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WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP

MINISTRY, HOME AND SOCIETY

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Abstract

The paper has highlighted the role that women are expected to play in the home, church and society. It looked into the social prejudices, discriminations and religious repression that women are subjected to in our society. The paper revealed the attitude of Jesus Christ to women and the role He has assigned to them in the home, the church and society. The paper concluded by emphasizing the fact that God is interested in women and sees them as people with high intellectual ability ‘carved out’ to work along with men in the building of peaceful, and progressive society.

Introduction

Every human being is faced with one responsibility or the other daily. Responsibilities may differ from person to person and from place to place but in order to allow for peace, progress, comfort, and stability in society, all responsibilities have to be effectively carried out. In carrying out responsibilities several roles have to be played by all/sundry. Men, women, and children in fact everybody must be involved in the building of society i.e the home, church, community.

Social Prejudices, Discrimination and Religious Repression against women

Traditionally, in most countries men’s roles are usually streamlined and demarcated from women’s roles. For instance the man is seen as the bread winner, family upholder and sustainer of society. While the woman on the hand is regarded as the home maker, bread eater etc.

Women in several societies are taught from childhood to appreciate and emphasize her femininity and to suppress anything in her that are masculine in order to maintain the tradition distinction between the man and woman (Volzebeer 1995)

Prior to this time, some parents regarded female children less worthy than the male, daughters were given less education because of the notion that they will eventually marry and end up merely as house wives. Parents feel that mothering and keeping of family do not require any serious intellectual training. However, male children were usually given better opportunity because they were seen as the potential bread winners.

Although women are endowed with abilities potentialities and have acquired relevant skills and aptitudes needed to make things move towards the desired

direction in the society, the age-long traditions have perpetually hindered them from making their impact effectively felt.

Those who acquired basic professional training faced discriminations in job placement. Women were tolerated and given due recognition as teachers but not in higher executive positions. They were to have their line made behind men who are regarded as superior being in society.

In the Religious Sector the attitude is not different from that of the secular world. Women's position is made rigid and inflexible. She is not free to express the God-given gifts where there are needs for this. She is completely jacketed to certain roles and things merely on account of her sex. It is usually seen as God's divine order and God's will to have women silenced in Church leadership. 1 Cor. 14:34

Studies carried out by Feliciano (1990) among the Philipinos revealed that no woman priest has ever been ordained in the Roman Catholic mission. The only lady priest ordained by the Episcopalian Church also created a bitter controversy among the male dominated church leadership. This problem is not too acute among the Pentecostal.

The question to be asked at this juncture is whether it is God's inflexible rule for women to suffer boredom and remain silent, sitting impassively while the men takes over the affairs of the church. Is the role of women in the Church limited to upholding the male leaders in prayers, coordinating the ladies' programmes and be busy with children at home alone? Where do we belong and what should be our role in the church, home and society when our lives have been turned over to God who created all human being? Jewish's Women's Status before the coming of Christ.

Among the Jews, three doxologies uttered everyday as presented by Rabbi Judah Bay Elai are praise God that he did not create me a heathen; praise God that He did not create me a women; praise God that He did not create me an illiterate person.

The above shows the kind of low regard the society had for women before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Women were subordinates to men, seen as mere properties that could be divorced without prior notice. Jewish leaders preferred to knock themselves against the walls and suffer brushes than to look at an oncoming woman.

(i) **Women Made in God's Image**

Gen. 1:26 reveals that man is made in the image of God. The Bible says "And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. God said they should be fruitful and multiply. In the spiritual sense both men and women that are made in God's image and are born again are to multiply by carrying out the work of evangelism and church related programmed, started by our Lord Jesus Christ. Going through the scriptures, we discovered that in a very quiet but deliberate ways Jesus demonstrated woman's worth, her personhood and equality with men through His life, deeds and teachings. How did He do this?

(ii) He was born of a woman

Jesus entered the world through a woman this demonstrate that if God the Almighty, the all knowing the creator of heaven and earth could make a woman the bearer of salvation through the birth of Jesus, man has no right to relegate her to an inferior position

(iii) Jesus interacted with women publicly

The coming of Jesus brought a difference to the centuries - old sexual taboos in relation to woman. Talking with woman in the public was a taboo among the Jews but Jesus elevated women's status from property to persons by discussing freely with them in the public.

