

Truth and Reason

Speaking the Words of Truth and Reason ♦ Acts 26:25

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The Bible's Perspective on Women Working

"Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain." (Prov. 31:10-11)

THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF misunderstanding and, I am afraid, misrepresentation of what the Bible teaches about a woman working. Most of the misunderstanding and controversy is centered around whether a woman should work outside the home.

The Bible contains many examples of women working at home within the family relationship— even performing tasks which are normally thought of as "man's work." These examples demonstrate that work is honorable for wives and mothers. There is Rebekah drawing water (Gen. 24:16); Rachel watering and feeding

sheep (Gen. 29:6-9); Ruth gleaning in the field (Ruth 2:17); the Samaritan woman drawing water (John 4:17); Martha fixing a meal for guests (Luke 10:40); and the virtuous wife performing a number of different tasks (Prov. 31:10-31).

Scripture also has examples of women working at jobs other than domestic duties at home. Lydia was a business woman and possibly a traveling saleswoman (Acts 16:14). Those who advocate infant baptism, even though they have no right to do so, try to use her as proof of their doctrine since her household was baptized by assuming she was married and had children who were babies with her in Philippi. Sometimes my brethren go to the opposite extreme, again without any right to do so, and assume she was not married and had no children in order to prove that

it was all right for her to work outside the home.

Assumptions are always dangerous.

Priscilla, who is always portrayed as a woman who was spiritually-minded, had, as did her husband, a tent-making business (Acts 18:1-3).

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We are not told whether this was done at home, whether she had children or whether she and her husband worked together, all of which are assumed by those who would make a hard, fast rule against women working outside the home.

The virtuous woman (Prov. 31:10-31) is an example of the ideal wife — a woman who certainly had a husband and children. She speculated in real estate and operated her own linen garment business. Though she is found in the Old Testament, her example shows she was able to do these things without neglecting the responsibilities of her home.

What Does Scripture Say?

The Bible never condemns women for working outside the home. Scripture stops short of saying a woman cannot take a job outside the home. It would have been easy for the Holy Spirit to have said so, easier, in fact, than what He did say. But since God's word stops short of saying it, we must stop there too. We cannot make any sort of blanket condemnation — we must consider all circumstances.

The objection raised most

often to this view is Titus 2:5 where it says women are to be

One must realize that a woman who chooses to marry has the home and the work in it as her primary responsibility. While it is not the only thing she is to do, her first loyalty in the physical realm is to her husband and family. Whatever she does, she must not neglect her home responsibilities.

“keepers at home.” But “keepers at home” does not mean “keep at home.” This phrase is variously translated as “workers at home” (ASV) and “home-makers” (NKJV). Thayer defines it as “keeping home and taking care of household affairs” (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 442). James Macknight says it is referring to those who are “careful of their families signifies both those who keep at home, and those who take proper care of their families. In this latter

sense I understand it here, with Eisner and the Vulgate” (*Macknight on the Epistles*, p. 490). David Lipscomb, in defining the phrase, said, “That they be keepers or managers at home; keep a neat, attractive house that will make her husband and children love home. Christian women should be the best housekeepers and should be models to all who know them” (*The Gospel Advocate Commentaries Series*, Vol. V, p. 273).

Even so, the practice of women working outside the home is not without danger, problems and possibly sin. One must realize that a woman who chooses to marry has the home and the work in it as her primary responsibility. While it is not the only thing she is to do, her first loyalty in the physical realm is to her husband and family. Whatever she does, she must not neglect her home responsibilities.

