

## FOREWORD

The 1981 convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod adopted the following resolution:

WHEREAS 1) the 1979 convention of the Synod resolved that the Commission on Higher Education report to this convention the results of the districts' studies regarding the statement on "The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture"; and

WHEREAS 2) a number of districts called for additional study of the relevant scriptural principles regarding the role of man and woman; and

WHEREAS 3) the role of man should be clearly defined according to scriptural principles regarding his responsibilities toward church, wife, family and society; and

WHEREAS 4) the role of woman should be clearly defined according to scriptural principles regarding her responsibilities toward church, husband, family and society; and

WHEREAS 5) it was recommended that a pamphlet on this subject be prepared in simple language so that it can be placed into the hands of our people; therefore, be it

**Resolved,** a) That this matter be referred to the Conference of Presidents to appoint an appropriate committee for further extensive study; and be it further

**Resolved,** b) That this appointed committee report to the districts of the WELS in convention in 1982; and be it finally

- Resolved,** c) That a pamphlet or other exposition in readily understood language be offered to the members of the Synod as soon as authorized by the Conference of Presidents.

*Man and Woman in God's World* was produced in the manner prescribed by the above resolution. All who were involved in its preparation approached their assignment with but one goal, to seek an answer to the question, What does the Bible say? This tract is herewith offered to the members of the synod by the Conference of Presidents.

## 1. IN GOD'S PERFECT WORLD

In every Christian there is an aching for Eden, an earnest longing for life as God intended it to be when he first made man and woman. Even the most casual reading of the opening chapters of Genesis reveals the blessed state in which man and woman were living immediately after their creation. Merely reading about life in Eden evokes in us a longing for a place we have never visited.

Moses tells us in Genesis 1 that God graciously bestowed the most wonderful blessings on both the man and the woman. Both of them share in his image, partake of his perfection and enjoy all necessary knowledge of him and his will for their lives. Both man and woman will exercise dominion over the created world. And God imparted to both the blessing to be fruitful and to increase in number. We can easily understand why God looked upon the man and the woman and considered them, like the rest of the creation, "very good."

The second chapter of Genesis leads us to a greater appreciation of the interdependence of man and woman, whose creation Moses had already described in Genesis 1. After God had created man and put him in the garden — a place we properly call "paradise" without fully understanding what we're saying — he stated, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (v 18). God himself defined what is "not good" about man's situation by adding that he would make "a helper suitable for him." Adam did not yet have one who corresponded to him, one who would fill what was lacking in his life and one who would join him in carrying out God's plan for their lives. The man and woman thus depended on one another.

God's plan for people's lives is twofold. First of all, man is to love and serve the One who has given him life. The command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil gave Adam and Eve an opportunity to do so. We today still recognize love and service to God as our chief purpose in life. God has not only created us in his goodness, but he has also recreated us through his grace. Thus something as routine as eating and drinking is to be done "for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

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The second purpose for which our Lord created us is to rule over and enjoy the world into which he has placed us. God put Adam into the garden to work it and take care of it. God also told him he could eat from any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the New Testament we have a fuller explanation of this second purpose in life. From Paul we learn that when we use the world God has created for us, we are to look not only at our "own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4). We will, in short, strive to "serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13).

When God created man, he determined that man would have a partner to help him achieve his purpose in life, one called "woman." The important place the woman fills in the man's life comes through in the meaning of the Hebrew word for "helper." This is a term that the Bible often uses to describe God in his relationship with his people. In Psalm 70:5 the inspired writer confesses God to be his "help," the very word which the Lord uses in Genesis 2:18 to describe the woman he is going to create for the man. The woman will provide what the man lacks and needs, as God comes to his people in their need and strengthens and supports them.

By himself the first man cannot complete God's plan for his life, which includes that later and blessed word: "Be fruitful and increase in number" (Genesis 1:28). He needs the woman whom God will provide. And so God creates the woman to be a helper for the man. This is why Paul later writes that man was not "created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Corinthians 11:9). Their mutual joy and fulfillment will come as they join to carry out God's plan for their lives.

