

APPENDIX TWO

On the Question of Men as Providers

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THE QUESTION COMES UP FROM TIME TO TIME, “*Is it wrong for married women to work outside the home?*” The quick answer is, “*No.*” The more involved answer first requires us to go to the scriptures, and then asks additional questions to make correct application.

When Jesus was asked about marriage and divorce in Matthew 19, He went to Genesis for the basis of His answers. We do well to follow His example and start in Genesis.

Read Genesis 2:15-18. What reason did God give for creating Eve? (2:18) It was not good for the man to be alone. What did God create for Adam? Not a maid, or a sex object. Not merely a companion. God created a *helper* (v.18). So what is the woman’s primary role according to creation? To *help* the man.

What did Adam need help with? What were the only commands God had given Adam to that point? There were three: (1) Be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28). (2) Have dominion over the creation (Gen. 1:28), including tending the garden (Gen.2:15). (3) Do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17).

The woman was created to help the man with these three things. Note that these are part of the creation order and were in place *before* sin entered the world in Genesis 3.

Read Genesis 3:16. How did sin affect the woman’s role and relationship to the man? There are two parts to the curse God pronounced on the woman. First, she was already ordained to help the man be fruitful and multiply. As a result of sin, however, the woman’s previously God-ordained role as the child bearer would be harder. Second, though she was created to *help* the man, as a result of sin, she would desire to *rule over* the man. Nevertheless, God said the man was still to rule over her. To whom was God speaking in 3:16? He was speaking to the woman.

Read Genesis 3:17-19. What did God say to the man as a result of sin? First, God spoke to the man about his error in listening to the voice of his wife. Note, however, God did not say it is always a sin for men to listen to their wives. It has been rightly said, “*Any man who does everything his wife tells him is a fool; but a man who does not do anything his wife tells him is a bigger fool.*” Why? Because God gave the man a woman to *help* him. Wives have many helpful things to say to their husbands. In what circumstance was God saying it is

wrong for a man to listen to the voice of his wife? When she is counseling (tempting) him to sin, as was the case in point in Genesis 3.

When God pronounced the curse on man, what did He also pronounce a curse on (v.17)? The ground. Why? Because the earth was placed under the man’s charge. When the man fell, everything that he was in charge of suffered for his sin. This is a sober warning to us regarding the far reaching consequences of our sin.

Man was to tend the garden that, up until Genesis 3, produced an abundance of fruit (Gen.2:9). Because of God’s curse on Adam, and subsequently the ground, what would man’s labors produce instead of an abundance of good fruit? (3:18) Thorns and thistles. Man was called to work before the fall. Since the fall, man’s labors have been met with resistance. As a result of sin, man’s work would be difficult and would require sweat (3:19).

To whom was God speaking in 3:17-19? God was speaking to the man. Whose face was to sweat in order to produce food? (3:18) The man’s. Who was taken from the ground? (3:19) The man. Remember, the man was created from the dirt (2:7), not the woman. She was formed from the man (2:22).

To whom was the mandate given to bear children? To the woman.

To whom is the mandate to work to provide given? To the man.

How do we know that these conclusions are correct and still binding? Look at the New Testament.

Read 1 Timothy 5:8. To whom is the command given to provide for the family? To the man. Even a casual reading of the passage makes it plain that the context is about providing physically. The passage has several things to say that are gender specific; so we may not misread verse eight to be gender neutral, as though the command to provide is to “mankind” instead of to men. Who then is responsible to be the providers according to the New Testament? Men.

Read Titus 2:1-6. In this passage there are gender specific instructions called *doctrine* (v.1). Doctrine means authoritative instruction. What instruction are older women to teach the younger women regarding their roles in marriage, family, and the home (v.4-5)? Women are to love and obey

their husbands and children and they are commanded to be *homemakers*.

What at the end of verse five is said will happen when women do not fulfill these roles? The Word of God will be blasphemed. What then is the primary God-ordained role of wives and mothers? To be homemakers.

Does that forbid a woman to earn money? Not at all. But it does place priority of caring for children and being a homemaker *first*. There is no biblical prohibition against a woman working outside the home so long as she does not neglect her primary calling of homemaker (including caring for and raising her children) to do so.

Now for a few follow up questions to make application.

Why do most wives work outside the home? Many insist that they cannot survive without two incomes. Is that true? Or could it be that families cannot live the lifestyle they want on one income? Could it be that the lifestyles many insist on living includes many things that we may *want* but do not *need* to survive? Could it be that we do not *need* big homes and new cars? Could it be that wives and mothers are working outside the home not in order to survive, but rather to live a desired lifestyle?

God's plan from the beginning was that the man is work to provide for himself and his wife and family. The curse made that work more difficult. Since God assigned this responsibility primarily to the man, could it be that when wives work outside the home, besides living with Eve's curse, they are also assuming Adam's responsibility and curse which God never intended for them? When both husband and wife work outside the home, which partner still assumes the majority of the burden of keeping the home? Is it not usually the wife who, besides working, still does the majority of cooking, cleaning, laundry, and provides the majority of care to the children?

When we encourage our daughters to pursue careers what are we training them to do and be? Since most women will marry and have children, why do they need to have careers? Do we not usually say it is because they might not marry? They might not have children? They might be widowed or divorced? What does a pilot spend more time training to do: fly airplanes. or use parachutes in case of trouble? What do we most typically give more attention to: training our daughters to be career women (giving them parachutes) or home makers (flying the plane God ordained for them)? Are we training our daughters wisely and biblically if they have degrees and careers but can't boil water, and don't know what to do with children?

When a newly married couple has two incomes (because there are no children yet), once children arrive how hard is it for that couple to transition to living on one income if they have become used to living on two? What might that young couple do when they have two incomes to prepare for transitioning to one?

Is there anything inherently wrong about a man being a house-husband and Mr. Mom, while his wife goes to work as the provider? While there may be special circumstances in which this cannot be avoided (e.g., the man is disabled, or during a limited season when the man is out of, and looking for work), most generally, it is God's plan that men be providers and wives be mothers and homemakers.

Proverbs 31 and the Career Woman

In hopes of finding a biblical precedent for a working wife/mother, some cite Proverbs 31:10-31. Of these 22 verses, 20 speak of the virtuous woman's character and her faithfulness to her husband, her family, and her role as a homemaker. Only two of the twenty-two verses can be viewed as supporting the working wife/mother as career woman. The sheer volume of verses on the wife/mother as homemaker versus those that present the possibility of the wife/mother as career woman (a 10:1 ratio) speaks volumes about priorities all by itself.

Beyond that, however, the two verses that some insist support the concept of the wife as career woman, do not say she "has a career outside the home," much less that she puts her children in the care of others while she goes off to work. The first (v.16) says, "*She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard.*" This says nothing about being a career woman outside the home. It is more clearly describing a cottage industry by a woman with a green thumb who's gardening makes a profit. There is certainly nothing wrong with that, but neither is there anything in that verse that supports the concept of a career woman.

The second verse (v.24) says. "*She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants.*" Here again, this is much more plainly describing a cottage industry in which an industrious woman sews and sells what she makes, than it supports the idea of a career woman outside the home.

The bottom line of Proverbs 31, is that while it does speak about an industrious homemaker, it does not support the concept of a wife/mother as career woman who works outside the home.