

# **A Woman's Place is...**

## **John Buttrey II**

How would you complete the title to this article? Without a doubt, the roles of women in society have greatly changed. Women are running major corporations, holding public office, ruling over courts, adding commentary and analysis on sporting events, and doing other jobs traditionally thought to be only for men. Society's ideas of a woman's place have indeed been greatly redefined.

But what about in the church? Should the changes regarding a woman's place in society, also be taking place in the church? Should women be allowed to serve as preachers or elders? Should they be able to publicly teach men in our assemblies?

Holy Scripture would answer such questions with a resounding no. As such, so should we. Changes in culture do not change God's inspired word. The pattern found in the Bible, from beginning to end, is that of male spiritual leadership. This pattern is recognized by those seeking greater leadership roles for women in the church. This is the reason some consider Paul to be a male chauvinist, or the Bible to be "out of touch." This is why gender-neuter Bibles have been published. Paul's inspired words of Scripture regarding man as the head of a woman (1 Cor. 11:3), or that women cannot teach or have authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12), clash head-on with society's changing attitudes.

In the fight for creating new roles of leadership for women in the church, what many people fail to recognize, is the great place of honor given to women, by God Himself!

Consider for example, how woman was created as a "helper suitable" for the man (Gen. 2:18). This is a place of great honor. not dishonor. The word "helper" applied to the woman, is a Hebrew word that is also used to describe God as our helper (cf. Ps. 33:20; 46:1; 54:4; 121:1-2). Do any of us think less of God because He is described as our Helper? Because God helps us, our love and appreciation for Him grows. The same should be true for the God-given role women are to play in the home and in the church.

In the book of Proverbs, wisdom is personified as a woman (cf. Pr. 1:20; 2:4; 8:1-3). Is this not a picture of great honor? How about the honor due the "excellent wife of Proverbs 31:10-31? This woman's husband and family were greatly blessed because of her tireless efforts. In fact,

the text reads, “Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also... (Proverbs 31:28a). The roles God has given women are a great blessing, and we should thank Him for those roles, not seek to change them.

In the New Testament, the church is pictured as “the bride of Christ.” (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25; Rev. 21:2). What a description of honor!

Think of the prominent roles played by women during the earthly ministry of Jesus. Mary, His mother, found favor with God (Luke 1:30ff). Mary Magdalene was one of several women who contributed financial support to our Savior and His disciples (Luke 8:1-3). Don’t forget the constant help and support of Mary and Martha. Remember, that it was women who arrived first at the empty tomb of Jesus. And it was a woman to whom He first appeared after His resurrection (John 20:16).

In the book of Acts, women are also featured in prominent roles of service. We read of Tabitha and her kind deeds of charity (Acts 9:36ff). There is Mary, the mother of John Mark, who opened her home for a powerful prayer meeting (Acts 12:12ff). How about the roles played by Timothy’s mother and grandmother (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5; 2:15)? There is also Lydia and Priscilla, the faithful women of Hebrews chapter eleven, and numerous others that could be listed.

The fact is, women can and do, play very important roles in the work of the local church. Their roles are different than those roles of leadership given by God to men. However, their roles are not insignificant or unimportant. God has made the roles of men and women very clear, in the home and in the church. Let us honor His word. All things considered, when it comes to God’s design of woman, we can and must say, “A woman’s place is *one of honor.*”