

Bible blether

Let us sing our first hymn 708 To God be the glory

The role of women in biblical times

Proverbs 31:10

A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.¹¹ Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.¹² She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.¹³ She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.¹⁴ She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.¹⁵ She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.¹⁷ She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.¹⁸ She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.¹⁹ In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.²⁰ She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.²¹ When it snows, she has no fear

a Verses 10-31 are an acrostic, each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.
²² She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine
linen and purple. ²³ Her husband is respected at the city
gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the
land. ²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells them, and
supplies the merchants with sashes. ²⁵ She is clothed
with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to
come. ²⁶ She speaks with wisdom, and faithful
instruction is on her tongue. ²⁷ She watches over the
affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of
idleness. ²⁸ Her children arise and call her blessed; her
husband also, and he praises her: ²⁹ “Many women do
noble things, but you surpass them all.” ³⁰ Charm is
deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who
fears the Lord is to be praised. ³¹ Give her the reward
she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the
city gate.

There is no way for us to understand this text in our
modern day setting... So let us look at the position of
women in the Old Testament times.

- ❖ In Old Testament times it was a patriarchal system and women had to obey their husbands. The men were in charge of everything.
- ❖ A woman called her husband “master” or “lord” – just like a slave would address his master.
- ❖ A Woman was regarded (as) the possession of a man just like his house, slaves and animals.
- ❖ A man could reject his wife, although she had no right to do the same. She could not ask for a divorce.
- ❖ A woman could not inherit from her husband. Daughters could only inherit in the absence of brothers.
- ❖ A vow from a woman was only valid if/when her dad or husband could affirm it.
- ❖ A Man was not allowed to sell his wife, only his slaves and daughters.
- ❖ While the men hunted and did their business at the marketplaces, the women had to stay home washing and cleaning it!
- ❖ She was responsible looking after the animals, working in the lands, cooked the meals, made clothes, to attend to the work of spinning and to bring water from the well. She earned a lot of status, when the work was done to a high standard.
- ❖ We read about a few women that gained recognition such as: **Miriam**, the sister of Moses and Aaron (Ex 15:20–21), was a prophetess, musician, and national leader (Nm 12). **Deborah and Jael** who were regarded as heroes. **Athaliah** was queen consort of Judah as the wife of King Jehoram, and later queen regnant for six years. **Huldah**, a prophetess; the wife of Shallum was consulted regarding the “book of the law” discovered by the high priest Hilkiah (2 Kings 22:14–20; 2 Chr. 34:22–28). **Ruth and Esther** who played a vital role in the survival of the people of Israel.
- ❖ Respect increased for a woman after she gave birth to her first son. It also brought her favour from her husband. Her children had to obey her and respect her like in Proverbs 31:10-31.
- ❖ Children are commanded to respect their parents – mother and father on the same level according to the Torah.

Meaning:

To us this portrayal of women sounds so unfair. But we need to remember that it was different times. Women were not treated badly; in fact men had the responsibility to look after their wives. The king of the land as the representative of God on earth had the responsibility to look after all the women who did not have husbands. He also had to look after the poor, the fatherless children and the widows. It is clear that all through the Old Testament times, women and men had different roles to play. Both were highly respected for fulfilling their roles to a high standard. God wanted the same for everybody.

- ❖ Things changed dramatically in New Testament times.
- ❖ Jesus regarded men and women as equal.
- ❖ Women had no right to speak to men in public – Jesus talked to a Samaritan, gentile woman at the well. And by her talking to him she leads her nation to redemption!
- ❖ Jesus allowed a woman with the flow of blood to touch him and at the same time healed her.
- ❖ Mary, the sister of Lazarus sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to him like a true disciple while her sister Martha was doing her duties in the house. Jesus preferred Mary!
- ❖ Jesus rescues a woman that was caught with adultery by inviting those who wanted to stone her to death to throw the first stone if they have done no wrong.
- ❖ Jesus was cared for by women – everywhere He went.

Meaning:

Jesus did not obey the rules of his society. Love for God and for the neighbour was far more important than anything else. And he regarded women as his neighbour!

1 Timothy 2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and

holiness. ³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time. ⁷ And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles. ⁸ I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. ⁹ I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰ but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. ¹¹ A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. ¹⁵ But women^a

a Greek *she*

will be saved^b through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

- The apostle Paul retrieved to the Old Testament views of women.
- Although he regarded men and women as equals – he emphasized their different roles.
- Women should wear hats and have no say during worship. But we must remember that this was only a way to keep order at the services because services were mostly chaotic.

What do we learn from all this?

- ❖ God created men and women equally – to support one another, each in their different roles. They are different and should complement each other. The one is not the boss of the other.
- ❖ Every human being on earth has its own talents and gifts and it must be used to the benefit of all people.
- ❖ The only thing that really matters is to live responsibly as a child of God – irrespective of gender/race/sexuality.
- ❖ Everyone is included in the saving plan of God.

Let us sing now MP 450 I was sinking deep in sin

Can I ask you Brenda to pray for us please?

Let us sing now our final hymn MSP 59 Blessed assurance

Let us say the peace together...

^b Or *restored*