

**E.R.A**  
**The Christian Faces the Issues**  
**Dr. George O. Wood**

I've personally enjoyed these Sunday evenings when we have had the opportunity to look at the subject, The Christian Faces the Issues. I know as we go along there are perhaps those in the audience who will not agree with everything I say. I suspect if you agreed with everything I said, that's the beginning of a cult – when you agree with everything the leader says. There's always room for healthy divergence. The issues that I speak about this evening I realize that there are many different viewpoints held in the Christian community on the issue of women's role in the church, in scripture and in society at large. So I simply ask that if you hold a position different than I that you'll take with charity what I'm saying. I'm attempting with the issue tonight to give a fair understanding of what I believe the word of God says. But since these are matters where Christians have disagreements we have learned that charity is the order of the day and love covers a multitude of sins. And even wrong opinions.

I'm trying to protect myself from all the tomatoes you're going to be throwing at me as we go along.

Tonight's issue is the Christian faces the issue of the Equal Rights Amendment and Feminism.

There are three components to this message this evening that I want to look at. First, the scripture and women. Second, the church and women. Third, society and women.

We want to start out with an examination of the scripture and women because before we look at the role of the church and the role of society we ought to have a handle upon what the scriptures are teaching us since we believe that whatever we hold as Christians comes not from tradition, not from convenience, not from a religious figure speaking his own opinions but comes indeed from the Bible.

Our foundation point for a discussion of the role of women in scripture is the book of Genesis which portrays the subjection of woman to man as a result of the fall. It's clear to see in the creation that it was not the intent of the creator for there to be a subjection of the wife to the husband. Rather in the creation, Genesis 1:27, God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female he created he them.

Man created in the image of God. "Man" a generic term being used to describe both the male and femaleness that God creates. Both fully in his image. No tension in the relationship. Complete equality before God in the creation.

The change in the relationship between man and woman between the first man and woman, husband and wife, occurred as described in Genesis 3:16. The later half of the verse. God speaking to Eve giving her the sentence for her sin "Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you." I think it's worthy to note that where there is no sin there is no problem with authority. There is no tension in the husband/wife relationship,. It is only after sin that the issue of authority begins to surface that we begin to have problems with it and that there also is tension in the man/wife relationship. I think it should be expected that in the redeemed community as well there would be a rolling back of the problems with authority that take place because Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law and sin.

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A great review here could be undertaken of the rest of the Old Testament treatment of women. But I think it simply would be sufficient to say that the Old Testament after those early opening chapters on the book Genesis simply shows the effect of the fall upon women in society. You have emerging thereafter a patriarchal society where women are sometimes seen and treated even as property. There are occasions in the Old Testament where women step out of that role and sometimes step into the role of judges or leaders and it's clear that Old Testament approval is given to such persons as the Queen of Sheba, Esther and to Ruth who are models for women's involvement in the life of the community.

Proverbs 31 also celebrates the virtuous woman who has a very prominent role to play within her community. But since we understand that a good rule of interpretation for all of the scripture is that the New Testament interprets the Old Testament, we look to the New Testament to see if there has been a change brought about from the fallen nature of humanity as described in the book of Genesis. We look at some particular elements of women's role as women in the New Testament relate to Jesus, relate to the Pentecostal community of Acts 2 and following. And also Paul and his relationship with women since Paul is an apostle of the church, what he has to say in his teaching capacity is binding upon the church.

These three aspects of New Testament teaching on women and I realize that an attempt to cover the ground in 10 or 15 minutes I am trying to deal with material that lots of books have been written about. You will excuse the brevity.

Suffice to say that some major elements change in regard to women as Jesus relates to women. For one thing he broke tradition. He talked with a woman at the well of Samaria and an immoral woman at that. He gave her the status of being received as a person. He set aside role casting. Mary did the right thing in listening to his teaching even though in his day Mary did the manly thing. But he says to Martha, "Mary has chosen the better part."

