

Retracing Our Footsteps Home

Family Talk-Part 4

Titus 2:5

I am about to deliver a message on one of the most politically incorrect passages you'll find in all of the New Testament.

It is a passage that is for the most part avoided by the church of our generation and by many pastors and leaders as well.

In fact, several phrases that are going to appear in the text for our study today are literally loaded with emotional fireworks.

They will create an immediate inward response made up of preconceived notions and widespread opinions.

The majority of our Christian world today has chosen to either ignore the implications or explain them away or simply assign them to a time long, long ago before society grew up.

These loaded phrases I'm referring to appear in Titus chapter 2, where we left off in our study last Lord's day. And the phrases Paul will deliver to Titus refer to these young married women were to be workers at home and submissive to their husbands.

That text not only raises eyebrows outside the church, they now raise eyebrows inside the church.

The ideas presented by the Apostle Paul of submission and homemaking are viewed by the majority of our American culture as relics from some past dinosaur age when men dragged their wives around by the hair and killed elephants with clubs and ate their meat raw and not just the fish either.

Surely Paul doesn't mean this . . . or at least he certainly doesn't mean that this is for today.

The truth is, feminist thinking outside the church and now securely inside the church actually

understand what Paul means, which is one of the reasons the Bible is so troubling to them in passages like these.

And they've gone through all kinds of interpretive gymnastics to make Paul say something other than what he clearly said.

Unbelieving feminist organizations like NOW – the National Organization for Women have for decades, since 1966, been calling for what effectively constitutes the end of marriage and motherhood as we knew it.

They have demanded that corporations and the State take on more and more of the responsibility of raising children . . . they've lobbied that marriage as an institution be erased.

In fact, one feminist wrote, "we must fight the institutionalization of the oppression of women – especially the institution of marriage."ⁱ

And that's largely because they equate submission with slavery.

One member of the National Organization of Women said that "freedom for women cannot be won without the abolition of marriage."ⁱⁱ

And granted, there are plenty of men who make that conclusion easy . . . and I'll explain where it all started in our study today.

Some of you older folks may remember how for many years, there was a widespread slogan in the United States that said, "Motherhood – Just say 'No!'"ⁱⁱⁱ

One of the greatest successes and to this day the legacy of the American feminist movement was the legal right granted to a woman to end the life of her preborn baby – regardless of the fact that now even

medical science has conclusively proven that life begins for that baby long before birth.

And the successes of feminism have not made men out of boys, by the way.

Men have been all too willing to acclimate to the new female culture of autonomy and sexual freedom.

Why get married and have children anyway when you can have the physical pleasures of marriage without a covenant of fidelity; when you can have added income with two breadwinners and continue the party lifestyle, why settle down and live off one income.

And if children should ever hit the radar screen – you can either abort them or go ahead and have them, but hand them over to someone else to raise, so that your lifestyles are only minimally impacted.

Like one actress who said some time ago, “You know, I was never handicapped by children.”

Thus our culture goes along believing it has found what it really wants – freedom, individuality, autonomy and self-serving all in the name of sophistication and advancement.

You remember the story by Hans Christian Anderson where the emperor was told by two weavers that they would make him such an amazing suit of clothes – so magnificent and beautiful that only the truly pure – the truly sophisticated of heart would be able to see the clothing and fully appreciate it.

And so the Emperor agreed and paid them royally for it all. And they did nothing but spin away on imaginary shuttles and sew with imaginary thread. And leader after leader went to see their work and came back to report to the King that they indeed had seen it all and he was going to look truly magnificent in his new clothes.

And then the big day arrived when the Emperor paraded through the streets in his suit of clothing . . . and no one wanted to be viewed as less than sophisticated so they all told him how fine he looked.

Until he passed a little child who said what everyone already knew but were afraid to say lest they go against the crowd and the powers that be.

That little boy saw the naked emperor walking past him and he pointed and said, “The emperor has no clothes.”

And that was the end of the party.

Who will dare to tell the truth about abortion and risk being cast outside the world of political and moral sophistication by saying, “They are taking the lives of real human living babies.”

Who will say, “To be rid of motherhood is to abandon the foundation of family and lose the greatest potential role of influence known on planet earth.”

Who will say, “A woman who throws away the constraint and covenant of marriage is not going to be cherished by a man, she is going to be exploited by a man.”

Cohabitation – Abortion – Freedom from the rigors of motherhood and the constraints of purity – look at our new clothes.

Our society has been buying these suits of clothes in earnest for the past several decades.

