

# On Being a Woman

## DOES A WOMAN NEED THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION?

Theology is a compound word transliterated from Greek and meaning "a word about God." Certainly all of God's children ought to study God's Word, seeking to know the heavenly Father, to understand His clear principles of godly living, to discover His solutions to problems and disappointments, and to equip themselves for service in His kingdom. I see a woman's need of theological education for these reasons:

### 1) To edify herself spiritually

In Scripture, uniquely for the woman, there is an incident which motivates one to study and master the truths and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ for personal edification. In Luke 10, we see Mary of Bethany in contrast to her sister Martha. Martha was a good woman, an efficient homemaker, a conscientious hostess; but when she asked the Lord to reprimand her sister Mary for not accepting more responsibility in assisting her in these mundane matters, Jesus rebuked Martha, reminding her that Mary had chosen the "good part" of sitting at His feet and hearing His Word. Even so, through the ages our Lord often has given to women the opportunity to study His Word, not while neglecting their household responsibilities, but by avoiding being "cumbered" with "much serving." In other words, one is never to neglect spiritual training and preparation — not even for the joy of serving others.

Another general admonition to study is found in 2 Timothy 3:14-15, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation

through faith which is in Christ Jesus." This knowledge of the Word is not optional because it gives us knowledge concerning salvation.

Psalms 119, verses 11 and 105, demands memorization of the Word because the Scriptures are the pattern to instruct us in the living of the Christian life.

First Peter 3 is richly efficacious for women, and among the helpful admonitions therein is the reminder of verse 15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." This impresses upon us the responsibility of personal witness in sharing the gospel.

### 2) To assist her husband

The woman was created for and from the man (1 Cor. 11:8-9) to help, assist, and undergird her own husband in the assignment God gives to him. The text reads: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet [ezer kenegedo, Hebrew, literally "a help like or corresponding to him"] for him" (Gen. 2:18). This is a demanding and rewarding responsibility. God created the man with a need for the woman — physically, he craves a lover; mentally, he desires a counterpart; emotionally, he needs a companion; spiritually, he seeks a co-laborer. No man needs a "suitable helper" more than the pastor or any man who seeks to serve the Lord vocationally. The pastor's wife can well be described as a "universal spare part." She must keep her home as a prepared shelter for her family and a ready haven for the needy. She certainly should keep herself attractive in order to draw women to herself through her "living letter" testimony (2 Cor. 3:2). She is often called upon for entertainment of "angels unaware," members of

her husband's flock, co-laborers in the kingdom's work, church leaders and potential leaders, unsaved men and women from the community. The "First Lady of the parsonage," together with her pastor-husband, also has a unique opportunity to use her potential and creativity, her talents and energies in a joint ministry which would be more fruitful and meaningful than separate ministries from the two of them individually.

The most outstanding ministering couple in the New Testament is the team of Aquila and Priscilla who traveled the apostolic world together, sharing the gospel of Christ and expounding the Word more fully (Acts 18:2-3, 18, 26). Priscilla must have been a diligent and discerning student of the Word of God, or she could never have made an impression on the learned Apollos. Obviously, she was encouraged to take an active part in ministry by her husband Aquila. When a godly wife is all she ought to be, she completes, complements, and extends her husband, and their joint ministry reaches beyond what either of them could do alone (Ps. 34:3). Paul commends **both of them** as "my helpers in Christ Jesus." When Paige Patterson invited me to join my life to his, irrevocably and inseparably, he asked me to join him in study and preparation just as long as God kept that door of opportunity open. How grateful I have been for the formal studies of seminary, but how much more grateful I am for the hours we have spent together studying the Word in preparation for the resulting multifarious ministry God has given us.

Husbands need to encourage their wives to learn. Note 1 Timothy 2:11, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection." The context of this passage indicates that the divine blueprint calls for the husband's direction of his wife's learning and teaching. The

word translated "silence" (*hēsuchia*, Greek) is literally a "quietness, calmness, tranquility" in contrast to the word used in 1 Corinthians 14:34 meaning literally "to stop talking." This indicates the responsibility of husbands to encourage their wives in learning and suggests the opportunity of wives to acquire knowledge.

### 3) To rear children in the Lord

Throughout history from the establishment of the home in the Garden of Eden until this present day, women have uniquely shared in producing the successive generations, nurturing and sheltering the fetus until its birth, training and caring for the child through childhood, supervising the molding of the youth through adolescence, supporting and loving the offspring into and through adulthood. This task alone is important enough to demand a woman's thorough preparation in biblical and theological studies. What a difference there would be in the coming generation if from childhood they were taught by parents and grandparents the Word of God through family worship and individual instruction to supplement the Christian education of the church (Deut. 6:4-12). The home is God's picturesque illustration to man of His perfect love as portrayed in the Father, the dramatic stage for complete sacrifice as shown in the Son, and the object lesson for His illuminating teaching through the Holy Spirit. Nowhere in God's creation should there be a more precise and vivid theological textbook than the Christian home. Certainly the home should offer to those within the family circle and to the world looking within the family circle "a word about God" with every passing day. Grandmother Lois and mother Eunice diligently and zealously taught young Timothy, passing on to him "the unfeigned faith" (2 Tim. 1:5).

