

# **Responsibilities of Mothers**

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## **Introduction**

Feminism has become the dominant philosophy of our age, affecting the home, the government and politics, the church, educational institutions, the workplace, all forms of the media, even the military. In the church, witness the growing emphasis on sentimentalism and emotion. In the academy, consider the ever-expanding course selection on “Women Studies.” In the workplace, behold the ubiquitous “Sensitivity Training Seminars.” Marriages and motherhood has suffered as a result of this trend. For Christians, the question is not “What is society’s view of the role of women?” Rather, we humbly ask, “What does the Bible say on this significant subject?” Therefore, in this lesson, let us consider the Biblically defined role of wives and mothers.

## **Duty of Wives**

Eve was created as a “helper suitable” for Adam (Genesis 2:18-24). What exactly is implied by this expression? First of all, woman is a “help” to man, rendering aid and assistance. She is a source of service and support. Secondly, woman is “suitable” to man. The Hebrew word used in this context refers to that which stands in front of, in the presence of, in the sight of, or opposite another object.<sup>i</sup> Woman is man’s counterpart. “Basically the word indicates that its object is immediately “before” something or someone. It is used in Genesis 2:18, where God said He would make Adam “a help meet for him,” or someone to correspond to him, just as the males and females of the animals corresponded to (matched) one another.”<sup>ii</sup>

In certain ways, men and women are equal. In Christ Jesus all are one – there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female (Galatians 3:28). This is also suggested by the creation account (Genesis 2:21-22). As Matthew Henry points out, “the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”<sup>iii</sup>

In other ways, woman is man’s crown and glory. Solomon said, “An excellent wife is the crown of her husband” (Proverbs 12:4). Paul said, “The woman is the glory of man” (1 Corinthians 11:7). A prudent wife is one of God’s greatest blessings (Proverbs 19:14).

In some ways, woman is weaker than man (1 Peter 3:7). This does not involve the intellectual or spiritual realms. Herein they are equal. However, she is the weaker vessel physically. Also, women are more inclined to react to emotion than to logic and reason. Eve was the weaker vessel in that she allowed feelings to overwhelm facts (Genesis 3:1-6).

Feelings are a wonderful blessing when they are based on truth and directed toward someone who is trustworthy. However, they are easily manipulated by one who is a manipulator.

As previously noted, the marital relationship provides for companionship, intimacy, procreation and child rearing. After the fall, the curse placed on woman involved added pain in childbirth. Yet, despite this fact, God said, “Yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (Genesis 3:16). Yes, marriage is a realm of headship and submission; but it is also a relationship that is mutually beneficial. Within this sphere, woman achieves her greatest glory!

When Boaz made the necessary arrangements to marry Ruth, his companions expressed the following wish: “May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel...” (Ruth 4:9-12). There is no greater glory for a godly woman than being a wife and mother. No other career can compare. Therefore, Solomon said, “The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands” (Proverbs 14:1). The 31<sup>st</sup> chapter of Proverbs paints a beautiful portrait of a woman who is truly worthy of praise. Though she is active and energetic in many areas, yet all her efforts center on her home and family (Proverbs 31:10-31).

In expressing God’s ideal for marriage, the New Testament teaches that wives must submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18). Biblical submission is rooted in a spirit of selflessness and service. Peter’s admonitions on this subject are of particular significance: Christian wives bear witness to the truth through their chaste and respectful behavior, through cultivating a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great value in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:1-6).

There is but one qualification to the authority of the husband, and that is the overriding authority of God. When the civil authorities commanded Peter and John not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus, they answered, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20). Later, when the prohibition was repeated, Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:27-29). How does this principles affect marriage? What if a husband asks his wife to do something unlawful or unscriptural? What if a husband asks his wife to forsake the assembly? What if a husband asks to participate in sin or commit a crime? Before saying, “He’s my husband, and I must obey my husband,” remember the example of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

## **Duty of Mothers**

In writing to Timothy, Paul addressed various aspects of significance to women. To begin with, she must be mindful of the need for proper, orderly adornment, both of the inner and outer person. Christian women will receive instruction with quietness and entire submissiveness. Although a women is not permitted to teach or exercise authority over a man, she is, nevertheless, given a tremendous task: the teaching and training of children (1 Timothy 2:9-15).

Later in the same epistle, Paul admonished younger widows to “get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach” (1 Timothy 5:14-15). Older women are to teach the younger women “to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure,

workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored” (Titus 2:3-5).

Many professional women today see no need for marriage, have no desire for children, and pay someone else to keep house. Others, though married, are more committed to their career than to their husband and family. For them, children are trinkets to possess, toys to occasionally play with, or trophies to be admired from a distance. Daycare services are often employed by mothers who work outside the home, without consideration of the consequences this might have upon the parent-child relationship. Instead of marching in lock-step with the world, let us rededicate ourselves to the Biblical pattern: Younger women should be encouraged to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored (Titus 2:3-5).

## **Conclusion**

As we reflect upon the responsibility of wives and mothers, several questions come to mind. Husbands give honor to the wife, but wives must also reverence/respect their husbands. As a wife, are you willing to honor your husband by stepping back and allowing him to lead? Fathers occupy a position of authority in the home, setting the standards and enforcing discipline. As a mother, are you willing to submit to his rules for the family, and enforce them even in his absence?

Let us realize that a Christian woman finds glory, not in professional accomplishments, but in fulfilling her God given roles as wife and mother. In closing, let us consider the example of a certain woman named Eunice. All that is known about her is that she was a Jewish woman who believed in Christ. She was married to a Greek, and lived in Lystra, an obscure backwater town in central Asia Minor (Acts 16:1-3). Is Eunice remembered for her educational, professional, or cultural accomplishments? No. Yet, she is immortalized on the pages of Scripture as the mother of Timothy. Paul viewed young Timothy as his true child in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2), his beloved son (2 Timothy 1:2) and trusted companion (Philippians 2:19-22). Who deserved the praise for Timothy’s spiritual development? Paul, in part, but Eunice, to a much greater degree. The faith Eunice received from her mother Lois, she successfully transmitted to her young son Timothy (2 Timothy 1:3-5). From childhood, Timothy had known the Sacred Writings that are able to impart the wisdom that leads to salvation (2 Timothy 3:14-17). May the church be blessed with more women like Eunice!

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<sup>i</sup> Robert L. Thomas, ed., *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries, Updated Edition*, (Anaheim, CA: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1999, c1998), s.v. “NEGED,” #5048.

<sup>ii</sup> W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger and William White, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1996), s.v. “TO TELL; Preposition; NEGED,” #5048.

<sup>iii</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), s.v. “Genesis 2:18.”