And everybody’s saying, “But we feel so light on our feet . . . we feel unencumbered . . . we even feel a breeze.”

There’s a reason for that . . . our culture is clothed in nothing more than its imagination.

The truth is all the opinions and messages and propaganda of our politically correct world are not making people more contented – healthier – satisfied.

The clothing of our world is threadbare at best. In fact, if the eyes of humanity were to be opened, like Adam and Eve, they would discover they are naked.

In spite of their advertisements and endorsements and applause – our world outside of God’s order and design is indeed naked – yet trying to cover over its shame with fig leaves.

So where do you start to tell the world the truth? You start with us.

Paul told Titus to go and organize the churches on the Island of Crete. He knew that an organized, active, committed church to the gospel of Jesus Christ would infiltrate her culture, like salt – and the believers would go out and impact culture as they went around turning on the light.

And Paul is about to tell Titus to teach them to turn on the light as it relates to marriage and motherhood.

Now the world will be rather quick to jump in and say that those are cultural ideas and expressions that belong in the first century.

So before we jump into the fireworks display, would you go back to *verse 1 of chapter 2*, in the

letter to Titus and notice that Paul writes, ***“But you, Titus, speak/teach the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.”***

Would you notice that Paul did not say, “Titus, go and teach things which are fitting for the culture there on the Island of Crete; Titus, go and teach the things which are fitting for the first century.”

No – teach these things because they happen to fit alongside sound doctrine.

In other words, these are timeless truths – because we don’t tinker with doctrine – these truths are as fitting for the 21st century as they were in the 1st century.^{iv}

Now as Paul continues with the curriculum for young mothers and wives, as we’ve already studied, in **verse 4**, he will effectively deliver through Titus three more distinctive characteristics for them to model after.

And this is where it really gets interesting.

Let’s back up to **verse 3** and get a running jump into the fireworks. Paul writes at the end of **verse 3** ***that older women were to teach what is good – note that – they were teach what is actually good! So that they (the older women) may encourage them (the younger wives and mothers) to love their husbands and to love their children, (5) To be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands so that the word of God will not be dishonored.***

In the latter part of this verse then, Paul gives instruction to younger wives and mothers regarding their priority, their mentality and their humility.

1. Her Priority

Let’s note, first of all, her priority. Paul writes, ***teach them to be workers at home.***

Workers at home is a compound word combining the word for house (oikos) and work or task (ergon); literally house-worker.^v

The wife and mother then is to expend her energy at home – one author wrote, “to maintain a nest and a haven for both her husband and children.” Obviously in this context she is a mother of young children.^{vi}

Some translations render this phrase, ***“keepers at home.”***

Some would say that if she is to be the keeper at home then that means she must be kept at home.

And you get this mental image of a mother chained to the kitchen sink with six crying children at her feet.^{vii}

Paul didn’t mean that the only place a wife and mother could work was in the home – within those four walls and under that particular roof.

In fact, for them in this culture, the wife would have worked in the garden, in the barn, in the field, and with other women at times in other fields and while we’re at it, she would have worked with other women for a variety of needs in the community as well as in the church.

Study the Proverbs 31 woman and she’s hiring her own staff, going out to help the poor, bartering in the market with tradesmen, negotiating real-estate deals with developers and expand her crop rotation system and even going out to provide assistance to the poor.

Her family isn’t her only focus – but it is her primary focus.

You see, Paul isn’t so much defining the only place a wife and mother can work – what he is defining is that the home is the number one place – it is the number one priority for her energy and her work.

Paul is actually commending the roles of mother and wife and homemaker. Which was the opposite of what the Cretan culture was all about back then. Paul was just as politically incorrect then as he is now.

Being a mother and a wife and a homemaker is good!

No matter what the emperor says and all his subjects who are really sophisticated and erudite – this is good.

The home is the place where the mother virtually impacts every member of society begins to learn respect for authority, virtues, relational skills, compassion, honesty, and above all, the application of biblical truth to life.

No wonder there is so much pressure for young wives and mothers to adopt the ungodly precepts of radical feminism who believe that wives and mothers at home are second class – they’ve missed the bus. They’re really out of step.

Add to that the pressure perhaps from their own husbands who want another stream of revenue no matter what.

Add to that their own fallen nature, desires, the lists of wants that is ever growing.

The pressure is on to leave the home and pursue a career regardless of children and the home.

I read just this past week an article entitled, “The New Breadwinners” which gave the statistics of the incredible rise of mothers of young children now working full time jobs outside their home.

