

# **God's Word and What It Teaches about Women**

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It is commonly believed that women in Bible times were looked down upon and not well treated and so on. But is this true? Did women get treated this way for 6,000 years, and then, all of a sudden, in our day, women are treated in such a way as they have never been treated before in history? Let us take a look at God's word and find out. We may just be in for a surprise.

## I. Creation of Woman

*"<sup>27</sup>So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and **female** created he them. <sup>28</sup>And God blessed **them**, and God said unto **them**, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."* (Genesis 1:27,28)

God created woman at the same time as He created man. God blessed **both** the man **and** the woman and gave them **both** dominion over the world that He had created and the living creatures that were in it.

*"<sup>5</sup>Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; <sup>6</sup>I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; <sup>7</sup>Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."* (Isaiah 43:5-7)

God was concerned for all of His people – both the sons **and** the daughters. Everyone that was (and is today) called by His name was (and is) created for God's glory. God has formed and made that person. People are made in God's image and for His glory. This is true of both men **and** women, and also of children. If a society understands this, women will be treated properly. If a man understands this, he will treat his wife and children properly.

God made a beautiful garden and put Adam in that garden. There was everything in that garden that Adam needed to sustain life, and everything he could desire for beauty and for health and for wholeness. There were many animals as well. God allowed each of these animals to pass before Adam, and Adam named the animals. However, among these animals was not one found that could be a help meet for Adam. God then did something very special. *"<sup>21</sup>And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; <sup>22</sup>And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her*

unto the man. <sup>23</sup>And Adam said, *This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*" (Genesis 2:21-23)

At the time God created Woman, God also instituted marriage. God brought the woman to the man, and then the Bible says, *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."* (Genesis 2:24) God made woman especially for the man because *"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."* (See verse 18) Woman was a special gift to man, a special gift from God. When someone gives us a special gift, we cherish it. A godly man will cherish his wife because *"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD."* (Proverbs 18:22)

Woman was made to be a help meet to the man. A help meet is an aid or a helper. We, as women, are specially made to complete a man and be the aid and helper he needs. This does not put a us below the man, but beside the man. Our role is different, but that does not degrade us. We do not need to take the position of a man. We are happiest and most satisfied when we fulfill the position God gives us. There is nothing degrading about being a helper. God Himself is a helper (See Psalm 10:14, end of verse), and we can be partakers of His work by being the best helpers we can be to the man He has made us for.

## **II. A Man's Love for His Wife**

Ephesians 5:25 and 29-31 says, *"<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it... <sup>29</sup>For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: <sup>30</sup>For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. <sup>31</sup>For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."*

When God made the Woman, Adam said, *"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."* (Genesis 1:23b) Adam understood that he and his wife were one flesh, that her bone had come from his bones that her flesh had come from his flesh. When a man and wife marry, they are to be one flesh. The man is to love, nourish, and cherish the woman.

## Examples of Husbands Who Loved

### 1. Isaac:

No doubt there were many men in the Bible who loved their wives, but God gives Isaac as a specific example. *“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.”* Isaac was sad because his mother was dead. Rebekah had just gone through a hard time. She left her father's house for a land and a people and husband she did not know and had never seen. Yet, Isaac took her into his mother's tent and loved her. One almost gets the picture that Isaac gathered her in his arms and embraced her and loved her – both for his comfort and hers.

### 2. Solomon:

Since a whole book was devoted to the relationship between Solomon and the woman he had espoused to be his wife, it is certainly no secret that the two loved each other. They flattered each other and said all sorts of romantic things about each other. They cared about where the other was and whether or not the other was safe. They longed to be together. Solomon, by marrying this woman, was lifting her up out of a position of servanthood to be the wife of the king. And he loved her. No longer would she be made to work hard and be rejected by her own family. She would be nourished, cared for, and provided for – she would be cherished. Solomon did all this for this woman because he loved her.

Proverbs 5:19 tells how a man was to feel about and to treat his wife, *“Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.”* His love relationship with her was to be that of the hind and the roe. What happens if a buck wants to steal another buck's doe? The buck who belongs to the doe will fight the other buck. He will make sure no one else touches his doe. It is his. A man is supposed to feel that way toward his wife and protect her from all others. A man is to be satisfied with his wife. She is to be enough for him. He is not to look for pleasure elsewhere. Also, the man is to be ravished with her love. He is to be enraptured by her, to be transported with pleasure, to be delighted beyond measure.

