthians 11.5, where he talked about a woman praying and prophesying with her head uncovered, being out of order.

But in Acts chapter 21 and verse 9, we have a very interesting phenomenon. Acts chapter 21 and verse 9. We find that Philip the evangelist had four daughters, and it said they're all prophetesses. They all prophesied.

And when the apostle Paul was staying in their home, they didn't prophesy over him, but a guest came to their home from another town, Agabus, a man who was a prophet, and he prophesied over Paul about how he would be imprisoned when he went to Jerusalem.

Now the question that arises is, why was it that Agabus the prophet came from another area and gave a prophecy over Paul while he was living in the home of four women who were prophetesses, and they never prophesied over him once? Most interpreters believe, and I think they probably are right, that because of the shamefacedness of the role of woman, as it was understood in the early church, that for a woman to give a personal prophecy over a man was tantamount to being in a role of authority over him, speaking down to him, speaking as the oracle of God to him. But for them to prophesy in general to other women or to the church as a whole might not have the same implications.

Agabus, however, being a man, was able to come and give personal prophecy to Paul. That may be the reason why the four sisters, the four daughters of Philip, didn't prophesy over Paul. Okay, we saw also in a case in the Old Testament in the book of Judges, chapter 4, that a woman was made a judge over Israel.

Now, as you read the story, it becomes clear that she was not the original for the job. There was a man named Barak who was supposed to go out and conquer the enemies of Israel, and then he was going to be the judge. And Deborah was a prophetess, and she told Barak, the Lord has told you you're supposed to go out and fight against the enemy.

And he said, I won't go unless you go with me. And she said, well, okay, I'll go with you, but if I go, the honor for the victory will go to a woman and not to a man. And, of course, they won the battle, and after that, Deborah judged Israel.

And we see that Barak was the first choice, but because of his reneging, or because of his cowardice, or whatever it was, his refusal to move into this role that God had called him to, and even she acknowledged he was the one called to do it, she ended up in the position. Catherine Kuhlman often said, whether rightly or wrongly, she believed that her ministry was given to her because God had called several men before her who had not answered the call and reneged. Now, I don't know if she professed to know who those men were or what, but she implied that there were several men who were called to be in her shoes before she was called.

And because they didn't fill her shoes and didn't answer the call, God chose her. Well, whether she's right or wrong, I can't say. It's interesting, Catherine Kuhlman was a very famous preacher and healer.

Apparently, it's okay for a woman to have the gift of healing. God gave her the gift of healing. But she did not approve of women teaching.

She once, in one of her meetings, said, I want all the pastors in the audience to come forward so I can pray with them. And because many of the Pentecostal churches have female pastors, there were quite a few women pastors that came forward. And Catherine Kuhlman rebuked them and said, it's not proper for you to be a pastor.

You're a woman. And a woman is not supposed to teach or usurp authority over a man. And she said, I know that some of you are going to think I'm a hypocrite because I'm up here, but she said, I'm not teaching.

She said, I'm just preaching the gospel and anyone can do that. But she said, to be a pastor or to be a teacher is forbidden to women. Now, as a point of interest, before her death, I had the opportunity to hear Catherine Kuhlman in person several different times.

And near the end of her life, she actually was doing some teaching and it was bad teaching. I'm sorry to say. She was a powerful woman of God.

Had a real anointing, but her anointing was not in teaching. And some of the things she taught were kind of funny. Kind of unscriptural.

But the point I'm making is that even women in ministry, in positions of authority, often have acknowledged that this was not originally God's principal choice. That it was because men did not do what they should have done. And we can see men renege as much as women do from their rightful roles.

Men are not better than women in this respect. All have a tendency to want the other person's role. Isn't that interesting? Almost everyone wants the grass that's on the other side of the fence.

But if we just resign ourselves to the role God has for us, then God's will will be done more quickly. The ministry of hospitality is a ministry that women can have according to Scripture. In 2 Kings chapter 4, 2 Kings chapter 4, the prophet Elisha walked regularly by a certain woman's house and she finally talked to her husband and said, why don't we build a little room on top of our house so every time the prophet comes by we can put him up there.

And she'd bring food and stuff and had a bed prepared for him. So that every time the prophet came by, she invited him up and he was able to stay there in her house. She showed hospitality.

That was something that she initiated and which the Lord blessed her for. Later she had a son who died and because of her kindness to the prophet, he came back and he raised her son from the dead. So she is seen as used of God in the ministry of hospitality.

In Acts chapter 16, we have the woman Lydia who did the same kind of thing to the apostles. In Acts 16 verse 15, we have Lydia taking the apostles into her home. She was a convert and she said, if you count me worthy, then would you come and stay in my home? And they did.

Hospitality is a tremendous ministry and women have as much right to exercise that ministry as men do. It's not restricted to men. There is also reference, apparent

reference to deaconesses in the Scripture.

Now, it's an unclear thing because the term that can be translated deaconess also could be translated deacon's wives. That passage is found in 1 Timothy 3 in verse 11. After it gives the qualifications for elders and deacons, then it says likewise the deaconesses or the deacon's wives depending on how it should be translated.

There is dispute which it should be. But they should be sober also and it tells how they should be and the kind of character they should have. Now, we do know that there were women who were dedicated to the service of Christ in the church.

Almost like the Catholic concept of a nun who was married to the church. There was that concept, a similar concept in the early church. That's why Paul talked about women remaining single for life so that they could serve the church or serve the Lord undistracted.

In 1 Timothy 5, he talked about widows who took an oath to be married to the church. And he said you shouldn't take any oath like this from a young widow because she might change her mind and want to marry a man. But a woman over 60 is usually considered safe.

