

Home: The Woman's Place

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Home – The Woman's Place

The place of the woman is a hotly debated issue. It is also an important issue, because everybody on earth is affected by the women and the part these women play in their lives. Henri F. Amiel said, "...Woman is the salvation or destruction of the family. She carries its destinies in the folds of her mantle."¹ The woman not only holds the fate of the family in her hand, but history also rests in her arms. The babies born to mothers all over the world today will one day make history.²

So, we see the need for each of us to decide whether the place of the woman is at home, or if it is of no importance if she decides to leave the home.

I think it will be well worth our while to remember, while we look at this concern, that "Where the heart is willing it will find a thousand ways, but where it is unwilling it will find a thousand excuses."³

The reasons women give for leaving the home are many, and most of them are superficially convincing. The majority of girls and young women today are being raised to believe these excuses. One of these erroneous reasons for leaving the home is that women can not be useful or enjoy the feelings of being beneficial if they stay at home.⁴ Another favorite excuse is that it would be a waste of her life, education, and mental and physical abilities for woman to spend her life at home.⁵ Women, who need a good reason to stay away from home, will often bring their health into the picture. These women have heard stories or rumors of stay-at-home women suffering from bad health, mental and physical, due to the hard work, never ending routines, and lack of mental stimulus, that are said to be a part of spending long periods of time in the home.⁶

Working women also need to explain why they leave their families. Working wives will say, "My husband is out of the home during the day. I don't need to stay there." Working mothers will explain that their children need to learn to be "independent,"⁷ or that someone else can do a fine job of raising their children and caring for their home.⁸ There are a fraction of working women that believe that their families really need them. They think that spending the time before and after work hours with their families is enough to satisfy their needs.⁹ Most working mothers will agree with Brenda Hunter, a former feminist, when she said, "I believed sincerely that

they (her children) would not be hurt as I pursued personal fulfillment through my teaching career.”¹⁰

The most popular excuse used by working women is the need for the money. By making money, they believe they can provide their families with a better lifestyle and their children with so many more opportunities. Unfortunately society has slowly but surely changed from valuing a woman for what she is to measuring her value by what she earns.¹¹

Putting into practice the belief, that women should work out of the home, has an affect on ourselves, other people, homes, society, and history. When we look at the results of women working out of the home, it is easy to think of only her, the woman. To be fair we need to consider not only her but also those whom her absence affects.¹²

We will look at her first. At first glance it seems the most important result of a woman working out of the home is that she has more money. Theoretically she should be able to have new clothes, new carpets, more modern furniture, and anything else she wants. We often overlook the fact that working women also have more bills to pay, such as for a babysitter, someone to wash and iron clothes, and maybe somebody to clean her house.¹³ Added money has also opened the door for women to smoke, drink wine and other strong drinks, and eat out a lot more than stay-at-home women. All of these things can be harmful to the health.¹⁴ A result of these open doors is that the tally of alcoholic women has risen rapidly, lung cancer is becoming more common in women, more women are committing suicide, and the percentage of women entangled in major crimes has grown significantly.¹⁵ Working out of the home has also caused many women to be unfaithful to their husbands.¹⁶ If we stop and look around us we can all see the effect unfaithfulness has on homes and lives. Outside work has also failed to give women an escape from routines and demands, that are linked to staying at home. Outside jobs have turned women into machines that fulfill their daily production quota.¹⁷ Feminists often excuse themselves for working out of the home by saying that staying at home causes depression. Maggie Scarf, who wrote the book Unfinished Business, has canceled out this excuse. Based on the findings of the Yale Depression Unit, she says that wives working out of the home and wives working in the home are equally susceptible to being depressed. It is interesting to note that she also found that the husbands of working wives are more vulnerable to depression, than the husbands of homemakers.¹⁸ It appears to me that the work place offers a golden dream to women, but this dream is not reality.