When we look at the Bible, we certainly do not get the picture that God wanted the woman or the wife to be looked down upon, to be used, to be considered pretty much a second class citizen. He had very high standards, from the beginning of creation, for the treatment of women and for the husband's treatment, care, and feelings for his wife. A woman is to be nourished and to be treated with tenderness and love because the husband has delight and pleasure to do so.

### **III. A Woman's Rights and Responsibilities**

Almost everyone has rights, but rights are not what we tend to think they are. Even many servants had rights. For example, the Ethiopian eunuch who rescued Jeremiah from the dungeon was a man that was over the treasury of the king. He had the right to oversee this treasury and use things out of it. Rights are privileges granted to a person or people by those in authority over them. What we often forget is that rights come with responsibilities. Because the Ethiopian was a faithful servant, he used the items from the king's treasury wisely and did not waste them. (See Jeremiah 38:10-13) Christians also have rights. One of the most blessed rights we have is the right to come boldly before God's throne so that we might receive grace to help in time of need. (See Hebrews 4:16) But that grace does not just come automatically. In order to get that grace, the Christian must come before the throne and ask for it. Our petitioning of the king is our responsibility in order to take advantage of that right.

A. The Right to Land and Property: The Responsibility to Go Through the Right Authority

#### The Daughters of Zelophehad

When the children of Israel were preparing to inherit the land, a problem was noted. Zelophehad had no sons, only daughters. Who would receive his inheritance? Numbers 27:1-5 *"<sup>1</sup>Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. <sup>2</sup>And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, <sup>3</sup>Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons. <sup>4</sup>Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father. <sup>5</sup>And Moses brought their cause before the LORD. <sup>6</sup>And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>7</sup>The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt*

*surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them."*

The daughters of Zelophehad had to fulfill at least two responsibilities

### 1. Request their inheritance from the proper authorities

The daughters of Zelophehad were concerned that their father's name not be done away from among his family. Therefore, they went before Moses and Eleazer, the priests, and the princes and all the congregation and asked for their father's inheritance. God said this inheritance should surely be given to them.

I believe that, when a society is Godly, women are treated in a proper and respectable manner. When a society is ungodly, women are either oppressed or put in the wrong role and idolized or put in roles of society where they do not belong.

### 2. Marry within the tribe to which they belonged

The daughters of Zelophehad must marry within their own tribe, or they would lose their inheritance. *"<sup>6</sup>This is the thing which the LORD doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry. <sup>7</sup>So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. <sup>8</sup>And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers. <sup>9</sup>Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance. <sup>10</sup>Even as the LORD commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad."* (Numbers 36:6-10)

### Achsah – Joshua 15:16-19

Achsah was the daughter of Caleb, who ended up marrying the son of Caleb's brother. Therefore she became daughter in law to her own father's brother. The Bible says, *"<sup>16</sup>And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. <sup>17</sup>And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. <sup>18</sup>And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? <sup>19</sup>Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given*

*me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.” (Joshua 15:16-19)*

When Caleb’s daughter was married, Caleb blessed her. Achsah was grateful for that blessing, but she did not feel afraid or ashamed to ask for something more. She asked her father for springs of water too. He graciously gave her springs, but not just in one place. He gave her both the upper and the nether springs. He did not tell her that she was out of place as a woman to ask. No, he graciously granted her request; and, it seems like, perhaps more than she requested. She may have been content with either the upper or the nether springs, but he gave her both. Caleb apparently loved his daughter. He wanted to give her to a valiant man, and he provided well for her when she was given away.

B. The Right to Be Industrious, Have One’s Own Business, and Earn One’s Own Money

### The Virtuous Woman

Proverbs 31:10-31 is only a small portion of the Bible, but it tells us much about the virtuous woman.

1. She is very rare. “Her price is far above rubies.” (See verse 10)
2. She is very precious, a great treasure, something to be cherished. “Her price is far above rubies.”
3. She is trustworthy. Her husband can even trust the finances to her. (See verse 11)
4. She fulfills her husband, he does not have to look elsewhere for fulfillment or pleasure. *“<sup>11</sup>The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. <sup>12</sup>She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.”* (verses 11,12)
5. She is a diligent worker. *“She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.”* (verse 13)
6. She seeks out the best food for her household, even if she has to go a long way to get it. She wants to make sure her household is properly fed, including her maidens. Although they are maidens, she makes sure they are properly cared for as well. *“<sup>14</sup>She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. <sup>15</sup>She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.”* (verses 14,15)
7. Because the virtuous woman is such a good steward of the household resources, she is able to buy a field. With money that she has made by her own hard work, she has the means for improving and planting that field. She works hard and knows that her merchandise is good, that others will want to buy it. She is industrious. *“<sup>16</sup>She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.*

*<sup>17</sup>She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. <sup>18</sup>She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.*" (verses 16-18)

The virtuous woman, according to the Old Testament passage of Proverbs 31, could be trusted to be a good steward of what belonged to the household. She was able to make merchandise and sell it. She was able to invest in a business venture and improve that venture as a result of her hard work. This allowed her to earn her own money.