The manner in which God describes the woman reinforces the idea that she is to stand alongside the man and assist him in fulfilling his purpose in life. Our English translations term the woman a helper who is "meet" (KJV) or "suitable" (NIV) for the man. The idea behind the Hebrew word is that she is to correspond to the man. He has been alone, and that is not good. The woman will fill that aloneness and in that way serve as his helper. She is to be his female counterpart — physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. She will bring him what he needs, and she will draw from him all that she

requires. We may compare them to the two finishing pieces of the divine puzzle, pieces who come together to complete the beautiful picture of life on earth as God intends it to be.

Adam himself gives eloquent testimony to the role the woman is to fill in his life when he states: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:23). This is Adam's way of saying that Eve is his female counterpart. Adam acknowledges that Eve is the one whom God has created to stand beside him, bring him what he needs and fulfill her needs in him as well. And he rightly cherishes and loves her as an equally good creation of God.

The creative act by which God brings forth the woman shows the man that she is a special and necessary part of his life. Before creating the woman God has the man name the animals. This naming process serves to show man that he doesn't have one who corresponds to him. As Adam names the animals, he thinks God's thoughts after him. He comes to the same understanding of his situation that God already has. Adam now sees that there is something "not good" about being alone, even though he is living in paradise. When God makes the woman out of the man's flesh and bones, Adam understands that he now has one who corresponds to him in the fullest sense. He even calls her "woman" to show how closely related they are. She is one "taken out of man" (v 23).

When God brings Eve to Adam, the man does not use personal names to discuss himself and his helper. He uses the more general titles of "man" and "woman." He calls the one God has made "woman," not Eve; and he states that she has been taken out of "man," not out of Adam. The first man and woman whom God created represent in their lives what the Lord wants in the lives of all people. What applies specifically to that man and that woman we know as Adam and Eve applies to all men and women generally.

Adam's delight at the creation of Eve is unmistakable. What joy fills his heart as God brings Eve to him for the wedding. "At last!" the man says. This now is one who truly corresponds to him, one with whom he can blend in perfect harmony, one with whom he can carry out God's will for their lives here on earth. Adam rightly exults in the gift of Eve as God brings her to him.

As we look back on the joyous relationship between man and woman in paradise, we cannot but long for that blissful harmony. In the garden two wills were one. They were united perfectly in God's will. The singers and the song were inseparable, for Adam and Eve lived their lives in perfect harmony with the will of God.

The creation account teaches us the unity and interdependence of the man and the woman as well as the roles God intends them to carry out with one another. It is impossible to recapture all that paradise involved, for our vision has been blurred by the cataracts of sin. Yet the Holy Spirit inspired the sacred writers to proclaim particular truths and to draw certain conclusions based on the relationship between Adam and Eve in paradise. Paul thus refers to the basic principle that "the head of the woman is man" (1 Corinthians 11:3) and "neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Corinthians 11:9). And when he tells Timothy that a woman is not "to have authority over a man," he sees that arrangement as a direct reflection of what was in effect already at creation, for he bases his directive to Timothy on the observation that in God's order of things "Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:11-13).

When we read the Genesis account in the light of the rest of Scripture, we recognize that the opening chapters of the Bible set forth the headship of man. For example, Paul states that the man is to be the head of the woman and bases his teaching on the fact that the woman was created from the man and for the man (1 Corinthians 11:3,8,9). He also informs us that the woman is not to have authority over the man, for Adam was created first. In addition, we can see the headship of man reflected in the fact that he is placed into the garden first and given control over it. The headship of man is also evident after the Fall when God comes looking for the man first and calls him to account for the fall into sin. We can affirm, therefore, that God established the headship of man at the time of creation.

Although the first chapters of Genesis show us an ideal situation which we can never attain, they lay down the basic principle to guide men and women in their relationships with one another. This principle is that the man is to be the head of the woman. Other portions of God's Word define and clarify our Lord's will and show how we are to apply that will to various situations in our lives.