Working out of the home will even rob a woman of peace of mind. Guilt, worry, and unhappiness usually follow a working woman. No matter what working women say about how it is right to leave their homes and families, most of them contend with guilt. As one author put it, “The struggle here is clearly internal. It is themselves they seek to convince of the purity of their motives, the righteousness of their actions, while all their instincts tell them that they are doing something wrong.”¹⁹ Happiness is what most working women profess, but from their lives the opposite can often be seen. One working mother confessed, “It’s hard to be happy with my life when I’m so concerned about my children.”²⁰ Even if these women don’t have children, it is

hard for them to be truly happy when they aren't doing what they were made to do. Along with guilt and unhappiness, worry hounds the working women, especially mothers. One converted feminist said, "I found it hard to forget about her (my baby) and turn all my energies in the direction of work. I worried about her development and the quality of care she would receive in my absence."²¹

Some women might sacrifice their peace of mind if that was all that needed to be sacrificed to work out of the home, but we need to think of the children, that working mothers leave behind. Children of working mothers are supposed to be able to tell everything they want to tell "mommy" and ask anything they want in the few minutes she has while she wakes them up, or puts them to bed.²² With a little bit of common sense and experience, we can know that that is not possible. If a mother is going to work out of the home, she will have to give up a large amount of the time she spends with her children. A mother, who worked out of the home, said, "If you ask me what I had to give up, when I went back to work, I'd say it was that – my talks with Sally (her daughter)"²³

Working mothers also have little, if any, time to enjoy being with their children. "Most of the time I am barking orders at them because now they have more work to do around the house and are not yet as productive as they need to be," is how one working mother described her time at home.²⁴ It seems that the little bit of time that the mother is home is not very enjoyable for all involved.

When the mother leaves the home, she takes the child's security with her. A well-known author, C. S. Lewis, whose mother died before he became a teenager, defined his childhood after his mother's death like this, "With my mother's death all settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life. There was much fun, many pleasures, many stabs of Joy; but no more of the old security. It was sea and islands now; the great continent had sunk like Atlantis."²⁵ An adult woman whose father had died and whose mother worked a full time job said the main sentiment connected to her childhood was loneliness. "Even now," she says, "I remember distinctly the cold fear that enveloped me as I unlocked the front door and entered the darkened apartment." "No matter how sunny the weather outside, no matter how warm the air," she continued, "the atmosphere of our empty home was dark and forbidding."²⁶

A child is hurt by the lack of this security. Despite everything working mothers try to do to make up for their daily absences, the number of teenage suicides have increased.²⁷ One adult, who as a child her mother had worked and whose father had passed away, said, "Even though mother telephoned to inquire about my day, her call did not make me feel suddenly warmed and loved."²⁸ Finally, these children that have become "independent" often experiment with drugs and other equally dangerous things.²⁹

It appears to me that the cost of a woman working out of the home outweighs the benefits. Does making more money compensate for losing your family? Do the feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction, that the woman says she has from holding a job, make up for the feelings of fear and insecurity that her children have?

Before we can say conclusively that the woman belongs in the home, we need to determine the importance of her job in the home. Many people, women included, assume that the stay-at-home woman's job only includes the washing, ironing, fixing of meals, cleaning, and the verification that everybody is dressed decently and clean behind the ears. If this were the case, a woman could leave home as long as someone else fulfills her responsibilities in her place. However to the surprise of many, this is not reality.

The high requirements for the job depict the importance of the position. The place of the woman can only be filled by the woman, and not just any woman.³⁰ The wisest man of all times, Solomon, said that the price of the virtuous woman is far above rubies.³¹ Virtuous women are rare, but to stay at home and do her job well, a woman must be virtuous. Unlike the secretary, a homemaker has to be understanding twenty-four hours a day. A stay-at-home woman has to be truly loving from sunrise to sunrise instead of from eight in the morning to six at night, with an hour off for lunch. It is also of vital importance that the domestic woman be wise.³² As the Bible says, "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands."³³ Also in the Bible, Titus chapter two verses four and five gives us a list of what God expects a woman to be. It says that the older women are to teach the younger women to be "sober (sober in mind; moderate³⁴), to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet (self-controlled; temperate³⁵), chaste (clean; innocent, pure³⁶), keepers at home (a stayer at home; domestically inclined³⁷), good, obedient to their own husbands..."³⁸ As you can probably tell, these qualities are not easy to obtain or maintain. Last but not least, a woman must be courageous to fulfill her position in the home. It takes courage not only to stay home and face the problems that arise there, but it takes courage, lots of it, to admit publicly that you are a homemaker.³⁹ As we have seen, the requirements for the woman's place in the home are much higher than the requirements for any job outside her home.⁴⁰