Work Can Be Abused

As it is with men, work can be abused by women. Some women abuse the Biblical principle of work by being idle. What is to be the motive for staying home? Is it just to

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Book of the Month

A Study of the Books of the Bible from Truth and Reason

First and Second Kings

I. General Data

A. Names: 1 and 2 Kings.

1. These books derive their names from their subject matter—the kings of the Hebrew monarchy. Originally, they were one book.
2. “The two Books of Kings were so called because they deal with matters concerning the kings and kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Originally they formed one book, but were separated for convenience in handling and reading at the time the Septuagint Version was made.” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, p. 100)

B. Author.

1. The author of the books is unknown but both the language and the unity of purpose seem to point to a single author.
2. “An ancient tradition among the Jews assigns the authorship to Jeremiah. The author, whoever he was, makes reference to other works then in existence, such as ‘the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah’ and of Israel, and the ‘book of the acts of Solomon’ (I Kings 11:41; 14:19,29; 15:7,23,31; 16:5,14,27; etc.)” (Deal)
3. “The ‘Books of the Chronicles of the Kings’ were probably of the nature of public Archives—State-annals, that is, containing an account of the chief public events in the reign of each king, drawn up by an authorized person. With the Israelites the authorized person was probably in almost every case a Prophet. The Prophets regarded this as one of their principle duties, as we see by the examples of Isaiah (2 Chron. 26:22; Isa. 36-38), Jeremiah (chap. 39-43:7; 52), and Daniel (chap. 1-6). At the close of every reign, if not even in its course, an addition was probably made to the ‘Book of the Chronicles of the Kings’ by the prophet who held the highest position at the period.” (*Barnes Notes on the OT, I Sam.-Esther*; pp. 131-132)

C. Time span.

1. 1 Kings covers about 120 years from the close of David’s reign to the death of King Jehoshaphat of Judah.
 - a. It opens with the rising prosperity of Israel under Solomon and closes amidst the gloom of Israel’s ten tribes in decline toward their final captivity in Assyria.
 - b. Judah is also seen as a declining, sinful kingdom drifting further away from God.
2. 2 Kings covers about 434 years from the death of Ahab, king of Israel, to the Babylonian captivity.

D. Historical setting.

1. The Northern Kingdom of Israel.
 - a. It lasted from the split of the kingdom, 933 B.C., to its captivity in Assyria in 721 B.C.
 - b. Nineteen kings, all of whom were idolaters, reigned over the Northern kingdom. Not a one of them was a godly king.
 - c. The longest reign was of Jereboam II, 41 years. The shortest was that of Zimri, just 7 days.
2. Judah, the Southern Kingdom.
 - a. It lasted from 933 to 606 B.C. when the people were carried away to Babylon.
 - b. Twenty kings reigned over it—seven were good or mostly good while 13 were bad.
 - c. The longest reign was that of Manasseh, one of the most wicked of Judah’s kings—55 years. The shortest was that of Jehoiahin, another bad one, three months.
3. The work of prophets.
 - a. “During these times the prophets were very active. The kings were for the most part wicked and were unwilling to submit to the divine will. This attitude and conduct on their part called for frequent warnings and denunciations from the prophets. They spoke for Jehovah and tried to stir up the conscience of the nation. Both the non-writing and writing prophets were active, and did nearly all their work during the period here set forth...They prophesied the fall of the nation and led the people to look for the glory of Israel through a coming Messiah.” (J.B. Tidwell, *The Bible Book by Book*, p. 80)

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- b. Some of the prophets evidently had very close associations with kings, keeping them abreast of God's will for them (cf. Deut. 17:14-20) and keeping records of the actions of those kings which affected the nation religiously. Many such written sources are mentioned in Scripture (1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 26:22).

E. Purposes.

1. "There seems to be at least a twofold purpose in the books before us: first, the accurate recording of the history of Judah and Israel, providing all Hebrews a continued story of their history and the background from which they had come... "Second, throughout there is a *religious* history interwoven into this story. It is the history of the increase of godliness under some reformer, such as King Asa, and decline again during the reign of a sinful, careless king and his court, such as Ahab. Also threading through the scenes are incidents of personal piety, heroic faith, and daring action, such as those seen in the lives of Elijah and Elisha." (Deal, 100)
2. "The political changes in Israel were given in order to show the religious condition. This is shown not only by what incidents he records, but by the way he passes judgment upon the several kings as good or bad. Everywhere there is a conflict between faith and unbelief, between the worship of Jehovah and the worship of Baal. We see wicked kings who introduce false worship and righteous kings who bring about reforms and try to overthrow the false worship. Israel yields to evil and is finally cut off, but Judah repents and is restored to perpetuate the kingdom and to be the medium through which Jesus came." (Tidwell, 78-79)
3. "The book of Kings aims to carry on the history of the theocracy until its end in the Babylonian exile. The kings of Judah are judged in accordance with the promise given to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16, whereas those of the northern kingdom, all of whom are condemned, are condemned because they have continued in the sin of Jereboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin...he makes it clear that the exile is a divine chastisement." (Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 189-190)
4. "By revealing the failure of man and of human governments, 1 and 2 Kings points forward to that age when God will set up His own kingdom, with the greater Son of David as the Sovereign Head, and all nations subject to Him." (Irving Jensen, *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament*, p. 186)