8. She was kind and generous to the poor. The money that the virtuous woman earned did not go to times of fun and pleasure. It went to help others in need. "*<sup>19</sup>She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. <sup>20</sup>She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.*" (verses 19,20) Because she was trustworthy, her husband did not mind when she gave to others.

9. She provided for her household and for herself. "*<sup>21</sup>She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. <sup>22</sup>She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.*" (verses 21,22) The virtuous woman's husband was well known in the community, but this did not make her proud. In order that her husband might fulfill what he needed to do, the virtuous woman worked diligently. Not only did she spin and sew for the needy, but she also made clothing for her family and for herself. She did not make just any clothing, but produced the best she could.

10. "*Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.*" (verse 23) The virtuous woman's husband is well known in the community, even among elders of the land. Her virtuous living and hard work have elevated her husband to respect in the eyes of others. She has been just the help meet he needs.

11. "*She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.*" (verse 24) Besides buying land and a vineyard, the virtuous woman also made either clothes or very nice linen material and sold it. It was fine linen, the best. It was something she knew the merchants would be pleased with.

12. The virtuous woman was known for her strength, character, and kindness. "*Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. <sup>26</sup>She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.*" (verses 25,26) Although she worked hard and was able to handle the rough parts of life, this did not make her hard. She was wise and kind and clothed with strength and honor. These things would bring her rejoicing in time to come.

13. The virtuous woman looked well to the needs of her household. No one in her house suffered want because of her laziness. She cared for her husband, her children, and her maidens. Her children arise up and call her blessed. Her husband also rises up and blesses her; and when he goes out among the people and the elders of the land, he praises her. "*<sup>27</sup>She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. <sup>28</sup>Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.*" (verses 27,28)



14. The virtuous woman had all the previous thirteen wonderful qualities, but the crowning quality of all is that she feared the LORD. All the other things would be naught if she left off the fear of the LORD. She could be beautiful and dress her family in gorgeous clothing and have the best for them all; but if that is all she has in life, her life is vain. But, she fears the Lord, and the Lord makes the things she does to prosper. She is known for her good works, not because she flaunts them but because she fears the Lord. She does not lift up herself, but her good works, which are the result of the fear of the Lord, bring her praise, even among the elders of the land. As with Ruth the Moabitess, it could also be said of the virtuous woman, *“All the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.”* (Ruth 3:11b)

*“<sup>30</sup>Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. <sup>31</sup>Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.”* (verses 30,31)

Consider this virtuous woman for a moment. Does it seem like she was oppressed and secluded? Not at all. She oversaw the household finances and affairs. She went long distances to get the best food. She labored and sold things to earn money to buy land and plant a vineyard. With money she earned from these things, she was able to make clothing for the poor, clothing for her household, and fine linen and girdles to sell to the merchants. The virtuous woman had her own business. She bought land. She earned her own money. But, the virtuous woman first fulfilled the responsibilities the Lord had given her. She took care of her husband and her home. She was a help meet to her husband and a mother and overseer in her home. As she was faithful in these things, the Lord prospered her and allowed her to do more and more things.

This story is a good lesson for us as women today. Our freedom and enlargement does not come from saying we have the “right” to do thus and thus, and in demanding that we be treated as well as the men and also feeling that we deserve more and should be given more. Our freedom comes from first fulfilling the role that God has given us. As we faithfully fulfill this role in the fear of the Lord, God will prosper and give enlargement and allow us to have more and more opportunities and do more and more things. As godly women, we do not find our fulfillment in doing as many things as we can in the world. We find our contentment and joy in faithfully carrying out the role God has given us. The freedom and opportunities to enlarge and branch out are given to us by God. God does not want women secluded and oppressed, but deliverance from oppression does not come from demanding our own way. It comes from fearing God and walking in His way. Rights are wonderful things granted to us by God, but these rights come with responsibilities, and we cannot be blessed or enjoy the full measure of these rights if we do not want to fulfill the opportunities. God blesses us because He loves us and because

He wants to, not because we “deserve” more. As godly women, our rights, happiness, and fulfillment in life come from Him.