## 2. IN THE FALLEN WORLD

We believers readily acknowledge how much we need God's directives, for we know the truly corrupting nature of sin. From Genesis 3 we learn of the tragedy that came upon the world when man fell into sin and ate the forbidden fruit. And we see that the harmony of perfection is replaced by the dissonance of sin.

In the temptation the serpent approached the woman first. She fell into sin and ate of the forbidden fruit. Paul tells us that her sin came as a result of her being deceived. He further adds, "Adam was not the one deceived" (1 Timothy 2:14). The apostle is not trying to lessen the guilt of the man or make him less responsible for his act. In fact, in Romans Paul reminds us that Adam was fully responsible, for he states: "Sin entered the world through one man," and "Through the disobedience of the one man many were made sinners" (Romans 5:12,19). But we still take note of the difference between the ways the man and the woman fell into sin, for Paul makes specific application on the basis of that difference in 1 Timothy 2.

Sin changed the way man and woman viewed and exercised their relationships. It destroyed man's harmonious relationship with God, but its effects did not stop there. It quickly shattered the perfect harmony that man and woman had formerly enjoyed. When God came looking for Adam and Eve and called them to account for what had happened, both sought to evade their personal responsibility. They thus gave sad but unmistakable testimony to the truth that sin had corrupted the harmonious relationship of Eden.

When God spoke to Adam and Eve after the Fall, he pointed out just how far-reaching the ravages of sin would be. The man and the woman would continue to rule over the earth, but after the Fall even the earth was under the curse of sin. God's once-perfect world would now bring forth thorns and thistles. Although man would still enjoy its fruits, he would do so only by the sweat of his brow. Another evidence of the infecting power of sin would appear in childbearing. God did not take this most blessed of roles from Eve, but he did indicate that sin would change its nature. In her role as childbearer Eve would now know pain and sorrow, where once she would have

experienced nothing but joy. The harp that once sounded only happiness would now produce the strains of sorrow as well.

Sin corrupted the way men and women carry out their relationship with one another. God created Eve to stand alongside Adam and serve as his helper. He had created the man to be the loving head of the woman. But the headship of the man, which she once perceived as all joy, would no longer be viewed in perfect love. The woman would at times resent and even resist the man's headship, and the man would sometimes abuse his position as head. In short, the weeds of sin would overrun Eden.

Because of the appearance and power of sin God gave more specific guidelines regarding the relationship between men and women. After the Fall, for instance, God reaffirmed the headship of man: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). Our sinful natures may rebel against God's directives, but as his children we delight in our Lord's guidance. We know he always directs us in the way that will lead to our happiness.

We Christians listen with humility as God describes the consequences sin brings into all relationships, particularly that between husbands and wives. We confess how true God's words have been. The history of mankind has often been a history of unloving treatment of women by men and of men by women. At times people have failed to distinguish clearly between what God describes as being the outgrowth of sin and what he prescribes as his good and gracious will. Men have sometimes forced women to eat of a bitter fruit and then have attempted to convince them that God planted the tree from which it grew.

The remedy for the ravages of sin is that which God promised as soon as Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. Both received the gracious promise of the Savior, called the woman's "offspring" in the first gospel proclamation (Genesis 3:15). This promise makes no distinctions whatever. Paul reminds us: "Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men" (Romans 5:18). The gospel transcends all distinctions and divisions sin has brought into the world. For the sake of Christ and his redeeming work God has declared all sinners righteous.

### 3. IN GOD'S REDEEMED WORLD

In the New Testament God reaffirms the basic principle he first set forth in the creation account. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul speaks of headship generally and reminds us that all are under a head, even Christ himself: the head of the woman is man; the head of every man is Christ; and the head of Christ is God (v 3). In beginning this way the apostle has a dual purpose. First of all, he puts the exercise and acceptance of headship in a spiritual context. Both men and women will recognize that any headship in their lives is an outgrowth of their relationship with God and is to reflect that relationship. But equally important, Paul shows us that acknowledging someone as our head is neither demeaning nor degrading. As Christ recognized God as his head, so we gladly acknowledge those God has placed over us.