In 1967 the percentage of young mothers working full time outside the home was 10%. Today that number is approaching 40%.

The rise of Day Care over the past 30 years has matched the obvious alteration of the home as we once knew it. Today, I have read, there are 12 million infants and toddlers cared for at Day Care centers at the rate of nearly 40 hours a week.

Now obviously we live in an imperfect world. There are definitely reasons mothers may have to work – for a season or for several years. A single mom raising her children; divorced women who are providing for their family; women whose husbands have died or become disabled and unable to work; who may be imprisoned or who left the family and are unwilling to help them.

For wives without children or whose children are grown – they obviously have fewer obligations to keeping the home and more time available – she and her husband may agree for her to choose an outside job or choose to work in the church or a Christian organization or a hospital or a school.^{viii}

But let’s not put on our blinders and buy into the cultural full-court press for couples to raise their standard of living at the expense of their God given responsibility.

Responsibility, by the way that is really short lived . . . I mean parenting little ones especially won’t last long.

It might feel like eternity at times, right? But in a few years, it’s over.

Marsha was cleaning out a closet yesterday and she found one of the little plastic guitars our boys played with when they were toddlers – a little tiny red and yellow guitar – she showed it to me and I immediately recognized it – although I forgot which child had it. All four evidently had their turn. They played it, strummed it . . . hit each other over the head with it. Marsha said, and I agreed, we’ve gotta put this up somewhere in the house – what an absolute treasure to see and to remember.

And it’s over (snap fingers). Just like that.

I thought it was interesting that the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development – not necessarily the most biblical organization on the planet – but they have been conducting a \$100 million dollar investigation of just over 1,000 children they tracked from birth through preschool. \$100 million dollars to now track all the behavioral problems of children rose primarily through Day Care – at the level of 30-40 hours a week, by the way. And they said, and I quote, “We have found that the total number of hours a child is without a parent – primarily their mother – from birth through preschool, the number of hours matters.”^{ix}

It matters. After 100 million dollars that’s what they found out . . . I would have told them that for 1 million.

A hundred million dollars to basically conclude that Mom matters and the more she is with these young babies and preschoolers the better.

No wonder, Paul teaches, your priority is first and foremost the home – especially when it matters the most!

The numbers are staggering and they are rising – right now, 72 million women – the majority of them married with children; and yet at the same time 72 million women are in the workforce, only 5 million are stay-at-home mothers.^x

There’s another study I came across dealing with college age women. This article a couple of years ago was published in Psychology Today – so you know it’s gotta be right.

This article caught my attention as it talked about the pressure young girls are facing concerning their image. “Deprived of an internal compass, girls are competing to be everything – turning colleges into incubators for eating disorders and numerous unrealistic, self-imposed expectations.” Get this, “those who aren’t mentored by parents are not inoculated against peer pressure and wind up turning to their peers and the media for guidance. The article then quotes from an article from Harvard University which “blames a girl’s image obsession on the culture of neglect – kids are effectively raising [each other].”^{xi}

It sounds like people within our culture are now beginning to say, “The emperor has no clothes.”

While the culture continues at large to disparage homemaking and motherhood, Paul tells these believers in the 1st century and in the 21st century the opposite – he says that what we really need to do is

effectively shine a spotlight of truth on the subjects of motherhood and marriage.

What we need to do is retrace our steps . . . back home.

Paul goes on to refer to not only the priority of these young wives and mothers in the home, but their mentality.

2. Her Mentality

He adds this mentality to pursue – next *in the middle of verse 5*.

It's the word, *kindness*. It comes from a word that could be translated, "goodness". In our language, you can understand this word to refer to being "good hearted" or even, "a heart that is after what is good."

This means her desire is to do whatever good she can for the good of her children and her husband.

Her mentality is conditioned to ask herself the question – would this be good for my children; would this be good for my husband. Is this a good thing for them – is this a good activity for me – is this a good habit for me or them? What would be good to do or to say or to provide?

Her mentality is geared toward goodness.

Now Paul goes on to refer not just to her priority and her mentality, but to her humility.

3. Her Humility

He writes further in verse 5, being subject to their own husbands so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

What's interesting is that Paul uses the middle voice for this verb which means that he isn't telling men to command their wives to submit to them – this is not a theme verse for husbands. Paul is actually telling the wives that this is a voluntary submission to the leadership of their husbands.

And he's commending them to do it.