#### C. The Right to Be Involved in the Work and Affairs of the Community and the Nation: The Responsibility to Be Faithful

In Nehemiah 3:12, we see that some of the women helped in keeping watch and building the wall of Jerusalem, “*And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Halohesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.*”

The women were helping to build the wall, but they also had to be faithful in doing their part of protecting the wall and the people in Jerusalem. “<sup>17</sup>***They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.*** <sup>18</sup>***For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded.*** *And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.*” (Nehemiah 4:17,18)

#### D. The Right to Make Their Own Spiritual Decisions: The Responsibility to Walk in the Fear of the Lord

Nehemiah 8:1,2 shows that all the people gathered together to hear the reading of the word of God. Everyone that could understand gathered together. The book of the word of God was opened in the sight of the people and all the people stood up out of respect for God’s word. When the people acknowledged God's greatness and humbled themselves before Him, and when they had understood God's words, they had great joy.

When the people signed a covenant between themselves and God, the Bible says that the men, their **wives**, their sons, and their **daughters** all signed; everyone that had separated themselves from the people of the land unto the law of God signed; everyone that had knowledge and understanding signed this covenant. (See Nehemiah 10:28) The women had the right to make their own spiritual decisions, but with that right also came the responsibility to have the fear of God and to walk in His covenant.

#### E. The Right to Be Involved in the Worship and Work of the Lord

<sup>66</sup>*The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore,* <sup>67</sup>*Beside their manservants and their maidservants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women.*” (Nehemiah 7:66,67)

Among the large congregation the Lord put together, there was a choir of 245 singing men and women. According to Nehemiah chapter eleven, the singers were over the business of the house of God and were given a portion daily according to the king's commandment. A faithful man was chosen to be over the singers, but there were women among the singers, and they helped in the business of the house of the Lord, and they also received a portion for their labors as singers for the Lord. God does not allot to women every position they may think they need, but women have plenty of opportunity to work and serve Him within the roles God has given them. Let us realize and be thankful for the great blessings, gifts, and opportunities God has given us and use these gifts and opportunities instead of demanding more. We do not want to fall into the trap Eve fell into and think that God is withholding some good thing from us because we do not have as much as we think we should have. God clearly defines women's roles, and we will be happiest and most fulfilled by staying within and serving within those roles. Let us rejoice and be glad that what is best for us comes from God, not from what we think we should have.

#### F. The Right to Have a Choice in Marriage

In speaking of widows, I Corinthians 7:9 says, *"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."* A widow may remain single, but she may marry if she chooses. And she may marry whom she will as long as it is within the Lord's will and the man is a godly man. But this is for the church age. What about in earlier Bible times? Did not families arrange marriages for their children? Yes, in some cases they did; but even in this, the woman had a choice, or should have been given a choice. Let us look at some examples.

#### Rebekah

Abraham sent his servant back to his (Abraham's) country to seek out a wife for Isaac. As he traveled, the servant prayed that God would bless his journey and the work he was doing for his master. God did so and led him straight to the right woman. Abraham's servant testified, *"And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren."* (Genesis 24:27) All the necessary transactions took place between Laban and Abraham's servant. There was only one thing that still needed to be done. The woman, Rebekah, needed to be asked if she would agree to this marriage. She would not be forced to go if she did not agree. <sup>57</sup>*And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth.* <sup>58</sup>*And they called*

*Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.”*  
(Genesis 24:57,58)

When Rebekah was sent off with Abraham’s servant, she was not sent off so they could be rid of her or so that she could be like a servant for Isaac. She was sent off with a blessing, *“<sup>59</sup>And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. <sup>60</sup>And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.”* (Genesis 24:57,58) When Rebekah reached Isaac’s house, she was received with love, *“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.”*

In this account, we see that Rebekah was given a choice as to whether or not she would agree to this marriage, even though the marriage was somewhat arranged for her. She was cared for and sent off with blessing. She was sent off with blessing and received with love. God put this account in Scripture for an example and for our learning. God cares about the welfare of women, and godly men and families will care too.

## Ruth

Many of us remember this familiar story. There was famine in Bethlehem, and Elimelech took his wife and sons to the land of Moab to escape the famine. While they were there, Elimelech’s sons married two of the women of the land. Although Elimelech had gone to Moab to escape the famine, this did not save his life or protect his children. Both he and his sons died there.

Naomi, Elimelech’s wife heard that the famine had ended in Bethlehem. She wanted to go back. Ruth claved to her and went with her. Ruth had learned to love Naomi and Naomi’s God. After she got to Bethlehem, it did not take long for the whole city to know that she was a virtuous woman. Because Boaz was a near kinsman, Naomi encouraged Ruth to go talk to him because Naomi would seek rest for Ruth; that is, she would seek someone to marry her and care for her. Ruth did what her mother-in-law said.