II. An Outline of 1 and 2 Kings

- A. The United Kingdom Under Solomon. (1 Kings 1-11)
 1. Ascension to the throne. (chs. 1-4)
 2. Building the temple. (chs. 5-8)
 3. His peak and his downfall. (chs. 9-11)
- B. The Divided Kingdom. (1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 17)
 1. The revolt and sins of the Northern Kingdom. (1 Kings 12-16)
 2. Career of Elijah. (1 Kings 17-19)
 3. Wickedness and death of Ahab. (1 Kings 20-22)
 4. Elijah's career comes to a close. (2 Kings 1-2)
 5. Career of Elisha. (2 Kings 3-8)
 6. Dynasty of Jehu. (2 Kings 9-10)
 7. Reign of various kings. (2 Kings 11-16)
 8. Fall of Israel. (2 Kings 17)
- C. The Kingdom of Judah. (2 Kings 18-25)
 1. Hezekiah. (chs. 18-20)
 2. Manasseh. (21:1-18)
 3. Amon. (21:19-26)
 4. Josiah. (22:1 - 23:30)
 5. Jehoahaz. (23:31-35)
 6. Jehoiakim. (23:36 - 24:7)
 7. Jehoiachin. (24:8-17; 25:27-30)
 8. Zedekiah. (24:18 - 25:26) The fall of Judah.

III. The Lessons of 1 and 2 Kings

- A. 1 Kings.
 1. The value of righteousness.
 - a. God's people are expected to keep His commandments. There is blessing in so doing and consequences in failure.
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- b. The book opens with a father's advice to his young son to be righteous and follow God (2:2-4a) but unrighteousness becomes the dominant theme in most of the characters in Israel's remaining Biblical history.
 2. The tragedy of believing a lie (ch. 13).
 - a. The young prophet was courageous (vv. 1-3), free from personal ambition (v. 7), one who refused to be rewarded for simply doing his duty (v. 7) but he believed a lie, disobeyed God and suffered the consequences (vv. 20-22).
 - b. It does make a difference what we believe in religion (Prov. 16:25; Acts 26:29).
 - c. It is possible to believe a lie without consequences (e.g., believing the earth is flat). But to believe a lie which leads to disobedience to God is sin.
 3. Elijah and total commitment (ch. 18).
 - a. Israel had grown weary in worshiping God and sought more variety in their religion.
 - b. Elijah appears on the scene and preaches a sermon that was clear and to the point saying that the sin of the people had not been in rejecting the worship of God but in trying to worship both God and Baal.
 - c. God deserves all our allegiance (Matt. 6:24; 12:30; Josh. 24:15; Jas. 4:4; Rev. 3:15).
 4. Even great servants of God become discouraged (ch. 19).
 - a. Despite his victories Elijah despaired even of life (v. 4), was physically exhausted (vv. 1-4), was afraid (v. 3), thought himself a failure, and felt a lack of support (v. 10).
 - b. Discouragement is a great tool of Satan. He knows that if he cannot affect you with worldly enticements, false doctrine, or persecution, if he can discourage you he has won the battle.
 5. The power of influence.
 - a. For evil: the wives of Solomon (1 Cor. 15:33), Jeroboam (14:16), and Jezebel.
 - b. For good: David, Asa, and Jehoshaphat (15:11; 22:41,43).
- B. 2 Kings
1. The providence of God.
 - a. The progressive unfolding of the eternal purpose of God is seen in the preservation of Judah, even in captivity.
 - b. The royal line of David was kept constantly alive and never lost sight of despite the scattering of the Jews over much of the Babylonian empire.
 2. The inspiration of Scripture.
 - a. In 2 Kings there are continuous expressions of inspiration:
 - 1) "According to the word of Jehovah."
 - 2) "The word of Jehovah He spoke..."
 - 3) "As Jehovah has said."
 - 4) "The word of Jehovah."
 - b. 2 Kings is an illustration of 2 Timothy 3:16.
 3. The danger of reasoning without God.
 - a. Naaman's "Behold I thought..." (5:11).
 - b. We must submit our thoughts to the thoughts of God (Isa. 55:8-9).
 4. The need to do all God has commanded.
 - a. The example of Noah (Gen. 7:5) and Moses (Heb. 8:4-6; Ex. 40:16).
 - b. Note 2 Kings 21:8; 22:8,13; 23:2-3,21,24-25.
 5. Sin brings calamity and captivity.
 - a. God's promise of provision and protection was conditional.
 - b. They had not been faithful and had not heeded God's warnings (17:13-14).
 - c. Sinning despite warning brings ruin without remedy. Inexcusable wrong brings inescapable wrath (Gal. 6:7-8).
 6. The book of the Law of God is to be cherished, not misplaced (22:8). We "lose" the Book when we:
 - a. Fail to read and study it.
 - b. Fail to apply its teachings to our lives.