- (a) The Samaritan woman Jn. 4:1-42 Jesus did not ignore her based on her race.
- (b) The widow of Nain 7:1-17 after meeting Jesus, full joy was restored to her home. Her experience was enough to win many souls to Christ.
- (c) The woman with the issue of blood - Mr 3:24-34, having met with Jesus, she was not only physically healed but was socially liberated from a taboo based on sex.
- (d) Jesus was anointed by a prostitute - Lk 6:36-42. at Simon's party, Jesus allowed a popular prostitute not only to touch Him but to anoint him
- (e) Jesus paused to console women who lined-up sorrowing on the way to Calvary.

(iv) Jesus recognized and accepted women's abilities

He appreciated women's service in His days without discriminating or considering any outrageous qualifications. As He went from place to place ministering, several women traveled with Him and ministered to Him needs Lk. 10:38-42

(v) Jesus brought abundant life to all

Jn. 10:10 Says "the thief comes only to steal kill and to destroy, I came that they might have life and might have it abundantly, Jesus has come to give deeper, meaningful richer, and all embracing life to all Christians whether male or female. The life that Jesus brought has known cannot be pegged to men alone.

- (vi) Jesus declare that all believers should go and preach the gospel and to baptize the converts in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all that we are commanded. Matt 28:19-20

This injunction was given to all believers regardless of their sex, they are to preach and teach the messages passed across to us by our saviour. It is a mandate for all that have been transformed by our Lord Jesus Christ.

(vii) Baptism of the Holy Ghost

Men and women have been enlisted into God's camp through the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The divine touch does not necessarily anchor on the person's sexual make up. Act1:8 Jesus told His followers to wait for this experience before they begin to preach and to teach. In Acts 2:1 when the disciples (with women) had this experience, they all spoken other tongues glorifying God, they all received dynamic power and gifts to operate, to preach and teach the word (see 1 Cor 12. of the Holy Spirit)

(viii) Jesus Parables

Some parable given by Jesus during His teaching sessions shows that Jesus was out to elevate women from their second class position to higher. Example of the parable are:

- (a) The woman and the leave (Small yeast on a dough to rise) Matt 13:33, Lk 13:20

(b) The parable of the lost coin Lk 15:8

Here Jesus used parables to illustrate God's character and plan for man. God is still in the business of using women to attain His plans for man to day. Women possess God like qualities and potentials (God's image). As a result of this they are to continue with the work that the master began. They are to work on equal and mutual togetherness with men.

(ix) Paul's Teachings

In ICor. 14:34 Paul declared that women should be silent in the Church and be subjected to the law. They are to be taught by their husband.

Paul later realized the role that women could play in ministry and the church when having worked with several women and have need richly blessed by their ministerial activities, he declared in Gal.3:28 that all of us who are baptized into Christ have clothed ourselves with Christ and there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave or free, there is neither male nor female for you are all on in Christ

The above shows that as long as a person is born again, led by the Holy Spirit, he or she is made ready to do whatever the spirit of God will have him/her do. We have all been given the mandate of reconciling the world to God. We are redeemed from false stereotypes which inhibits the free flow of God's power. Women in Ministry Biblical Example

a. Mariam - A Musician Ex. 15

b. Rahab - Jebusite, a woman of faith

She had genuine faith in Yahweh and with her wisdom she contributed to Israelites victory over Jericho. Jobs 2, Heb 11:30-31

c Deborah : Mother in Israel a Judge, Prophetess, wife of Lapidoth Judges 4 she was a very courageous woman, she lived in the dark ages of Israelites history (Moral, Social, economic, and religious break down). Together with Barak she defeated Jabin the King of Cannan that oppressed Israelites for 20 years.

d. Ruth: A Moabite a vessel unto honour. Ruth chp 1-4 she deserted her ideals for Yahweh the God of Israel. She demonstrated good faith and trusted in the Lord. She was rewarded for her loyalty to God. She bore Obed the father of

Jesse who gave birth to David the king from whom Christ the Messiah emerged.