Now we come back to the question of is the woman's place in the home really important? The requirements for the job say it is important, but is the job itself really important? The Bible says it is. Not everyone realizes that the woman's position in the home has existed since before the fall of man. Before sin came into the world, God said, "it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an helpmeet for him."⁴¹ Genesis goes on to recount how the woman was made to fit man's needs. So, the position of the woman in the home is not punishment for a sin she committed.⁴²

History shows us that what goes on in the home makes a difference. Jonathan Edwards, who was a Godly man, with his wife made a Godly home. Of the estimated one thousand three hundred ninety-four people of the four generations after Mr. and Mrs. Edwards, fourteen were college professors, one hundred were Gospel ministers, sixty practiced medicine, sixty were authors and editors, and more than one hundred of them turned out to be lawyers and judges. Contrast that family and its descendants with the family of a well-known atheist, who lived at about the same time as Jonathan Edwards. Of the one thousand two hundred people produced in the four generations following this God denying man and his wife, four hundred of them wrecked themselves physically, three hundred ten became paupers, one hundred fifty were criminals, and

seven committed murder.⁴³ Although the woman is not totally responsible for what goes on in the home and how the children are raised, there are many cases where the children are raised to fear God even though the man of the house is ungodly.

The world may try to belittle the importance of the home, but history reveals the great influence the home has on the world.

The domestic woman spends a lot of her time in the home, and she can set the stage for a lot that happens there. Along with all the manual work that goes into keeping a home, the woman can nurture good physical and mental health in her family. Diet, exercise, and rest all contribute to a person's well being, and the woman does a lot to determine what kind of diet, how much rest, and the amount of exercise her family receives. The homemaker can also maintain a healthy atmosphere to boost good mental health. A moderate dose of humor, a right outlook on life, and good values in the home direct how people think and act in and out of the home. It will help all involved, if the woman of the house has a listening ear, a helpful and patient attitude, words of encouragement, and educational criticism in her bag of tools.⁴⁴ What the home is like is important, because people usually reflect the homes they live in.

Children are an important part of many homes, and the influence a mother has on her offspring is sometimes overlooked. It can be said that children are mirrors reflecting their mothers and the home.⁴⁵ Abraham Lincoln is renown for his desire to read, and for the extent he would go to satisfy this desire. Few people realize that behind this desire was a mother, who covered miles to get a book for him.⁴⁶ It has been said in recent history that "...the influence which is exerted upon the mind during the first eight or ten years of existence, in a great degree guides the destinies of that mind for time and eternity."⁴⁷ Thomas A. Edison realized that at least to some extent, when he said, "My mother was the making of me."⁴⁸ Lamartine, a poet from France, also acknowledged the influence his mother had on him. "My education was wholly centered in the glance, more or less serene, and the smile, more or less open, of my mother. The reins of my heart were in her hand... I drank deep, above all, from my mother's mind; I read through her eyes; I felt through her impressions; I lived through her life" he said.⁴⁹ Just as a mother can influence a child for good, she can influence it for worse. It would be interesting to do a study on criminals and their mothers. As a mother cares for her children bonds develop, the lack of these bonds will often cause depression or a greater tendency toward drugs, etc... That is another way working mothers have a negative influence on their children.

A baby sitter might be able to care for the physical needs of a child, but children need more than food, clothing, and a place to sleep.⁵¹ Children need security. Mothers are a major source of this security. A working mother, who was convicted of the need to stay home, said, "From years of growing, reading, and listening to my children, I have come to see just how much I contribute to their feelings of security and well-being."⁵² Children, also, need to learn about life.⁵³ By word and by deed, a mother can teach her children a variety of things, such as thankfulness and truthfulness. Faith is another long-lasting present that a mother can give a child;⁵⁴ like Eunice gave to her son, Timothy.⁵⁵

The Bible says, "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones."⁵⁶ From this we see that the woman of the house without a doubt also affects her husband. She can wreck his life and job like Jezebel and Delilah of old times and so many women today. She can destroy him or she can be the helpmeet she is meant to be. Sarah spent a lifetime helping her husband to serve God and man.⁵⁷ Priscilla helped her husband too, by, among other things, helping him make tents.⁵⁸ Even if you can't help your husband make tents, you can help him by not complaining, giving him a home to look forward to coming home to, by being there when he needs you, and by the wise use of finances.⁵⁹ Henri F. Amiel was truthful when he said the woman carries the destiny of the family, the husband and children, "in the folds of her mantle."¹

