

This Teaching Is Dangerous for Women

In this post, I want to explore the ways this wrong teaching can affect women practically. A major concern is that wifely submission in marriage is not actually helped by teaching the woman reflecting the church as her ultimate thing. I've sat under such teaching, and I found it demoralizing, not inspiring, to think that the best image I have to go to as a woman is the church, especially if you know anything about the church according to Scripture.

I am the church, but I am the Church that is being conformed to the image of Christ. If you follow a reformed hermeneutic for understanding Scripture, the other husband/wife team mirroring Christ and the church is Hosea and Gomer. Their story is beautiful beyond measure, giving us a picture of God's faithful pursuit of His wayward bride. But it does not give an inspiring image of the church's role in this relationship.

When I couple Ephesians 5's teaching with Genesis 1 and 2, that I am bearing out God's image in all of my life, I am inspired toward a better, noble goal. Peter does this in 1 Peter 2-3. He calls wives to look to Jesus as their example during hard seasons in marriage. Holding both of these Scriptures, Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 2-3, in conjunction with Genesis 1-2 on the teaching of wifely submission in marriage gives us a balanced understanding of and inspiration for what God is calling us to.

We need to use all the pictures the Bible gives us along with the essence of our creation from Genesis 1-2. Singular focus on one of these pictures without the context of the others creates a skewed view of the issue. Though we ARE the Church, we are created to image God. The church's glory is that God is

working in Her to make Her glorious in Him. Her glory is best seen when, as the arms and legs to Jesus' head, she acts in conjunction with her identity in Him. That is an inspiring calling!

While women weren't created to image the church, there is still much of value to learn from Ephesians 5's metaphor on the husband/wife relationship in Christ. What do marriages between husbands and wives that are IN CHRIST (Eph. 4:15) and IMITATORS OF GOD (Eph. 5:1) look like? In that context, Ephesians 5 is inspiring to think through. Humility. Love. Self-sacrifice. Laying down of your rights. When our language is correct in how we label a woman's identity as image-bearer of God, we can then learn from this metaphor that illustrates a practical piece of the puzzle.

Another major concern with this wrong teaching on a woman's identity is that women often believe that their only opportunity for acting out their created purpose is with a husband. According to the wording in *True Woman 101* on a woman's created purpose, the singular place for a woman to live out her purposes in God's kingdom as He intended is in marriage. This is a demoralizing and frustrating teaching for women who are not married. Also, this idea does not fit the narrative of Scripture. Hannah, Esther, Ruth, Rahab, Deborah, Phoebe, Priscilla, Lydia, Mary of Bethany, etc.

If you allow God's example of ezer from the Old Testament to flesh out His created purposes for women, you start to recognize it in women commended in Scripture, married or single, with or without children, as they live out God's image-bearing purposes in their lives.

Furthermore, extrapolations of this wrong teaching lead to patriarchy and abuse. This is so obvious I don't want to write more on this. Simply put, bad Bible interpretation leads to bad practice by those in power every single time. It will frustrate some that I don't explore this further.

Maybe this is the most important reason in your mind to draw attention to this wrong teaching from Scripture. But I have a more important issue in my head, and I will end focusing on what I think is THE reason to be concerned about this teaching.

It codifies sloppy Bible interpretation, and this is bad for all of us.

As I said in my first post on *True Woman 101*, I have a high standard for what constitutes an accurate handling of the Word. I believe that standard is best held through self-examination and a willingness to correct when confronted with contradictory Scripture. I have had to correct myself personally in light of that standard many times, usually when another confronts me with Scripture I am misunderstanding or a passage I have missed altogether. It's humbling to have to correct yourself. But it's right nonetheless, and for the integrity of the Scriptures, it's absolutely necessary.

I know this concern of mine isn't as important to others as it is to me. But of everything else listed here, this is the one that bothers me most. Sure, this teaching hurts women when practically applied, and that is a big problem. But this teaching is also just wrong! It is the result of inaccurately handling the Word of God. THAT'S what hurts women!

My major concern for women coming out of a *True Woman 101* study is not what they think of themselves but how they understand Scripture. If a woman can accurately handle Scripture, she'll eventually get her identity in Christ. This may be an unpopular focus I have, but I stand by it.

I've staked my ministry on the belief that the Bible when accurately handled is good for women, that it is LIFE-GIVING for women. Teach women to handle the Word accurately. Do it ourselves in our studies and teaching. Elders and pastors, encourage it and oversee it. When we do that, a whole lot of

other issues in the body of Christ concerning gender suddenly fall into place.

*Adapted from **Wendy Alsup's** blog, . Wendy has authored three books including By His Wounds You Are Healed: How the Message of Ephesians Transforms a Woman's Identity. She is also a wife, mom and college math teacher who loves ministering to women.*