

THE DECONSTRUCTION OF BIBLICAL FEMININITY

GOLDEN TEXT

“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised”. (Proverbs 31:30)

USEFUL PRACTICE

Woman was created to cooperate with man. God entrusted her with the gift of motherhood and the role of being a wife and helper.

SCRIPTURE READING

Proverbs 31:10-31

10 A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

11 Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.

12 She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

13 She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.

14 She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.

15 She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family and portions for her female servants.

16 She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

17 She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.

18 She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.

19 In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.

20 She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.

21 When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.

22 She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.

23 Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.

24 She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.

25 She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.

26 She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

27 She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

28 Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

29 "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all."

30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

31 Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

I) To explain biblical femininity;

II) To highlight the erosion of femininity based on feminist activism and the supposed "sexual freedom";

III) To focus on the image of the woman of noble character of Proverbs 31 as a symbol of balanced biblical femininity.

INTRODUCTION

The Scriptures present the woman of noble character as a symbol of femininity (Proverbs 31:10-31). This woman is portrayed as a model of faithful wife, loving mother, manager and exemplary achiever. However, in postmodern times, biblical femininity has been deconstructed. In this lesson, we present the divine mandate for women, the attacks of feminist activism, and the biblical example of womanhood. Thus, our purpose is to

show that God requires the Christian woman to behave in accordance with the revelation of the Word of God.

I - BIBLICAL FEMININITY

1. The divine creation of woman. Man and woman were created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). In the order of Creation, Adam was created before Eve (Gen. 2:7, 15). Then the Creator concluded: “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). Thus, God created woman from the flesh and bones of man (Gen. 2:21, 22). Therefore, Adam identified her: “she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man” (Genesis 2:23). In the act of Creation, God’s image was distributed without distinction among them, making them equal before the Most High. Adam and Eve were created equal in personhood, worth, honor and respect. However, this equality does not mean uniformity of roles (Gen 1:26-28; 3:16-19). The Bible teaches the equality of both, but also makes clear the distinct functions of each.

2. The blessing of motherhood. In the creational mandate, God commanded man and woman to “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28). Obviously, it was an impossible task to be accomplished by Adam alone. Thus, the woman was created with the blessing of motherhood and with the function of being a wife and mother. Adam named her Eve “because she would become the mother of all the living” (Gen. 3:20). Thus, the natural role of women includes the gift of procreating, taking care of the house and the children (1 Tim. 5:14). Here, however, it is important to emphasize that this role of women, constituted by biology and, consequently, reaffirmed by the Bible, is the sore point considered by feminists to be an outrage that limits the social role of women and that, for this reason, they fight to gain emancipation from household chores and motherhood. However, before the miraculous conception in her womb, Mary burst into songs of gratitude to the Most High for the blessing of motherhood (Luke 1:46-48). This blessing must always be remembered by Christian women in the 21st century.

3. The woman as a helper. Woman was created to be a helper for man (1 Corinthians 11:9). In this case, the term “helper” is also used to refer to God (Ps. 33:20; Ps. 121:2). Therefore, helping is not something derogatory, but a noble function of help and relief. In this regard, the Bible emphasizes that God created woman to be a suitable helper (Gen. 2:18). This was so because Adam lived with all created beings, but he did not find a helper similar to him, capable of supplying this need. So, for this reason, God made the woman to cooperate with the man, not as someone inferior, but as a complement with their equalities and differences. This mutual

complementarity is necessary for the formation of the couple, because procreation, sexual satisfaction, affectionate and pleasant experience to fulfill the will of God (Prov. 5:18).

II - THE DECONSTRUCTION OF FEMININITY

1. Feminist activism. In the 19th century, the first wave of feminist activism took place in Europe and the USA. Women claimed equal rights with men. The first to become popular was the right to vote. In the 20th century, second wave feminism fought for reproductive rights and sexual freedom. The activist Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) establishes one of the maxims of feminism: “one is not born a woman, one becomes a woman”. This activism advances, expands to the discussion of gender and the movement takes on connotations of “empowerment” of women. In 2011, based on a phenomenon at the University of Toronto, Canada, the slogan “my body, my rules” was introduced. As Christians, we must affirm and defend the rights of women, as well as combat any type of discrimination. However, at the same time, we must make it clear that feminism is an ideology that seeks to deconstruct biblical values.

