

Items for group discussion on July 28, 2017:

Scripture exalts women throughout:

- Women bear the stamp of God's own image, play key roles in Biblical narratives, are seen as venerated partners and cherished companions to their husbands, and are to be honored by their children.
- Women are set apart for special honor, illustrated by the command to husbands to love their wives sacrificially and by acknowledgement and celebration of the value of a virtuous woman.
- The OT gave due distinction to wives and mothers, i.e. Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Rahab, Jochebed, etc.
- The NT represented the bride of Christ as a woman. In the church, women partook with men in all feasts and public worship. Women were not required to be veiled or silent in public, shared teaching responsibility and authority over their children, administered the affairs of their own households and even owned land.

Ancient cultures degraded and debased women:

- Women in pagan societies during biblical times were treated in an undignified manner, regarded as inferior by nature and as chattel.
- Pagan religion fueled and encouraged devaluation and demeaning of women

Jesus exalted the position of womanhood:

- Women were included as disciples of Jesus and he encouraged their discipleship
- Jesus treated women with the utmost dignity, blessed their children, raised, their dead, forgave their sins, resorted their virtue and honor

Women were prominent in the ministry of the early church:

- Women prayed with the chief disciples, performed good deeds and offered hospitality
- Some women were known for their understanding of sound doctrine and for their spiritual giftedness
- The apostle Paul ministered alongside women and recognized and applauded their faithfulness and giftedness.

As Christianity grew and expanded, it began to influence Western society

- Christian influence improved the status of women
- Tertullian, one of the early church fathers, noted the trend toward modesty in women's dress and its corresponding elevation of the status of women.
- Women began to be honored for their virtue and faith and were "less and less vilified or mistreated as objects for the amusement of men."
- Women converted out of pagan society were automatically freed from demeaning practices in temples and theaters.
- When Constantine granted legal status to Christianity, women enjoyed new legal status.
- The social, legal and spiritual status of women, as a rule, is elevated wherever the gospel has spread.

Detriment of secular movements (feminism):

- Effect on natural gender distinctions
- Motherhood under fire

The message of Scripture:

- Honor given to feminine virtue; uniqueness of femininity
- Women of the Bible are marked “excellent” based on their character and their moral and spiritual qualities
- Godliness and good works are the essence of feminine beauty rather than outward embellishments
- The faithfulness of the women illustrated in the book is their true, lasting legacy