The application Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 11 on the basis of the headship principle is clear. To the woman Paul says that she is to recognize the man as her God-ordained head. She is to conduct herself in a way which exhibits that she acknowledges his headship. For the Corinthians, women wearing a head covering showed in an outward way that they acknowledged themselves to be under the authority and protection of the men over them. The significance and social implication of that particular custom may have changed for us, but also today in their choice of styles and in their actions Christian women will conduct themselves in a way that clearly shows they recognize the man as the one God has ordained to be the head. To the men Paul says that every man will exercise his headship as one who is himself under a head, Christ. Men will want to give testimony to their dependence on women and to bear in mind that they cannot be born or fulfill all of God's purposes for their lives "independent of woman" (v 11).

We shall now examine this relationship in three areas of life: marriage, church and society.

## A. The Christian and Marriage

In Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3 we receive God's inspired blueprint for man-woman relationships in marriage. Both of these passages place a special responsibility on the husband. In Ephesians 5:25 Paul enjoins husbands to love their wives "just as Christ loved the church." That exhortation alone excludes any highhanded or harsh rule by believing husbands, for Christ compels us to follow him by the power of his winsome love, not by the force of his law.

The passages from Ephesians and 1 Peter call upon wives to submit themselves, but do not tell husbands to compel their wives to be subject to them. Paul even asks husbands to submit themselves to their wives as an expression of that love: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). The apostle also stresses that wives will submit themselves "as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22) and teaches Christian wives to see their submission as an outgrowth and expression of their love for Christ.

In other Bible passages one truth emerges again and again. The husband-wife relationship God spelled out at creation and reiterated immediately after the Fall has not been set aside by the coming of Christ. God did not give Adam and Eve an injunction that applied only to them or only during the Old Testament era. In Genesis 2 and 3 God expressed his unchanging will for marriage. The apostles apply the principle of Genesis to marriages in the New Testament era. While Christians are "all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28) and share equally in his blessings, they still have specific roles that God assigns them in marriage. In the marriage relationship God places the husband in the role of head and calls upon the wife to submit herself to him.

The Christian husband knows he has an awesome responsibility. He sees that the family is not only the basic unit in society, but also the unit for which God has made him especially responsible. His family, therefore, becomes his major earthly priority and receives a major portion of his attention and energy. He realizes that just as the flock of Christ would be scattered and destroyed were it not for our Lord's continuing leadership, so the little flock of his household would suffer

all sorts of harm if he were not to lead it according to God's will. For that reason he looks to God's Word and to the example of God's Son to learn how he is to exercise his leadership in the family. And just as Christ sacrificed himself for his church, the husband puts his wife and children first among his earthly responsibilities and gives his all in providing for their needs.

God wants husbands to provide a setting in which wives will delight in rendering their services. The Christian husband will recognize that his wife is the one whom God himself has designed for the man, the one without whom his life would be "not good." In addition, the Christian husband will accord his wife special honor since he recognizes her as his co-heir of salvation, redeemed and restored to God by the blood of Jesus just as he is. Because his wife is a blessing from God, the husband will provide for her needs, be they physical, mental or emotional. Above all, he will take the lead in tending to her spiritual well-being and will see to it that she has ample opportunity to grow in grace and to apply God's Word to her life. The Christian husband will be an example to others in the way he treats his wife, just as Christ is the believer's example.

In saying that the wife is to submit herself to her husband, we are not disparaging the role that she is to fill in the home. A woman should never be apologetic about being "just a housewife," as though she cannot be fulfilled or make a worthwhile contribution unless she holds a position outside the home.

