

#132 “Biblical Womanhood”
by Brent Barnett
www.relevantbibleteaching.com

Women face many lies against true womanhood to the extent that there is often great confusion about what it even means to be a woman. Some say that womanhood is casting off “enslavement” to a husband and climbing a corporate ladder in the workplace, politics, or some other professional area. Some say that womanhood is only doing work at home, period. Some say that womanhood is defined by not wearing fashionable clothes, make-up, jewelry, etc. For others, womanhood is defined by having children, and in some cases, how many children one has. Women will always find themselves chasing an elusive identity and dream unless they embrace who God made them to be according to the Bible.

Women must come to accept their femininity. God has made them different purposefully. Physically, they are different, being generally weaker and crafted to bear and nurse children, and they have different emotional needs as well. Peter exhorts husbands to treat their wives in an understanding way because they are different, being women, and men need to understand this (1 Peter 3:7). Men don’t need the same kind or quantity of emotional intimacy and affection. Women shouldn’t be yelled at, threatened physically, or intimidated by men. They should be treated with sensitivity, care, and respect. Women shouldn’t have to compete with men in terms of “toughness,” for their strength is different. Women are clearly different physically and emotionally in terms of how God has made them and wired them. They need to accept this reality, and men need to honor this reality.

Women must come to define womanhood based not on the culture or even what well-meaning Christians might assert but on the Word of God. The Bible says that a woman does well if she bears children (Psalm 128), and it doesn’t condemn a woman as inferior if she remains unmarried, does not have children, or cannot have children (Matthew 19:12). The Bible says that women should be workers at home (Titus 2:5), but it also allows for them to do profitable business ventures (Proverbs 31:16). The Biblical ideal is for men to provide for their families and for women to stay at home to raise the children. Unfortunately, this will not always work out perfectly, and both men and women need to be willing to adapt and be flexible and understanding. If it is possible for a mother to be with her children and raise them, then there is no Biblical reason to excuse her from not doing so. Though a stay at home mother might feel at times like she is not accomplishing a whole lot simply by keeping a home and by training her children, she is raising up the future which will itself leave a future. Thus, the long-term impact is extremely far reaching. There is much to do to keep a home well and to train children, and it certainly is a full-time job and a high calling of God.

Women must find their worth and identity in who they are in Christ. What Christ finds precious is described in 1 Peter 3:3-6 which says, “Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit,

which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.” There is nothing evil about wearing makeup, nice dresses, braiding the hair, or donning gold jewelry (see Ezekiel 16:1-19 in which God metaphorically describes Himself giving Israel jewelry and nice clothing). What is evil is making outward appearance the sole objective and goal to define womanhood or to find worth. Womanhood is not based first and foremost upon outer appearance but in the state of one’s heart. As 1 Samuel 16:7 says, “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’” Women frequently fall into the trap of thinking that they will be better or more valuable if they look better, which they measure based upon what the society at the time says is beautiful. Though husbands certainly should appreciate their wives’ outward beauty, form, and appearance (Song of Solomon 1:15), the ultimate definition of a woman is in the hidden person of the heart (Proverbs 31:30). God wants to see a gentle and quiet spirit, one which respects God and her husband, not in a fearful dread but in a peaceful, secure rest and trust. A godly woman is a comfort and a companion, one whom a godly husband can trust and delight in (Proverbs 31:11). Her tenderness and peaceableness is the adornment which God says is definitive of a woman of God. Women should dress like women, and they have the right Biblically to take care of themselves outwardly, even doing what they can to look their best, if they so desire (and their husbands probably do so desire). Outward beauty is not evil in and of itself, and neither is having a pleasant, elegant personality. The Bible condemns preoccupation with the external because it is vain, and it condemns charm that is deceitful, seductive, and manipulative because such is devilish, evil, ungodly, and riddled with lies. In God’s view, it is the woman who fears the Lord who is to be praised (Proverbs 31:30).

Women must come to see that godliness is the ultimate measure of a woman. 1 Timothy 2:9-10 says, “Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.” True womanhood is not found in a woman trying to see how many men she can get to check her out. She is not to seduce them by lust, but she is to attract a godly man by her own godliness. Her adornment can be external as long as it is modest, discreet, and proper. This does not necessarily equate to bland and unstylish, but it does mean taking care not to stumble men into sin.

A woman must guard her heart above all else, and she must be free to be who God made her to be. She is different than man, she is the complement for man, and she has different roles in marriage than the man. True womanhood is doing all that she does, regardless of where she presently is in life, to the honor and glory of God by honoring His Word. Truly, a woman who fears the Lord is a difficult find (as is a man who fears the Lord), but these will be praised by the husbands who are blessed enough to marry them,

by those who are treated kindly by them, by the children who are raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by them, and ultimately by the Lord Himself.