

## ***Patriarchy vs. Single Women in the Bible*** **Bob and Terri Jennings | illbehonest.com | 2010**

*[This was written in 2010 in response to an article regarding the reasons as to why a young Christian girl was not in college, but instead was staying under her father till marriage.]*

You may be commended for wanting to please the Lord and to help others, and for making the effort to write the article. It is true, as you say, that parents need to protect their single daughters, and that daughters need to be very careful, especially in our corrupt society. But we would put forward that you have misapplied Biblical principles.

You put forward that unmarried women should always be living or working in the home of their father, husband, or guardian. But we reply, take note of these examples of single women who were on their own, working outside of the home, and supporting themselves and others:

1. **Dorcas:** She was a hard worker. For whom? Her family? No, the widows,<sup>1</sup> for, upon her death, the widows, not relatives, stood by her body weeping. And, upon her reviving, Peter called in the saints and widows.<sup>2</sup> The point? She apparently was not living with relatives, dependent on them, or serving them.
2. **The younger widow of 1 Timothy 5:** She was supporting widows,<sup>3</sup> *not* family.
3. **Phoebe:** She independently was a helper and servant to the church, *not* father or family.<sup>4</sup>
4. **Lydia:** She was supporting herself and "her household" as a seller of fabric.<sup>5</sup>
5. **Anna:** She lived in the temple, *not* a house.<sup>6</sup>
6. **The elect lady:** She had a household, for, she had her children and appears to be on her own, directing her own household.<sup>7</sup>
7. **Ruth:** She lived with her mother-in-law and supported them both.<sup>8</sup>

Consider that these women had the liberty *not* to be at home perpetually and actually followed Christ around and ministered to Him. Some were married:

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1 Acts 9:39

2 9:41

3 1 Timothy 5:16

4 Romans 16:1

5 Acts 16:14, 15

6 Luke 2:36, 37

7 2 John 1, 10

8 Ruth 2:23

1. Mary, Susanna, many others.<sup>9</sup>
2. Salome, wife of Zebedee.<sup>10</sup>
3. Joanna, wife of Chuza.<sup>11</sup>

Single women had the *liberty* to:

1. marry whom they wish, in the Lord,<sup>12</sup>
2. make a vow and keep it,<sup>13</sup>
3. be fellow-workers in the gospel,<sup>14</sup>
4. support needy widows,<sup>15</sup>
5. attend prayer meetings,<sup>16</sup>
6. host a prayer meeting,<sup>17</sup>
7. prophesy,<sup>18</sup> and
8. receive a reproof personally and directly.<sup>19</sup>

Deborah is never condemned for being a judge in Israel, and that, while she was married. She even went to battle.<sup>20</sup>

Misapplication of Scripture is serious; it is a devilish thing.<sup>21</sup> And, it is misapplication of Scripture to say:

1. that Titus 2:3-5 applies to single women. It is addressed to *married* women and directs that they be "workers at home," etc. We see wives serve their husbands, daughters obey

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9 Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40, 41

10 Mark 15:40, 41; 16:1; Matthew 4:21; 27:55, 56; Luke 8:1-3; Matthew 20:20

11 Luke 8:1-3; 23:49, 23:55-24:10

12 1 Corinthians 7:39; Numbers 36:6

13 Numbers 30:9

14 Philippians 4:2, 3; Romans 16

15 1 Timothy 5:16; Acts 9:39

16 Acts 1:14; 2:1; 2:42-47

17 Acts 12:12

18 Acts 2:17; 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5

19 1 Timothy 5:1,2; Philippians 4:2, 3

20 Judges 4

21 Matthew 4:6

their parents, saints serve the church, but, “daughters serve their fathers” is not found in the Bible.

2. that 1 Timothy 2:11-14, "quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness," applies to this case. Rather, those are instructions for the church, *not* instructions of a father to a daughter.
3. that “a family can further God’s purposes here on earth more effectively than one person alone.” Has any family furthered God’s purposes more than the Apostle Paul?

The book of Acts indicates Priscilla was a tentmaker like her husband.<sup>22</sup> She obviously was not always “busy about domestic matters”. And she was so skilled in the Scriptures that she “explained [to Apollos] the way of God more accurately.”<sup>23</sup> Priscilla opened her home to the church.<sup>24</sup> She "risked her neck" for the gospel.<sup>25</sup> She served the saints!

The Bible doesn’t say your calling as a young woman is to be a “worker at home.” In fact, Paul says, “The unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she who is married cares for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.”<sup>26</sup> So it is the married woman who specifically is a worker at home, not necessarily the single woman.

1 Timothy 5:11-14 adds to Titus 2:4-5. Paul’s concern in 1 Timothy was that the younger widows *marry* and fulfill their responsibilities at home and not bring shame to Christianity.<sup>27</sup> It does not specify that a *single* woman has those responsibilities. So, be careful that you not “let what is for you a good thing (homemaking) be spoken of as evil”<sup>28</sup> by trying to bind others to your personal conviction. Remember, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking (homemaking!) but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”<sup>29</sup>

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22 Acts 18:3

23 Acts 18:26

24 1 Corinthians 16:19

25 Romans 16:4

26 1 Corinthians 7:34

27 1 Timothy 5:14

28 Romans 14:16

29 Romans 14:17-19