And he said a widow over 60 should be accepted in under certain conditions. But there's clearly a position in the early church for women who wanted to give themselves to full-time service of Christ. And that was not forbidden to women.

In fact, Paul makes reference to such a woman in Romans chapter 16. Her name was Phoebe. And he speaks very highly of her.

Romans 16, 1, I commend unto you Phoebe, our sister, who is a servant of the church or a deaconess, which is at Centuria, that you receive her in the Lord as becometh saints and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she have need of you. For she hath been a succorer or a helper of many and of myself also. So, Paul acknowledges his debt to this woman who had the gift of help, a deaconess, a servant of the church.

And she was apparently moving to Rome from Centuria. And so Paul said, well, she sure has been a good servant of God here in Centuria. I hope that you'll receive her in Rome into the same office.

She's a tremendous servant of the church. Okay, there is a teaching ministry for women. Paul said he would not he would not suffer a woman to teach or usurp authority over a man.

But he did not say that a woman could not teach children or other women. Just men. Because men were supposed to have the leading role in the church.

And the position of teaching is an authority role. You dominate. In teaching, you affect people's thinking.

You affect their lives. It's an authoritative position. But it's alright for a woman, an older woman, we saw already in Titus chapter 2, the older women are supposed to teach the younger women.

There should be younger women classes in the church taught by older women teaching them to be sober, to be grave, to be chaste, to be lovers of their husbands, lovers of their children, keepers at home, and all those things that Paul said the older women should teach. There is a place for teaching. If a woman has a gift of teaching, it doesn't mean she has to suppress it.

She simply has to use it in a scriptural way. To use it to teach the women of their place. Sadly, women who have a gift of teaching often have better gifts of teaching than some men.

And because of that, they sometimes get positions in churches and Christian organizations that belong rightly to the men because they are leadership positions. And in so doing, they set what I think is a bad and unscriptural example for the younger women who admire them. And while the older women are supposed to be teaching the young women to be submissive and keepers at home, and all that, instead the older women are teaching just the opposite.

They are teaching the younger women that they can hold positions in leadership just like the men and that it's all the same and all that. And that is an ungodly influence. I'm not saying the women who do it are ungodly, but it is an ungodly product of the particular deception that they are party to.

But we can see that it's not wrong for a woman to teach other women or to teach children. And finally, it seems that a woman can even operate alongside her husband in a ministry of authority over another man. We have at least one example of this in Acts chapter 18.

Acts chapter 18, verse 26. Speaking about Apollos, it says, And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, whom when Priscilla and Aquila, who were a married couple, Aquila and Priscilla had heard him, they took him unto them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. Now here we see a married couple taking this mighty man of God aside and correcting him because his doctrine was deficient in some major points.

This was a woman taking authority over a man, but not by herself. She and her husband as partners, as a team, were doing so. Now I don't believe that every woman who is married to a man will operate as a team in this particular sense.

I mean, not all men necessarily are in the position to correct other men. Not all men are

in the public ministry as Aquila was. But in the case where he was, it's sometimes so that God would use a wife as the partner of her husband.

So we see there's quite a long list of ministries that women can be involved in that are all very valuable. There's only really one thing that they're forbidden to do. And that's to teach a man, to teach men in the church.

And just like Eve in the Garden of Eden who had all the trees available to her, but the one tree that was forbidden was the one she couldn't live without. A lot of women seem to want to chafe at this restriction. Want to make all kinds of excuses and say it's not binding today and all these other things.

But if we would just say, look at all the things God has given us. Look at all the areas of ministry that God has provided for us. All the ways that we can affect the world in a godly way.

Instead of thinking, why can't I do this one? Well, look, I'm a man and there's some things I can't do. I can't prophesy. Why? I'm not saying God forbids it, but I just don't have that gift.

I'm not a prophet. I am not a healer of the sick. I've sometimes prayed for the sick.

Occasionally they've gotten well. Sometimes they got worse. I don't have that gift particularly.

I don't have the gift of the word of wisdom or word of knowledge. I don't know, maybe sometimes word of wisdom, I'm not sure, but the word of knowledge I don't have. Discerning of spirits I'm not very gifted in.

I could be jealous of those things. But instead I say, well, God has given me some good gifts, some gifts that I like, some gifts that some people don't have. And I like these gifts and I'm thankful to God for the role He's given me in the body.

There are some things I wish I could do. I'd love to raise the dead. I'd love to heal the sick.

I'd love to cast out all the demons in the mental hospital. I'd love to do all these things, but I haven't been given that anointing. I haven't been given that responsibility.

That is not the role that God has given me. He's given it to some people, but He hasn't apparently given it to me. Because I don't move in that kind of power and authority when I'm dealing with those areas.

In teaching I believe the gift of God, but I don't have the gift of God in these other areas. Well, I could be disappointed. I could be jealous of others, but there's no need to be.

God has given plenty for each of us to do. And we needn't be jealous of the other positions. And I'm not saying I know anyone to be in this room, but I know that many people in the body of Christ just can't live without that forbidden fruit.

It seems like they just can't be happy until they've made some provision to have that one restraint removed. And of course the major restraint we have to realize is that as women in the body of Christ, there's a need to portray to the women who are not in the body of Christ what womanhood was designed to be. And if we allow the world to mold what Christian women behave like and think like, then we are failing to hold up the standard of the world for them to imitate.

Not that they want to imitate us, but they're going to be judged someday for whether they had light or not. And our lives and examples are going to be the thing that gave them an opportunity to see what God's will was. And by not being conformed to this world, but by giving our bodies a living sacrifice, we thus prove what is that good and acceptable will of God.

And it will be an undeniable thing. Okay, well, that is basically the teaching of the Word of God as I understand it on the role of women in the body of Christ.