Jesus insisted on an end to sexual moral discrimination. He indicates in his teaching on divorce, Matthew 5:31-32, that a man simply did not have the right to do with a woman as he wanted. We also see how Jesus respects the woman who was taken in adultery by not punishing her as her society would have done. He demanded that the man would bear the same responsibility as the woman.

He has women associated with him in his ministry. A group of women who ministered to him. We see that he appeared after his resurrection first to women. In fact, when most of us think of Mary Magdalene we think of her as the converted harlot. However we do not usually think of her as the first Christian evangelist. But she was. To her was given the message by Jesus to go and proclaim to the apostles the news of the gospel that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Women were always loyal to Jesus in his ministry. In fact, you will never read anywhere in the New Testament of Jesus personally being opposed by a woman. Radical change of Jesus' treatment of women held in Jewish and Greek and Roman culture.

When we go to the second strand of teaching in the New Testament on women, we look at women and the Pentecostal community, Acts 2. And also the preceding chapter, Acts 1. We find there in those passages women as full participants in the Pentecostal community. They are

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there on the day of Pentecost. They are in the apostolic company of 120 prior to the pouring out of the Spirit. The ten days between ascension and Pentecost, they are there to pray, not just to do the cooking.

In fact, Peter on the day of Pentecost, quotes the prophet Joel as saying that one of the things that the day of Pentecost has done is to bring the coming of the Spirit upon all flesh. Specifically we want to pay attention to the exactly language he employs. Acts 2:17 “in the last days...” and by the way “the last days “ are everything from the day of Pentecost to the return of Christ. “In the last days,” God says, “I will pour out my Spirit upon all people [all flesh]. Your sons and your daughters will prophecy. Your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophecy.” That is have a ministry in the word. A ministry of speaking the word of God to the Godly community.

We go on to see the development of the early church we find for example women involved in key positions of ministry. For example, Philip’s daughters who were prophetesses, Acts 21:9. We also find in 1 Corinthians 11 that Paul indicates that women within the Christian community were expected to lead that community in both prayer and prophecy. Prophecy being an exhortation from God’s word. Quite a distinction from the Jewish synagogue where women set in the balcony and were silent.

When we come to the discussion of Paul and women, Paul is sometimes represented as one of the male chauvinists. But a careful examination will yield some opposite conclusions. For example very close friends of his and companions in ministry were Priscilla and Aquila. This husband/wife team taught Apollos the way more accurately, Acts 18:2-46. Of the six times Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned in scripture, Priscilla’s name comes first 4 out the 6 times. Very unusual kind of way in biblical times of letting the woman’s name go first. No doubt showing from Luke’s vantage point that Priscilla had the verbal ministry.

In Romans 16 eight or nine of the 28 names mentioned are names of women. Phoebe is a deacon. Within the early church the office of deacon at least in one case was held by a woman.

We also read of Junia and Andronicus described as apostles, Junia being a feminine name, who had been followers of the way from the beginning. It’s been suggested a husband wife team. If so Junia would be the only woman in scripture mentioned as an apostle.

Euodias and Syntyche mentioned in Philippians 4:2-3 are called yoke fellows, or co-workers. A very exalted term that Paul also uses of men companions.

In Galatians 3:28 which was written prior to Paul’s teaching about women in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2. Paul indicates that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female. These three mighty distinctions that tyrannized over the ancient world were abolished for all were one in Christ Jesus. These ideas were astonishing and subversive.

Looking at a comparison of Galatians 3:28 with 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11 and following attempts to begin to understand what is happening in the New Testament. In looking at Galatians 3:28 it is easy to see that in the apostolic age there was already a breaking down of

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the divisions that had existed between the inequality of Jew to gentile. By the time the apostolic age is over the Christian church has made its position felt on that subject.