You could render this phrase – *to continually place themselves under the authority of their own husbands*.^{xii}

Paul expands on this idea in *Ephesians 5* where he refers to the wife as the church, submitting to the leadership of her husband as unto Jesus Christ.

And then Paul refers in that same chapter to the husband loving his wife as Jesus Christ loves the church.

Listen, I know from personal experience that my wife would have a much easier time of submitting to me if I acted more like Jesus.

Still, the idea of submission, in our culture, is like drinking sour milk.

But think for moment, before you throw the milk out; the truth is, everyone in a well ordered society submits to someone.

In fact, in *Ephesians 5*, we're all told to be *subject to one another in the fear of Christ*.

Children submit to parents; students submit to teachers; basketball players submit to coaches; citizens submit to town councils; and when you drive out of here – that policeman is gonna wave his hand at you and you are gonna submit to him.

And it will have nothing to do with what kind of person he is – you're not gonna roll down your window and say, "Why should I follow your direction – I'm the one that's just been to church!"

Your obedience doesn't have anything to do with who he is, it has to do with what kind of authority he's been given.

And by the way, authority isn't a privilege to be exploited to build up your ego – it is a responsibility to be carried out for the benefit of those under your care.^{xiii}

And authority is part of God's arrangement for all of life.

According to God's design, the wife is under the authority of her husband; the husband is under the authority of the elders of the church, along with singles and widows and young people and everyone else; the elders are under the authority of Jesus Christ and even Jesus Christ willingly submits to the authority of God the Father.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3)*

Part of the problem is that this concept of headship and submission runs counter culture to everything women may have been raised to believe – which is why Titus needed older women to practically teach how this worked for women as new believers in Christ.

Part of the problem in our culture today is that "equality" and "equal rights" have become the buzzword of our generation.

And the trouble with the word *equality* is that it can be deceptive, depending on who's using the word.

Erwin Lutzer points out in one of his books on this issue that feminists have extended the definition of equality beyond equal treatment and equal value to equal roles for men and women; that is, the place of women should be interchangeable with that of men. Whatever men do, women should be free to do and all gender based roles should be abolished.^{xxiv}

Even the church now is growing more and more divided on whether or not women can preach or pastor – surely they have equal rights to the highest level of authority in the church.

Aren't we all equal?

Yes, we are equal in our essence – we are both male and female made in the image of God. We are both equal in our salvation and our individual priesthood before God – that is, we can both go to God directly in prayer and worship. And we are equal in our accountability before God one day.

Adam won't be there saying, "It was the woman." And the woman won't be saying, "It was that snake."

We will be entirely and individually accountable to God.

But equality in essence does not mean equality in authority or function.

And what we've now inherited from 40 years of worldly feminism and about a decade of evangelical feminism is not only the loss of God ordained structure for the home, the family and now the church, but a tragic failure to glory in the distinctions of men and women and to find satisfaction and contentment in what God created and ordered.

The lines are all blurred and turned upside down.

But you need to understand that the problem isn't just the past 40 years. It really began in the Garden of Eden – and it's just repackaged over the centuries in a variety of forms.

Both Adam and Eve were made in God's image – Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall of Adam and Eve in sin – in fact, it wasn't until Adam ate the fruit that their eyes were opened to their shame. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles were ordained by God as part of the created order – which means they echo in every human heart.^{xv}

But the fall of man in sin introduced distortions in marriage and every other relationship.

Part of the curse God pronounced on Adam and Eve had to do with their own relationship and every marriage that would come after them.

Before they were exiled from the Garden, God told Eve that part of her now fallen nature would be this *desire for her husband (Genesis 3:16)*. That phrase is repeated in the next chapter, which provides clarity as God warns Cain that *sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you and you must master it (Genesis 4:7)*.

In other words, sin wants to control your life – it wants to dominate and manipulate your heart, but you must master it.

So God is telling Eve and the daughters of Eve after her, which includes every woman in here, that women will struggle in their fallen nature with a desire that will no longer willingly respond to the leadership of men – and especially her husband – but her desire will be to manipulate and dominate her world and especially her husband.

And then God says to Adam in that same text, before Adam is exiled with his wife – Genesis 3:16 – Adam, you will rule over Eve.

In other words, Adam's default desire will no longer be to provide loving nurturing leadership, but exploitation and self-centered, self-promoting, self-pleasing rule over the woman.

God created Eve to be at Adam's side, but Adam is now gonna have the natural fallen desire to put her under his feet.

And the woman is gonna to do her utmost to not just get back to Adam's side, but rule over his head.