Staying at home is not easy. The woman pays a price to stay at home. One of the greatest things a woman has to give up, when she becomes a homemaker, is thanks.⁶⁰ Our mothers were not joking when they said, "Housework is something nobody notices; unless it isn't done." Just as housework doesn't bring the woman thanks, it doesn't bring her glory either. I believe it gives God glory, though, and that should be our goal in life.⁶¹ Another thing the woman, who stays at home, has to do without is society's approval. The author of Where Have All the Mothers Gone? said it very nicely when she wrote, "While the career mother has society's approbation, the stay-at-home mother has society's pity and contempt."⁶² Along with the disapproval of society, a woman's relatives and/or friends might think her decision to stay at home is wrong.⁶³ It definitely makes life harder, when those we love strongly disagree with a major decision.

There are other sacrifices that a homemaker must also make. A homemaker must sacrifice herself. The life of a homemaker is demanding.⁶⁴ The wife and mother must be ready to give up her time alone, a few more hours of sleep, and other things she would like to do to meet the needs of her family. Along with giving of herself, the stay-at-home woman may also be called upon to give up her old family and friends. The old family and friends should not be considered more important than the housewife's new family and its needs.⁶⁵ As she helps her husband with the finances, the wife may have to abandon or post-pone her dreams of crystal and gold, and all the conveniences she would like to have.⁶⁶ Do these sacrifices seem small to you, when you consider the importance of the woman's place in the home?

The benefits of a woman staying at home are not necessarily material, but they are valuable. Productivity is one of the benefits. The woman will be most productive only as she does what she was made to do.⁶⁷ Just like a little red wagon in a lake, the woman is out of place in the work place. When everybody fulfills his or her position in the home, there is peace in the home.⁶⁸ Peace is valuable, because it cannot be bought with all the money a woman can make out of the home. Staying at home, in contrast to working out of the home, can improve a woman's character to a greater extent. The home is a good place to learn patience, perseverance, self-control, longsuffering, gentleness, and how to arrange priorities.⁶⁹ We can never have too much of these qualities. Best of all when a Christian woman stays at home, she is serving her Lord and being a good testimony for Him.⁷⁰ For the mother, who sacrifices to stay at home and bring her children up in the strait and narrow way the Bible says, "Train up a child in the

way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”⁷¹ In old age, the knowledge of having done right is more comforting, than years of worldly approval, or tokens of worldly recognition.

There are exceptions. Death does come or the unexpected happens and the woman is left definitely or indefinitely the sole provider of the family. “I have to work out of the home,” you say. Must you really work out of the home or could you work in the home? Sewing and other handcrafts, giving music or culinary classes, etc.. are all options to be considered. Working part time, like while the children are in school, is a possibility in certain cases.⁷² It is a wise idea to prayerfully seek our priorities, before the decision is made about what kind of job to take. In what order of importance does the earning of money, the raising of children, the caring for the home, and God come?⁷³ One mother, who was the sole provider for her home, found that although she never had all her wants, if she had the right priorities, God would supply her needs, even if money seemed to be lacking.⁷⁴ It is hard to decide whether or not to work out of the home. James chapter one, verse five says, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

We have tried to see the most important pros and cons of the woman leaving or staying in the home. It is quite clear that a choice needs to be made, and priorities need to be set. The choice is not complicated. This hotly debated issue can be set down in black and white, right and wrong, Biblical and worldly. There are no shades of gray. You cannot serve God and man. Remember what we do today does affect the future.

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”
II Peter 3:18

Note to unmarried young women like me: It would be easy to say, “Well, I’m not married, so I don’t have to worry about that stuff.” It is true that we don’t have our own homes to care for yet, but we can be getting ourselves ready to care for them. A young woman, who likes to be out and about right now, will like to be out and about after she is married. An unsubmitive young woman will be an unsubmitive wife. There isn’t a big bang during the wedding, that immediately makes us everything we should be.

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