2. “Sexual freedom”. The Bible refers to sex as something pleasurable between a man and his wife within the confines of marriage (Proverbs 5:18,19). Sexual satisfaction must occur within marriage and be preceded by mutual love between both (1 Cor. 7:3-5). However, for feminism, this model is repressive and must be fought in search of women's sexual “liberation”. In defense of this ideology, it requires that no mode of sexual intercourse should be considered right or wrong. Here, early sexual initiation, the practice of homosexuality, fornication, adultery and prostitution are included (1 Cor. 6:10). In this sense, themes such as abortion, unwanted pregnancies and the deconstruction of the family are radicalized by the movement's ideological activism.

3. Attacks on the traditional family. Scripture teaches that marriage is monogamous, heterosexual and indissoluble (Matt. 19:5, 6), with the man as the leader of the family (Eph. 5:23). However, for the ideology of feminist activism, this biblical form of marriage enslaves the woman, obliges the couple to have sexual relations only with their spouse and tyrannizes the marital ties that cannot be broken. In this sense, the Marxist vision is of deconstruction of the traditional family, promotion of sexual freedom and dissolution of marriage. This concept exerts a strong influence on the feminist movement. In this way, radical activism rejects motherhood, advocates abortion, considers women's role as helpers offensive, praises lust, and engages in a gender struggle against men.

III – A WOMAN OF NOBLE CHARACTER: BIBLICAL SYMBOL OF

FEMININITY

1. Model of a faithful wife. A woman of noble character is of inestimable worth (Proverbs 31:10). Therefore, the Bible declares that “Her husband has full confidence in her” (Proverbs 31:11a) and reveals the husband's total trust in his wife. Thus, this wife's conduct is unblemished in all areas, such as: marital loyalty, sexual purity, home management and finances. Moreover, this woman's excellent management does not put the family in need. Therefore, her household “lacks nothing of value” (Proverbs 31:11b) and as to her husband, “She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life” (Proverbs 31:12). She provides him with continual well-being, she is a dependable and firm woman. Her actions inspire the indispensable confidence that makes her husband a successful man (Proverbs 31:23).

2. Model of a loving mother. The woman of noble character is also a devoted mother: “She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family” (Proverbs 31:15a). She wakes up when it is still dark and provides the family with a meal. For the well-being of her husband and children, she manages the multiple tasks in the house (Proverbs 31:15b). She is a protective mother, her children are adequately dressed both in the heat and in the cold: “When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.” (Proverbs 31:21 - NIV). This mother of noble character brings up her offspring with wisdom and kindness (Proverbs 31:26). She anticipates hard times and “does not eat the bread of idleness” (Proverbs 31:27). Her children recognize her incalculable value, praise her, thank her and reciprocate the love received from this blessed mother (Prov. 31:28a).

3. Model of a manager and achiever. The woman of noble character is a remarkable manager. As an achiever, she gets fabrics, makes good quality clothes, sheets and quilts (Proverbs 31:15, 22). She buys imported and high standard goods for her home (Prov. 31.14). She gets property and manages profitable businesses (Proverbs 31:16). She manages the production and sales of her business (Prov. 31.18, 24). Generous and sensitive, she helps the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:20). She is full of energy and good character and is self-confident about the future (Proverbs 31:25). This wife, mother and achiever is praised by her family (Prov. 31:28, 29). Her immeasurable worth does not lie in physical appearance, but in a God-fearing heart (Proverbs 31:30). This woman's example and virtues will be publicly recognized (Proverbs 31:31).

CONCLUSION

The Bible reveals that men and women complement each other (Gen 2:24). In this way, husband and wife are equal as persons, but different in their divinely appointed roles. Among other roles, God entrusted women with the gift of motherhood and the task of being a helper. These characteristics ennoble and do not stigmatize women. However, the deconstruction of femininity puts them on a collision course with the divine will. Therefore, the Christian woman is instructed to honor her femininity and thus glorify God in his sovereignty (Luke 1:38, 46-48).