So now comes a new body of believers . . . a new dispensation of grace . . . what about marriage now? What about men and women now? That was the Old Testament . . . what about now?

Paul says, "Titus, teach the older women to teach the younger women that what the gospel does is return you to the kind of relationship God intended before the fall of mankind into sin."

Man picks up the woman from the dust under his feet and places her at his side and lovingly leads her and cares for her and provides for her she lovingly serves him and respects him and follows him.

This is the restoration of relationships . . . this is the restoration of the church and the home.

Where the distinctive and the God ordained roles are not diminished or twisted or denied, but honored and exalted and enhanced.

It's a return back to the original home that God intended.

-Where men are men and women are women.

-Where men are superior to women in being men.

-Where women are superior to men in being women.

And the differences and nuances and distinctives are enhanced and enjoyed and revealed in as we honor our Creator.

Our 24 year old daughter is currently serving as a missionary in Santiago, Chile, teaching 5 year olds in a Christian academy.

On her blog this week she posted the distinctives that she's observed between these little boys and little girls. The distinctives have become more apparent no doubt because she's in a different culture – but the distinctives are transcultural – they are designed by our creator – in general terms these differences marked my daughter and she cataloged these comments – which I've edited for time sake:

Candace wrote:

Boys only want to color pictures of superhero's and if it isn't a super hero, it's a dog or big scary animal.

Girls only want to color pictures of castles, princesses, flowers, and rainbows

Boys dodge my hugs but pick me endless amounts of flowers

Girls pick flowers to keep for themselves, but they hug me throughout the day

Boys take their school work seriously as a competition

Girls want to offer help to whomever needs it (often times when they are not supposed to look at each other's papers, but wanna help each other, which made the Assessment Tests we took this week really interesting!

Boys flex in the bathroom mirror and try jumping the farthest off the bench as possible

Girls: Smile and giggle into the mirror, and use the bench for twirling

Boys want to play ball with the older boys on the playground, and truly believe they can keep up

Girls hover over the swing set not giving a care to the loud ball game going on a few feet away

Boys always want to be first and fastest

Girls hold hands and walk together

Boys play in the dirt on the playground and always have to be asked to clean up.

Girls play with the dirt on the playground and volunteer to wash up after recess

While playing at their play center inside the classroom, the boys always go for the big cars and trucks and make car sounds and rail road tracks out of anything they can find.

The girls find the princess and the prince and the big mini-van and while the boys are creating rail road tracks and battle grounds, the girls are rearranging the insides of the doll houses.

Boys stick with the same thing for maybe 10 minutes and are bored and ready to conquer something different

Girls could do the same activity the entire afternoon – perfecting or changing it up, the entire afternoon.

Boys tell me that I'm pretty

Girls ask me why I'm not married

Why are they, in general terms, that way?

Because of the One who made them that way. In general terms – there are obvious distinctions.

And I'm speaking in general terms. I know men who can arrange flowers and I know some girls who could beat the socks off the fellas in basketball. I grew up next to a girl named Susan – from toddlers through High school. And on a rainy day, you'd find me as a teenager in her garage, playing Barbies

I was fascinated by all car doors that opened and closets with little hangars – it was so creative. I just didn't want anyone to know – and I've kept it a secret until today.

Culture and fallen mankind will blur the lines and remake the order that God has arranged for our benefit and well-being.

And when we, the church, follow God's arrangement, Paul tells Titus at the *end of verse 5, the world will not be able to dishonor my word* – which includes my name – my plan – my redemption, my glory, my purposes for mankind.

The German philosopher Heinrich Heine challenged the church when he said in the 19th century, "Show me your redeemed life and I might be inclined to believe in your Redeemer."^{xvi}

The world is watching – that's Paul's point.

If we don't strive to live like this, the world will *dishonor God's word* – in other words, if the Christians don't care about His word, if we don't follow His word, if we deny and disobey and rearrange the order of His creation, why shouldn't they?

But we as Christians love the assembly, because of the unity of our spirit and the joy of worship and the reminders of this kind of redeemed priority and redeemed mentality and redeemed humility – for men and women alike.

So we all, beloved, are once again encouraged to submit to the Spirit of God who pull us and prods us and prompts us and pursues us back to God's created design . . . by His strength we literally retrace our steps back home.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 6/03/2012 by Stephen Davey.

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- xii Ray, p. 168
- xiii Adapted from the Danvers Statement of Faith
- xiv Lutzer, p. 89
- xv Notes from Raymond Ortland
- xvi MacArthur, p. 88