First and Second Kings Study Questions

1 Kings 1

1. How old was David when he died? (See 2 Sam. 5:4) What was his physical condition in his old age?
2. Who was Adonijah? What did he attempt to do? Why?
3. What action was ordered by David to put down the usurpation attempt of Adonijah and to establish the government in the hand of Solomon? How effective was it?

1 Kings 5

4. Who was Hiram? Describe his relationship with David. (cf. 2 Sam. 5:11) What is his relationship with Solomon?
5. Why did Solomon send to Hiram for help in building the temple? What did he give to Hiram in exchange for his services?

1 Kings 6-7

6. In what year did Solomon start construction of the temple? How many years did it take to complete it?
7. What did Solomon build after the temple was done? How many years did it take to complete it?

1 Kings 8

8. On what occasion was the ark brought into the temple and the temple dedicated? (v. 2 with Lev. 23:34)
9. What promises does Solomon mention in his dedicatory speech and prayer as having been fulfilled? (See 2 Sam. 7:11b-16)

1 Kings 10

10. Summarize the vast wealth of Solomon. What uses were made of gold in his kingdom? What indications are given of the sources of his wealth? What is said about silver that indicates the enormity of his wealth?
11. How is the great wisdom of Solomon described?

1 Kings 11

12. What caused Solomon to fall away from God? What were the two main consequences of his apostasy?

1 Kings 11-12

13. What was the immediate cause or occasion of the division between the Northern and Southern kingdoms? What was the ultimate cause of it?
14. Who was Rehoboam? What two big mistakes did he make?
15. Name the two kingdoms which resulted from the division. What tribes were included in the Southern kingdom? (cf. 2 Chron. 11:12)

1 Kings 13

16. Where was the prophet in this text from? What was his message against the altar at Bethel? Did Jeroboam have good reason to believe his message and repent of his sins? What became of the prophet? What was his mistake?

1 Kings 17

17. Who was Elijah? What brought on the three and a half year drought? (See James 5:16-18) What was it supposed to accomplish? List the ways in which God took care of Elijah during it?

1 Kings 18-19

18. Who was Ahab? Who was Jezebel? How does chapter 18 reveal the influence and power of Jezebel in the kingdom? (Note vv. 4, 13, 19)
19. What challenge did Elijah put to Israel? Describe the contest he proposed and his great victory. What was the effect of this victory on the people?
20. What did Elijah do after his victory on Mt. Carmel? Why?
21. Who appeared to Elijah in the wilderness? Why? What did He instruct him to do?