- e. Esther: An intercessor a preserver of a race Esther 2ff. a Jew that became the queen of Persia. By the wisdom of God, she was able to initiate a decree that cancelled the destructive decree mooted by Haman
- f. Mary the Mother of Jesus: A highly favoured woman, a woman of faith, a facilitator. Lk1:ff
- g. Anna - Prophetess, Intercessor Lk. 2:36-40
Uptill the age of eighty-four (84) she fasted and prayed before God in the temple for the birth of the Messiah
- h The Samaritan woman : A zealous evangelist John 4
Although she was a notorious sinner after meeting the Lord who feel her with the living water, she could not contain her joy to herself but left her jug and went to bring others to Jesus. Though she started as a woman with ill-reputation she ended as an evangelist.
- I Mary Magdalene: An evangelist, a lover of God. Jn 20:11 -18
She loved the Lord with all her heart. Immediately she was delivered of several evil spirits she followed Christ Jesus sent her to declare the resurrection message to the disciples,
- j. Mary the mother of John Mark: An intercessor, a prayer warrior she wanted and begged Jesus for the placement of her children in heaven. Prayers were organized in her home for ministers. (Deliverance of Peter. Act 12)
- k. Priscilla: A teacher of the word, an evangelist, a coordinator. Act 18:26 together with her husband she taught the word of God to men and women
- l. Lydia: A given and Helped Act 16:1
She ministered to the needs of many especially God's ministers
- m. Phoebe: An evangelist. Rom 16:1
She worked along with Paul dynamically
- n. Nympha: Euodia Syntyche-All worked with Paul. Phillip 4:3, Col 4:15.

The Role of Christian Women in the Church and Ministry today

To work for God you must take note and be sure of the following points

- (a) Be sure of your salvation

- (b) Seek after righteousness
- (c) Be willing to yield and obey God as He directs
- (d) Pray, fast, read the Bible as you seek God
- (e) Know your gifts and calling and be ready to serve God as you are led by the Holy Spirit.

Areas of Leadership

Pastoral service, Evangelism, Prophetic, Ministry, Intercessory Ministry, Teaching, Deliverance, Healing, Counselling Music etc.

Areas of Service in the Church

Church Committees, Music (Choir) giving to support God work Malachi 3:8-19 Lk 6:38 Visitations, Orphans, Widows, the sick and the sorrowing James 1:27 Sunday School Teaching, Deliverance, Cleaning of Church, Ushering etc.

Women's Role the Home and Society

Introduction

There is the need to know the duties God has assigned women in their homes and the society. The woman we are addressing is suppose to be a Christian, a woman who was a sinner, once lost but found by Jesus Christ our Lord. She is the woman that has committed her total life to God and his service. If you are here and you have not taken such a step you can do so now. Jesus died on the cross for us, in order to set us free from the yoke of the devil. You cannot perform any role that will be acceptable to God in your home or society except you yield yourself to Him.

God has wonderfully designed women to physically carry out some function. First and foremost, we have to bear in mind that we are made in the image of God to show forth His glory, to live for Him, to abide in Him and to represent Him on earth including our homes. We should not relegate ourselves rather we are to see ourselves as we are seen by God. We should love ourselves, love others, and be radiant and loyal to God.

From the time we are conceived in our mother's womb, our personality and destiny as women were distinctly established by God. Therefore, you should not see yourself as second class citizen or liability to any man, but as God's creature specially made by God to function in this perverted world.

Her Role in the Home: A virtuous woman who can find? Prov.31:10 Realising that you are a fellow heir of God's grace with your husband, you should see yourself as a channel of blessing to your home.

God instituted marriage Gen. 2:23-24 as a result of this, the qualities expected of people joined together by God should be displayed by you.

- (i) Christian women should be virtuous, hardworking compassionate not lazy, not a busybody
- (ii) A women should submit herself to her husband (Serah Abraham, wife) 1 Peter 3:6
- (iii) A Christian woman should be a supporter, helper, business partner, a friend, and someone to share things with in the home.
- (iv) With her intellectual ability. She ought to serve as a balancing factor to her husband in serious deliberations about life and the home. Always expressing God's mind whenever the need arises.
- (v) Her affection and good expression of love will help to build habitable atmosphere in her home (To have agape love for her husband)
- (vi) She should do everything possible to complete her husband's manhood by providing willingly and adequately for this personal needs (sexual relationship) just as the husband has no power over his body but the wife so also the wife has no power over her body but the husband. I Cor. 7:1-5.
- (vii) She should cultivate the habit of forgiving her husband even when it is difficult to do so. Forgive so that your prayers will not be hindered.
- (viii) She should be a complement to her husband not a competitor. She should not be heady thereby allowing the devil to have a way in her home. This will lead her to hell fire.
- (ix) She is expected to reverence and honour her husband. To remain on
- (x) It is duty of a Christian woman to pray and intercede constantly for her husband and her children. This prayer has to be offered day and night, everywhere, every moment for protection upliftment divine healing, peace, and harmony.

