

## In Praise of Godly Women

Jason Cicero

And Jehovah God said, *"It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him"* (Genesis 2:18).

Men and women were made to be complementary parts of a remarkable whole. Our ultimate nature and destiny are the same, and much we are to be in life is identical, but our roles here are different. This difference has nothing to do with value or status, but with the way God in His great wisdom ordered the human family.

There is nothing so priceless and so beautiful as a woman of spiritual grace and loveliness: *"Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies"* (Proverbs 31:10).

The man achieves what he does from a position of leadership, the woman from a position of submission. This submission arises from the very nature of creation, the woman created for the man and not man for the woman (see 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Corinthians 11:8-9). There is nothing degrading about God's order! The wife *follows* to serve her husband and the husband *leads* to serve his wife. Both serve each other in order to serve the Lord Jesus: *"... submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ"* (Ephesians 5:21; ESV). Everything is for the sake of others.

The secret of the worthy woman is revealed in the *"words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him"* (Proverbs 31:1). The worthy woman *"fears the LORD"* (Proverbs 31:30;). That is why the *"heart of her husband trusts in her"* (Proverbs 31:11). That is why she does her husband *"good and no evil all the days of her life"* (Proverbs 31:12). The foundation of her love for him is not his handsome good looks or his charming personality, but her deep love for Christ before whom she has committed her faithful love to her husband.

*"Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying: 'Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all'"* (Proverbs 31:28-29). Let us all rise up and give glory to God for the godly women as they have followed the lead of the Chief Shepherd.

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## The Bride

Joella Pickup

One of the most meaningful passages in the Bible is in Ephesians 5:20-33. Paul, through the Holy Spirit, compares the relationship of marriage to the relationship of Christ and His church. The husband is by the Word of God and by his own nature the head of the wife.

Christ, by his own nature, deity, is head of the church. He gave Himself for the church, cleansing and purifying her for himself to the end that their relationship be holy and acceptable to God (Ephesians 5:25-28).

Nearly all the New Testament is filled with admonitions to keep us holy as God is holy. The church is sacred to Christ; so, in marriage, the relationship of husband and his wife must be kept sacred.

The Old Testament is replete with stories about the stubborn Israelites who "dealt treacherously" with the Lord and allowed themselves to be tempted to serve false gods. Do we not know (with shame) about "straying husbands" and "unfaithful wives" who have broken their vows to God and to their spouses by being unfaithful to the marriage? Oh, let us not be guilty of such a great sin! Infidelity is the sin that will not let our souls see Heaven or know God's Grace.

Marriage is wonderful when it is lived in fidelity and truth. Being a Christian with all reverence to our Head, Jesus Christ, is more wonderful still. Both Christianity and marriage take work to keep them fresh, alive and growing.

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**Editor's Note:** These two articles were authored by two Christians with diverse points of view, yet each with proper understanding of the Holy Scriptures. **Jason Cicero**, a Gospel preacher from Alabama, notes from the Old Testament that God intended man and woman to complement each other in every aspect of life. **Joella Pickup**, mother, wife, and example to all, recounts from the New Testament the same sentiment, noting that the pattern that Jesus our Lord set when He took his Bride, the Church, and loved Her, and gave Himself for Her is exactly what husbands must follow in the marriage relationship. Husbands and wives would do well to remember these precious words of wisdom.

# Teacher of Good Things

*Joella Pickup*

Women were important to the Lord's work in New Testament days and we can learn much from them. Paul wrote in Romans 16:1-2 that the church should help Phoebe who was a servant of the church in Cenchrea. She needed assistance while she was in Rome. Remember, these directions plus others are inspired by the Holy Spirit. They illustrate our own duties in the work of the Lord, also. They are not something nice and sweet to do if we can find a little time. These are binding principles for our growth and maturity. This is how we procreate spiritually and without this kind of growth, we become decadent and sterile.

We must give ourselves first to the Lord. Next, be willing to shoulder the responsibilities of the Christian life, not shrinking back in fear, but willing to be a teacher of good things whenever the opportunity arises (Hebrews 10:38-39). "Perfect love casteth out fear," says 1 John 4:18. This passage refers to the fear of judgment concerning sin, but it seems no injustice to take it a bit further, in that we need not fear to teach others, either. Perfect love can cast out other, more common fears, such as the fear of responsibility, and the fear of being inadequate to a task. If you study your lesson diligently, you will not be nearly so afraid to teach it. Women who have been Christians many years and still say, "I can't teach," are a wonderment to me. If you know how something works, and if you can talk and write, you can teach! Think of teaching people about God as a wonderful gift you are giving them. You don't have to be the perfect teacher; you are merely telling them about what is perfect—the word of God. I have told my voice students that if they think of their songs as lovely gifts to their friends in class, they will not be so afraid to get up and sing for the class.

1 Peter 3:15 and Colossians 4:6 tell us to be ready to answer anyone who asks about our religious beliefs. You can answer on the spot if you have anticipated such a question. You can invite that person into your home for Bible study, or to a regular worship service or gospel meeting and then invite them to your home as Priscilla and Aquila did to discuss the sermon.

However, the best way to prepare yourself personally to answer anyone who asks is simply to practice making up lessons on subjects your non-Christian friends are likely to ask, such as, "Why don't you people have music in your church?" Think about that one for a minute. What are they really asking? Study the scriptures concerning your subject and write down a solid Bible response in complete sentences so the points will make a good impact on your brain. And voila! You have a lesson plan in front of you! You have the question,

your scriptural comments and examples on the subject, and then your Biblical conclusion. It's best to begin with a "Thus saith the Lord," rather than a story. You may want to use a concordance or study helps which are often found in the backs of some Bibles. Add further scriptures as needed, taking great care to note their context so you can be sure you are handling them correctly, and then establish your conclusion. This could be just an exercise, a rehearsal for yourself, though you may never get a chance to use it. Yet, look how you will have grown in knowledge and confidence!

Next, cultivate a great desire for spiritual food. Jesus said in John 6:63, "My words, they are spirit and they are life." Luke 4:4 says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." We must have spiritual food or we grow faint and weak. Have you ever been so hungry you almost fainted? Probably not, but that is the kind of soul-hunger we must have for the word of God (Matthew 5:6). Can we ever get too much spiritual food? I think not! People generally treat taking in spiritual food like they are on a reducing diet. All too often we stuff our stomachs and starve our souls!

We are sorry to see a plant die from some disease or lack of care, or an animal whose growth has been stunted for want of food, or from disease or life energy because it will never reach its potential. We are distressed when a child is unable mentally or physically to grow into normal adulthood due to birth defect, accident, drug addiction, or to an emotionally impoverished childhood. But we should be even more concerned about Christians who have stopped growing, who remain in a spiritually infantile state—Christians who are not well-grounded in the truth, and who will not exert the necessary effort for learning. Such a person has a spiritual illness—we could call it a type of "spiritual anorexia." That person's lifeline to Christ is in great danger of being broken off and lost. Energy must be invested in Christianity or spiritual starvation results.

The beauty of a mature Christian is a joy to contemplate. Qualified elders dedicated and caring for the souls in their charge; deacons diligent in the work assigned to them; loving attentive parents who strive to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; strong preachers and teachers, mature and bearing fruit—all these have set themselves to pass on to succeeding generations the seed of the gospel. Isaiah and Nahum, as quoted by Paul in Romans 10:15, praised such people highly. Should not the rest of us strive just as diligently also to be counted among that "great cloud of witnesses?" (Hebrews 12:1). And Amen. **WWW**