The second distinction to fall between that of slaves and owners took a number of centuries for the gospel influence to have an impact. Even in America society only a recently as 120 years ago it brought about a change in our culture as well. Because the leaven of the gospel kept telling us there was no distinction between slave and free.

I think in the modern era of the Spirit we have seen a cultural application of Galatians 3:28 coming to pass. There is to be in ministry an equality between man and woman in their functioning within the body of Christ.

I have the luxury of belonging to a denomination that has ordained women for all seventy years of its existence. We never went through the throws of having to change our doctrinal position to accommodate the pressures of the times. Women were ordained in the ministry and were pastoring churches in the Assemblies of God before women had the right to vote in America. One can never charge the denomination that we're a part of as lately jumping on a bandwagon. It was our understanding from Acts 2:17-18 and Galatians 3:28 that we had marching orders for the last days and for the Pentecostal era. The distinctions which previously had kept women from occupying a place of service and employing all the gifts that were possible in the body that distinction had fallen on the day of Pentecost. And it was God's eternal will that it would fall although it would need a time of transition for such a change to take place.

And indeed it took a time for all three cultural changes to take place. Acts 15 indicates how much the church struggled with the inclusion of gentiles into the community of God. So there was a transitional kind of thing that was employed that said or the time being they were not to eat things that were strangled nor to drink blood. In what particular time that was a very transitionally important moment. It would break table fellowship between a Jew and a gentile. Even though the scriptures were declaring the permanent equality of Jew of Gentile there was a transitional scripture for phasing that equality in.

The same way with the development of slaves and masters. It was the eternal plan of God to lift the curse that had been placed upon human relationship and structure in society so that one group of people were the property of others. But it took time for that to work it's way into the culture. Therefore the gospel in the apostles instead of attacking that problem in the culture had on and fomenting revolution the scriptures give us transitional passages such as Ephesians 5 which talk about the obligation of the slave to be submitted to his master. Not intending them to be used as they were as some in the days of the civil war, to support the viewpoint that slaves have a duty to always be slaves.

I'd suggest that there are some transitional passages on the role of women in the New Testament as well. That God's platform is reflected in Acts 2:17-18 and Galatians 3:28 which reflect his perfect will. But there were transitional phrasings in reflected in scriptures like 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

The 1 Corinthians 14 passage calls upon women to be silent in the assembly. Whatever Paul means by women being silent he cannot mean that women cannot pray or prophecy publicly since he has already clearly indicated in 1 Corinthians 11:5 that women may pray and prophecy

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publicly as long as they are veiled. The reason why he calls for the veil is that was the culturally and transitionally appropriate thing in that culture. It would be an inappropriate for a woman to speak in the congregation of the saints without a veil or to go out in culture without a veil as it would be for me to wear a baseball hat to the pulpit and pray with a baseball hat and preach a sermon with it on. There are some social conventions that we hold that are offensive if we don't hold them.

I understood I think what Paul meant when he called for silence when my parents were missionaries in China. The women all sat on one side of the auditorium and the men on the other side. Since the educational level was significantly different between the two groups it was not uncommon for a great deal of chatter to be taking place on the women's side as well as calling out from the women's side over to the men's side as to what the appropriate thing that the pastor meant that he just said. It perhaps could even be a reference by Paul to women who were asking questions in a disorderly matter or perhaps challenging comments publicly made by their husbands. In that context he is calling for silence. But it's clear from his statement that women may pray and prophecy that he was enjoining total silence upon women in Christian community.

In 1 Timothy 2:11-15 Paul states "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over men. She must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one who was deceived. It was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be kept safe through childbirth if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety." Probably before us is one of the most interesting scriptures in the New Testament to exegete. There is a wealth of possibility within the text as to what Paul may or may not be saying. Depending where you are as a pastor or a biblical teacher on the women's issue you will tend to read that scripture with whatever flavor you may choose to bring to it.

I would say to you that I have studied the scripture very carefully and I have the right interpretation of it!