- (xi) She has to be very hardworking, her house should be kept neat, God is clean and lives in a clean environment.
- (xii) Her appearance at home and outside be dignifying, not flamboyant but moderate enough to the glory of God.
- (xiii) She should be a good home maker. A Christian woman should manage her home effectively. Prov 14:1 says that " every wise woman builds her home but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands". She should not be a nagging wife but very accommodating.
- (xiv) A Christian woman should not be a good cook. The road to a man's heart is his belly therefore she has to prepare whatever will satisfy her husband so that he will not become a regular customer to buckataria operators.
After the preparation of palatable food, the woman will honour God more and make her husband happy by serving him like a king.
- (xxii) She has to back up her husband financially. The running of the home should not be left exclusively to the husband based on the fact that he is the bread winner. You are to compliment his efforts. Do not compare whatever you are given for the home with what Mr A or Z gave his wife.
- (xxiii) Be very transparent when it comes to the issue of finance. Do not hide your salary from your husband. Let your husband know what you have and be free to use them.
- (xxiv) A Christian woman should be hospitable. Her home should be open to people and she must cheerfully receive them. Matt 24:35 (when you do so you are caring for Jesus)
- (xxv) Pray constantly with your husband. In the area of child rearing the role of a Christian woman cannot be under estimated. We have realize that children are gifts from God and we shall surely account for the way we have brought them up before God. They are made by God and Jesus is interested in them. Lk 18:16 Matt 19:13-15.
To bring children up we need great energy, devotion, God's wisdom and prayers.

What should be our role as we nurture them

- (a) We should love, care and be sensitive to their needs

- (b) Give them the needed security Prov. 31:12-18
Be close to them 2Tim 1:5-6 they are to be equally loved. Do not tag them as "Daddy's Son" "Mummy's Daughter" this can breed enemy between the children.
- (c) Live by example not by precepts alone. Pray and teach them how pray and teach them how to pray and the need to read the bible always (personal devotion to be inculcated)
- (d) Teach them God's word. Do not leave the work to the Sunday School Teacher to carry out for you or for them to be misled by their friends.
- (e) Discipline your children in love. Heb 12:7-12 do not spoil the child, therefore spare not the rod. Let them see punishment as corrective measures
- (f) Create time to relax and play with your children. Listen to their views and comments. Let them know why they cannot behave like other children or watch worldly films
- (g) When it comes to choosing a career, pray along with your child, do not impose any profession on him.
- (h) Teach and involve them in the household chores
- (i) Let your children be able to rise up and call you blessed, Prov 31:28

The in- laws

In home where Jesus is the Boss, the way the woman relates with the inlaws and the extended family members should be as dictated by the Holy spirit. They are not to be shunned or seen as outcasts or unwanted elements.

- 1 They should be prayed for and loved even when they hate the woman (Ruth and Naomi- Ruth 1 end)
- 2 Meet their needs as you are directed by God
- 3 Learn to tolerate them
- 4 Do not bring them in to settle quarrels in your home (God is higher than any man.)
- 5 Do not allow for favouritism, love all of them equally (wife and husbands' relations).

Women's Role in Society

First and foremost, a Christian woman should see herself as the light and the salt of the world. (Matt 5:13-5) she has been created wonderfully to minister to the needs of people. Her life should preach Christ to those around her. She has to carry out the following roles:-

- 1 Proclaim the gospel to sinners - organizing and crusades, teaching sessions for people
- 2 Her office work should be seen as service work performed primarily for the benefits of others.
- 3 She should be accommodating and should not see people coming to her as an interruption
- 4 She should not perpetuate sin but expose it where she works (police, banking etc)
- 5 She has to live and exemplary life (punctuality to work honesty faithfulness etc)
- 6 She should be helpful to all preach Christ by displaying admirable behaviours
- 7 Politically she ought to be well informed and be interested in the making of democratic society.
- 8 Business world she should engage in clean business and encourage others to do so (do not give bribe, do not take it, correct perversion). Share Christ with business partners, present them bibles
- 9 Provide free services when necessary (Medical or teaching etc)
- 10 To visit the lonely and the shut-ins
- 11 Obey and encourage others to keep Government laws
- 12 Write in the dailies to correct some of the societal ills.
- 13 Minister to the physical needs of neighbours

Summary/Conclusion

We have been able to examine the roles that are expected of Christian women in the church, ministry, the home and the society. Our discussion have truly proved to us that God is interested in women, He sees them as people with high intellectual

ability and as people meant to work along with men for the progress of the work He began and for the peace and the development of the home and society. The roles of women are indeed many and can be under estimated. Exposure to these roles will help to make Christian women what they are ordained to be and to do.

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