1 Kings 21

22. What did Ahab want? Is there any indication why Naboth refused Ahab's offer? What did the law of Moses say about the sale of a family inheritance? (See Lev. 25:23-28; Num. 36; cf. Jer. 32:7-10)
23. How did Ahab get what he wanted? What consequences were to come upon him and Jezebel because of their actions in this incident?

2 Kings 4

24. Who was Elisha? List the miracles he did which are recorded in this chapter. What, specifically, do you think these miracles accomplished for him?
25. Why were miracles particularly characteristic of the ministries of Elijah and Elisha?

2 Kings 5

26. Who was Naaman? What was his problem? How did he hear about Elisha?
27. How was Naaman cleansed?
28. What effect did Naaman's cleansing have on him? How did he show faith?
29. What comparison can you make between the cleansing of Naaman and the cleansing that takes place today in baptism? (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16; Eph. 5:26)
30. Who was Gehazi? What was his sin?

- Gene Taylor

keep from working? It is sinful to neglect one's work even if she stays home. Those in olden times baked bread, shopped daily, did everything by hand, etc. To just fritter one's time by watching soap operas on TV, gossiping on the phone, and stirring up strife, is sinful.

The woman who works outside the home, especially one who is married, must not abuse work by being one of those "silly women" who are laden with various lusts (2 Tim. 3:4-6). Spending time in pleasure with men on coffee breaks, at meals, etc., is a dangerous practice for the working woman who is married.

Hard Questions Working Women Must Ask Themselves

1. Do I work outside the home because I am bored as a homemaker? Many women today place too much emphasis on career and fulfillment outside the home. Young women need to be taught that being a godly wife and mother is a lofty and admirable aspiration.

2. Do I work to satisfy my pride? Do I work just to prove I can make it in a "man's world?" The woman who chooses to marry is to submit herself to the Lord

and her husband and her role of "helper" to him.

3. Do I work to satisfy my own or my husband's greed? Greed and covetousness are never proper motives for work (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

4. Do I work because the children "get to me?" Do your children make you nervous or "drive you up the wall" so that you cannot stand to be at home with them? Or do they make you feel that because of them you have been shackled at home? If either of these describes your feelings, is this not a sign of improper perspectives and priorities?

5. Does working outside the home constantly interfere with my responsibilities to God, Christ and the church? (Matt. 6:33; Col. 3:1).

6. Does working outside the home interfere with your responsibilities as a godly wife and mother? Has it interfered with providing for the emotional and physical needs of my husband? Has it affected your attitude by making you independent and aggressively destroying your submissive spirit toward your husband? Has work outside the home taken you from your responsibilities to not only bear children but to raise, nurture and teach your

children—especially during the time of their most formative years?

Conclusion

We must face the reality of the deterioration of family life in our society and realize that working women, at least in part, have contributed to that demise. Yet, as with all truth, extremes must be avoided. That it is always sinful for a woman to work outside the home is an erroneous view. That in regard to work a woman can do whatever she wants, whenever she wants, is likewise erroneous. Consider the two following questions:

1. Are your working motives and patterns a reflection of economic need or of covetousness? If material greed is your motive, then you have become earthly-minded and apathetic toward the spiritual needs of your family.

2. In your family, have your husband and children been pushed aside to a point where they no longer occupy the focus of your attention and desires of your heart? If so, you are neglecting those things for which you were especially created by God. 🙏

- Gene Taylor

Bible Land History and Geography

The Biblical City Of Corinth. A detailed outline describing the city of Corinth, Greece and its significance in Biblical times and its archaeological ruins. Includes several color photographs.

The Biblical City Of Ephesus. A detailed outline describing the city of Ephesus in Turkey (Asia Minor), its significance in Biblical times and its archaeological ruins. Includes several photographs.

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The Biblical City of Capernaum. A booklet describing the city of Capernaum, its significance in Biblical times and its archaeological ruins.

The British Museum and the Bible. A booklet containing a four page outline which details some of the relics from various Bible lands to be found in the British Museum.

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Church of Christ

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