Ruth did not have to choose Boaz as her mother-in-law wanted her to do. When she lay at Boaz’ feet and entreated him to do the part of a kinsman for her, he said, *“Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.”* (Ruth 3:10) There were men available in Bethlehem, young men that could have been attractive to Ruth. She could have gone after them; but she did not. She chose the

man that would care for her and for her mother-in-law, the man that would do things after the law of the land. Ruth was able to do this because she learned to fear the God of Israel. One day, as she worked, Boaz told her, *“The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”* (Ruth 2:12) When Ruth married Boaz, the people of the land blessed her. Ruth 4:11,12 says, *“<sup>11</sup>And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: <sup>12</sup>And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman.”*

Ruth was also blessed of God when she married Boaz. The Bible says, *“<sup>13</sup>So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son. <sup>14</sup>And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. <sup>15</sup>And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.”* (Ruth 4:13-15) Not only was Ruth blessed by her choice, which was made because she had learned to love God; but Naomi was also blessed. Through Ruth, God provided for Naomi in her old age. The son that Ruth bore was Obed, the grandfather of king David, and in the lineage of Jesus Christ.

Ruth did not have to marry Boaz. She had a choice. It seems she could have had the choice of any number of young men; but she chose Boaz because she wanted to please Naomi and Naomi’s God. When she forfeited some of her own “rights” and chose God’s way, she received great blessings. God always knows what is best, and His plan is always right for us. This is a good lesson that we, as women, can learn from the life of Ruth.

#### **IV. The Man and Woman’s Role as a Picture of True Love and a Reflection of Christ and the Church**

##### Solomon’s Lover

Solomon was a great king of Israel who loved God. However, he went after many wives, some of which were heathen wives. The heathen wives turned his heart away from God.

There is one wife that God singles out in Scripture, not a wife that turned Solomon’s heart away, but a wife whom Solomon loved and who loved Solomon in return. Though she was different, an outcast, a servant or slave, and a common woman, Solomon loved her. God took this love between Solomon and this woman and made it into a picture of

the love between Jesus and the church. This helps us to know that Solomon loved this woman very deeply.

The book of Song of Solomon is full of romantic exchanges between Solomon and his lover. How they felt for each other! How they desired to be together! How they cared for each other's well being! How they longed after one another! Solomon spent much time courting this woman, wooing her to himself. In turn she went after him. Though she had a different skin color, though she was an outcast, though she was a slave in her own household, though she was perhaps the child of an illegitimate relationship, yet Solomon loved her. He loved her with an unconditional love. Many times he came and called for her. Perhaps more than any other story in the Bible, this is a story of true love between a husband and wife. Take some time to read this book and the romantic exchanges and this couple's pursuit of one another. This is a picture God gave us of what love is really supposed to be like, of how a man is supposed to love a woman, and of how a woman should desire the man whom she loves.

It really is God's plan for the woman to be loved by her husband, cherished, cared for, provided for. Solomon was an example of this cherishing, this loving care, this provision. God thought so much of this that He devoted an entire book of the Bible to the love story of this couple. The woman could have refused Solomon's wooing, considering herself to be too low and unwanted, but she did not. She chose to accept his lovingkindness and care for her and reciprocated it with love and devotion.

Ephesians 5:25 and 28-30 says, *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. <sup>28</sup>So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. <sup>29</sup>For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: <sup>30</sup>For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."* Women are to be cherished and nourished by their husband as if they were part of his own flesh and bones. Remember what Adam said, *"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."* (Genesis 2:23) It is also God's plan for the husband to honor the wife. I Peter 3:7 says, *"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."* The husband is to seek to understand his wife; to try to get to know her needs, needs which he may not have as a man; to treat his wife as an heir together with him of the grace of life.

It was never God's plan that the woman be treated as a second class citizen, to be looked down upon because she was a woman. That is mankind's idea, really Satan's idea. All throughout the Bible there are examples – of women who received an

inheritance, of women who owned land, of women who helped make things for the tabernacle, of women who helped build, of women who were part of the singers in the temple, of women who were prophetesses, of women who were helpmeet to great men, and even of women who had their own businesses (such as the virtuous woman and Lydia the seller of purple). There are things that God says a woman should not do. God did establish the man as head over the woman. These things are for her protection. They are not for putting her down or making her less equal to the man. They are for helping her to fulfill the special role God has given her.

Are you a woman? Look to the word of God. See how special God says you are. See how He has made you just perfectly to fulfill the place He has for you. I think you will be blessed very much.