### 4) To teach the younger women

"The aged women [i.e., spiritually mature] likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh 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 chil-

dren, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:3-5).

### 1) The authority for the criterion

Theological education must be based upon and measured against the veracity and accuracy of God's Word. There is no better protection

---

## "Theological education must be based upon and measured against the veracity and accuracy of God's Word."

---

The pattern for womanhood, the design for marriage, and the blueprint for the home have been greatly distorted through the years. Especially in recent years, women are clamoring for greater authority and for more leadership roles in the church. However, in Scripture, the role of the woman in the church is clearly based upon God's divine order for the home — submission to and honor of the husband by the wife. Whether in teaching biblical truth, extending Christian hospitality, or engaging in individual ministries, a woman must always work within the clear authority of His Word, neither seeking recognition nor demanding higher office, but making every effort to serve Him who is Lord and trusting the providence of God to open opportunities and give usefulness beyond human limitation and expectations. Certainly, unless the direction of womanhood is turned back to the divine design, we stand to lose ground continually in the home. What greater reward could a spiritually mature woman find than passing on to other women lessons in godly womanhood! There emphatically is **not** direction or permission given to the woman or to occupy a ruling position in the church (1 Tim. 2:12) or to seek ordination from the church (note 1 Tim. 3:1-4, especially verse 4, in which those in church leadership are admonished to rule their own houses, which if directed to women, would be in direct opposition to the New Testament pattern).

### Criterion for the Theological Education

One cannot evaluate theological education without determining the criterion which is to test the foundation for such educational pursuit.

and safeguard for doctrinal solidarity than the unquestioned authority of Scripture. Not only must the Bible be the supreme textbook, but also its doctrines must be presented clearly and completely (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12) to enable one to give sound reasons for holding the evangelical view of Scripture and of the gospel as over against the various other views.

### 2) The diversity of exposure

Biblical studies include many areas of study — New Testament, Old Testament, theology, ethics, church history, Greek, Hebrew, homiletics, etc. Thus, theological education should have a broad foundation in exposing the student to a well-rounded program (2 Tim. 2:15).

### 3) Development of an area of specialization

Working from broad general foundation, one must develop her own unique interest without such rigid conformity to any single pattern which would actually inhibit effective education (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12-16; Eph. 4:7 ff.; Rom. 12:3 ff.). The assignment of spiritual gifts is made by the Creator Himself to enable all members of the "body" of Christ to work together harmoniously and effectively.

### 4) Correlation of knowledge and practice

One must correlate the theoretic and the pragmatic aspects of education in order to enable one to emerge with the capacity for accomplishment through pragmatic exercise which is based upon a carefully evaluated philosophical foundation (cf. James 1:22; Col. 2:8). Learning must go hand-in-hand with the laboratory of actual experience. Every Christian has the privilege and duty to share in

(Continued on page 14)

## **WOMAN**

(Continued from page 11)

the evangelization of the world and to participate in the work of the kingdom. The accoutrements of pedagogy are to be blended with one's sphere of labor to enhance the discharge of those duties (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15).

### **5) Faculty/Student Interaction**

Education involves the interaction of both professional contingency and classroom peers with the student in the classroom. A student learns much from his mentor just by being around him, observing his actions and reactions, noting how he deals with problems (Prov. 1:5; 9:9). There should be time for question/answer interaction and an opportunity to experiment with one's own ideas under the pressure of defending a position with one's colleagues.

### **Sources Of**

#### **Theological Education**

(1) Personal Bible study with the aid of evangelical books and commentaries. (Send self-addressed, stamped envelope to receive list of books to assist personal study.)

(2) Enrollment in correspondence courses or use of cassette tapes by scholarly teachers and preachers.

(3) Seminars or conferences, such as Criswell Center's annual School of the Prophets, which includes a Women's Conference.

(4) Study of current evangelical journals and periodicals.

(5) Classroom study, such as is available at Criswell Center. In addition to the regular daytime baccalaureate curriculum, CCBS even sponsors a curriculum for women in its evening school and provides child care for those with young children at a nominal cost.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, what could be a better background for any endeavor a young woman may pursue than a strong biblical foundation. In the humble opinion of this writer, husbands should be encouraged to make every effort to enable their wives to study along with them, if not in the classroom then by correspondence. Yes, theological education is for women, too!