A glorious picture of the Christian woman in the home emerges from Scripture. The Bible teaches us that in the home especially the woman is to be a helper suitable for the man and is capable of supplying what he needs and lacks. She watches over the affairs of the household and creates an atmosphere of tranquility and trust, of peace and joy. There she also carries out that most vital of tasks, namely, training the next generation to love and serve God. It is no wonder that her husband praises her and that her children arise and call her blessed (cf. Proverbs 31:10-31).

The importance of a woman's role in the home cannot be overemphasized. People often feel that holding up family responsibilities to women reduces them to second class citizens, but that is not the case.

The Christian husband will readily testify to the truth: "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22). He knows that his life without his wife would be "not good," and he freely acknowledges, "She is worth far more than rubies" (Proverbs 31:10). God has made women to correspond to men mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Women are capable of filling even the most demanding positions in society. Hence it is not inability to cope with positions outside of the home but rather conformity to God's will that leads women to find their greatest fulfillment in carrying out their responsibilities to their husbands and children. In the home the woman finds that same joy in serving her husband that all Christians experience in serving their Lord.

Christian men and women in all ages have testified to the mutual delight and satisfaction they derive from filling the roles God has established for them. Husbands will rejoice in serving as leaders whose pattern is Christ's own example of love and service. And wives will find true joy by helping their husbands, joining them in rearing their children, and growing in faith and knowledge with their families.

### **B. The Christian and the Church**

The second area in which the New Testament applies the principle of the headship of the man is the church. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul tells women to "remain silent in the churches" (v 34). Such silence is not a blanket rule, as though he were forbidding women even to speak in a worship setting. Paul simply asks the women to be silent when it comes to teaching that exercises authority over the assembly of believers. The women may have been speaking out of a sincere desire to learn and to grow in grace and knowledge. But the apostle also directs this zeal so that it will show itself in the proper way. For women this means to "ask their own husbands at home" (v 35), and once again it is the headship of the husband that determines this. Paul's words lay a corresponding responsibility upon men. His injunction presupposes that men will be knowledgeable about the work of the church and will take an active part in carrying out that work. Women are to be silent and are not to speak because they "must be in submission, as the Law says" (v 34).

When Paul refers to "the Law," he shows that his application does not pertain only to the congregations of his day. "The Law" refers to the first five books of the Old Testament which includes the opening chapters of Genesis, so Paul's exhortation is not rooted in a changing custom of the day. It is based on the headship principle which God established at the time of creation and which therefore applies to all times.

Nor does the spiritual equality of men and women in Christ set aside the headship principle. In Galatians 3:28 Paul shows that when it comes to the gift of salvation there are no distinctions whatever, neither racial nor social nor sexual. "You are all one in Christ Jesus," he reassures us to let us know that, regardless of our standing before the world, we share fully in the forgiving grace of Jesus. The most beggarly or bereft becomes a king and a priest in the sight of God because of Christ's grace. While we rejoice in this gospel proclamation, we do not assume that this description of the gospel now sets aside the principles of the law. Restored men and women use the precepts of the law to direct them in a way that is a delight to him who has loved them so fully and faithfully.

In 1 Timothy 2 Paul again emphasizes the headship of the man as he discusses the public ministry of the church. At the end of the chapter he states that a woman "must be silent" (v 12). In this passage the apostle specifically forbids a woman "to teach." She is not to interpret and proclaim the Word publicly when she would "have authority over a man." This does not bar women from all teaching or from all offices of the public ministry. Nor does this mean that women may exercise no authority in the church. Paul is referring only to that kind of teaching by which they would rule men. A woman who has "authority over a man" violates the principle of the headship of man. The Lord directs women to step back from this area of church work. In a desire to uphold that principle they will "learn in quietness and full submission" (v 11) when the men are involved.

This quiet submission and not having "authority over a man" is in full conformity with God's timeless principle, as Paul points out in his next words to Timothy (vv 13,14). That the principle of the headship of the man was indeed God's will already before the Fall is clearly

indicated by the chronology of creation, "for Adam was formed first then Eve" (v 13; cf. also 1 Corinthians 11:8,9: "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.")

Paul not only indicates that the headship of man was God's will already at creation, but he also goes on to point out the grave harm that was done when that principle was not observed. The fall into sin involved a major reversal of man's and woman's assigned roles, as Genesis 3 clearly indicates, particularly verses 6,12 and 17. Noting the different ways in which the man and the woman fell into sin, Paul writes: "Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (1 Timothy 2:14).

The fall into sin is not cited by Paul as the reason for man's headship or woman's submission. That had been established earlier. Rather, the fall into sin illustrates the damage done when both man and woman departed from God's established principle. Hence, it is not male chauvinism but a desire to retain God's ideal in a sin-scarred world that moves Paul to urge women not to exercise authority over men.

To be sure Paul excludes women from exercising authority over men, but that does not rule out for women every form of service in the church. In the epistle to the Romans Paul speaks of the contribution that Priscilla made to his ministry (16:3,4). We know that this same Priscilla joined her husband Aquila in teaching Apollos "the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26). What is more, in his second letter to Timothy, Paul refers to the faith that Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice imparted to him (1:5). Paul's concern, then, is not to exclude women from being involved in Christ's work, but to direct women in a way that accords with the headship of man that God set forth in creation. Women are not to assume an office of the public ministry when that means exercising authority over men.

Evangelical practice still requires women to honor the headship of men by not seeking the pastoral office. Certain forms of the public ministry carry with them the responsibility to exercise authority over male and female members of the church (e.g., the parish pastorate, district and synodical offices). The congregation asks the called pastor

to speak "as one speaking the very words of God" (1 Peter 4:11), to interpret God's Word for men and women and to direct their lives by it (cf. Hebrews 13:7,17). In that capacity ministers of the gospel exercise supervision over men and women, "all the flock," as Paul reminds the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20:28). Women will not, therefore, seek the pastoral office because they want to uphold the principle of the headship of man. They will seek to serve their Lord in other ways that are in accord with that principle.

In a desire to affirm the headship of men, our congregations withhold voting privileges from women in their governing assemblies. The question of such suffrage does not center on the relative importance of the matter being voted on, whether it's theological or non-theological. If it did, suffrage could be extended to women in matters that do not deal directly with the public ministry of the Word. But the central issue is the headship principle, which God set forth already at the creation of man and woman. In the perfection of Eden this principle was accepted gladly and willingly, but in our fallen state Paul now needs to urge acceptance of it by asking women to look to men for leadership.

The Christian woman knows that if she were to demand the right to vote and to govern the congregation, she would be exercising authority over the man who is to be her head. Thus she will forego seeking such decision-making in the congregation. Each man of the congregation is a representative of that "kind" who was created to be her head, and she will want to reflect in every way possible the honor she accords men in their God-given role. Men will earn the honor of women as they assume the responsibility the Lord expects of them. Men will recognize that Christ's glory and his people will be served only when they, whom God has ordained to be leaders, exercise their leadership.

Men will seek the advice of women as they lead the congregation. We have Christ as our Head, and every decision he makes on our behalf is carried out in perfect love and is always done with our best interests in mind. Christian men will want to exhibit that love to the women members of their congregations. They may do this by seeking the opinions and suggestions of the women before a final decision is



made. In this way the church will be benefited by the special gifts and talents God has given to the women in the church, and the men still will be following Christ's own example as they exercise the authority God entrusts to them.

Women are not to be restricted to performing menial tasks or to worship in a passive way. The book of Acts and the epistles of Paul show the key roles women filled in the spread of the gospel. At times they gathered the little nucleus to which the apostles preached and around which they built their congregations (Acts 16:14,15). Women served as witnesses to the unchurched and as instructors to those new in the faith (Acts 18:26; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). In many instances women were the apostles' support and strength in times of crisis (Romans 16:1-16; Philippians 4:2,3). The leaders of our congregations will constantly look for new areas to which they can properly direct the zeal and talents of dedicated women.

### C. The Christian and Society

The headship principle is equally valid in society, since this principle is part of God's unchanging will for men and women in their relationships with one another. The Bible, however, does not make direct application of the headship principle in society as it does in marriage and the church. For that reason we need to avoid making applications that may lead us to say more than Scripture says. There is no scriptural mandate or model, for example, asserting that a Christian woman may never hold a position of leadership in secular society. Nor do Christian men have biblical warrant to assume that they dare never be placed in a position where a woman will have authority over them in business or politics. The fourth commandment (including our responsibility toward human government) and the seventh commandment (including our responsibility for the worldly goods which God has entrusted to us) are also a part of God's Law. These aspects of the Law apply to women as well as to men.

There are other principles, however, which Christians will consider as they seek to determine God's will for their lives in this world. A Christian woman considering a position in the business world, for example, will weigh this over against the responsibilities she may

have as a wife and mother and how she can put the unique talents that God has given her to the best possible use. In short, she will strive to determine how she can best glorify her Lord and be the salt and light of the world that God would have her be.

Whatever role Christians finally choose to fill in the world, they will want to be sure that filling that role is an expression of their faith. Paul exhorts us to offer ourselves "as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (Romans 12:1). This exhortation applies to the Christian when serving the Lord as much in society as in the church and in the home. The Christian will seek to uphold and reflect the principles of God's Word at all times in every area of life.

As Christians we also want to exercise genuine love toward our fellow believers once we have determined how God would have us live our lives in society. One Christian woman may feel that, even if she were to exercise authority in society in a spirit that does not violate or militate against the headship principle, this would not be in accord with God's will for her life. In such a case she would not want to act against her Christian conscience, for to do so would not be an expression of her faith. At the same time, there may be another woman whose Christian conscience allows her to accept authority in society and still reflect to society that she accepts what Scripture says about the headship of man. In both cases they will want to remember that the way God leads them to apply his headship principle is not binding on all women.

The principle is clear and unchanging, but for the application of the principle in a society Scripture leaves a great deal to our conscientious Christian judgment. As long as the God-ordained relationship between man and woman is wholeheartedly embraced, differences of judgment in applications need not and will not disturb the church.

## CONCLUSION

The principles God sets down to direct men and women in their relationships with one another are all joy to us as Christians. These directives flow out of God's love and find their highest example in him who is the very heart of the gospel. In Christ, submitting oneself becomes an act of serving God and a way of following Christ's own pattern. In Christ, exercising headship is done in the spirit of love and is transformed into a means of serving the needs of others. What is more, we Christians can delight in God's precepts since we recognize that through them God is directing us toward our own good. As we bend our wills to conform to God's will, we will experience true joy and satisfaction.

In applying the truths God gives us for man-woman relationships, we seek to do so in a spirit of love and humility. Our concern is always: What does God say to me? In this way we follow the approach of Paul, who does not tell men how to make their wives more subject or women how to make their men show more Christ-like leadership. Paul speaks to men about the duties of men, and then he discusses with women what God asks of women. In this way he takes each person aside, as it were, and carefully instructs each one in the will of God. Paul is confident that those who love Christ will delight in doing his will when it is known to them.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the inspired writers have stated the principle of man's headship clearly and have asserted its continuing validity. And although this principle is applicable at all times and to all phases of the relationship between man and woman, the apostles in Scripture have illustrated the application of the principle in only two areas — in marriage and in the church. Obviously that leaves a great deal to sanctified Christian judgment. We who have been made free in Christ need to decide carefully in each situation how our Lord wants us apply that principle in secular society. In doing this we will remember that we are the light and salt of the earth. We will strive according to the new man to give glory to God by honoring his Word before the world.

In the New Testament the inspired writers never seek to limit the believers, but to direct them in a way that is pleasing to God. They also applaud the works of love and service which fellow believers offer to the praise of God. How blessed the church will be if men and women can recapture that spirit and spur one another on to love and good deeds! May this study encourage us to search the Scriptures to learn what God says about the special role that our Lord wants each man and each woman to fill in his world.