It might be well for a moment to review the Jewish and Greek and Christian cultural settings that this scripture takes place in.

In the Jewish setting of the period a woman was a thing. Proverbs says "He who findeth a good wife findeth a good thing." She was at the disposal either of her husband or her father. She was forbidden to take part in synagogue service and sat apart from or in back of men in the synagogue. A woman came to the synagogue to hear. A man came to learn. It was forbidden for a woman to teach in school even the youngest of children. A strict rabbi would not greet a woman on the street. A woman's duty was to send her children to the synagogue, attend to domestic concerns and leave her husband free for study and for work. And to keep house for him until he returned. The Jewish man thanked God that he was "not a gentile, a slave or a woman."

In the Greek culture, Timothy was at Ephesus where this letter is written to. At Ephesus was the temple of Diana, one of the wonders of the ancient world. Women at Ephesus were degraded into serving as priestess prostitutes. Respective Greek women led a confined life, a respectable Greek woman never left her own quarters without a male escort. She did not appear at meals alone. She never appeared in the street alone. Never went to any public meetings alone.

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Christian women we see in Paul's letter to the Ephesians as well as his two letters to Timothy were going through some problems in the Christian community. Women appear to be in 2 Timothy 3:6 especially susceptible to heretical teaching and it's not hard to understand this because generally the education was much different. As a common sort of a rule when the gospel is coming into a culture people tend to have a more gullible, non educated nature tend to be the most open to heresy. It's also clear in 1 Timothy 5:13 that the younger widows clearly did not know how to use their time. Well might they not know how to use their time because they had not been trained for any employable skill. Yet this is the same town where Paul had left Priscilla and Aquila and they had ministered.

So Paul in writing within this cultural setting says first, Women should learn. We often skip right over that and go right on to "in quietness," and forget that he first of all gives a positive which would distinguish him from the synagogue kind of setting. Women should learn.

Then he says a woman should learn in quietness. That is the very same word used in 2:2. That we all as Christians should seek to live peaceful and quite lives in all Godliness and holiness. So the idea of quietness and full submission is used by Paul to refer to the whole Christian community as not be a raucous demanding, get on a crusade for your rights, kind of community.

He also says, "I do not permit a woman to teach." The verb tense is in the present. In the Greek it might just as easily read "I do not permit a woman to teach" or "I am not now permitting a woman to teach" or "I am not now allowing a woman to teach." He is not saying in this passage, I never have permitted a woman to teach, or I never shall permit a woman to teach. Given the unique situation at Ephesus it's not hard to see why and why perhaps Priscilla could be a teacher or prophetess and yet at Ephesus women were not being allowed to have that happen.

Paul also says he does not allow women to have authority over a man. The verb "to have authority" is the only time it occurs in the New Testament. It carries in the Greek the connotation to interrupt, to dictate, to domineer.

Again, this pertains to all of Christian community. No one in the Christian community is allowed to interrupt, dictate or domineer others within the body.

Perhaps the key word is the preposition in verse 13. "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." There are some who say the word "for" the preposition is causal. That is to say Paul is not now permitting women to teach because Adam was formed first and then Eve and Eve was the one who was deceived and became a sinner and that's why women are not allowed to teach. So the verse should be simply read, "Because Adam was formed first..." She must be silent because Adam was formed first.

But just as easily that word may not be a causal preposition. It may be a connective preposition which simply can carry the connotation of "Now the next thing I'm going to say" or "Furthermore." "Furthermore Adam was formed first then Eve and Adam was not the one deceived. It was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be kept safe through childbirth."

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Here the NIV kind of blurs what is being said in the biblical text. Women will be saved by the birth of the child. Or saved by child bearing.

Which is a way to say not that women are going to be eternally saved by becoming eternally saved by becoming pregnant and delivering babies because that would annul the doctrine of grace and justification by faith and would say the root to salvation for women is to get married and have a child and you're guaranteed salvation.

But rather a more reasonable understanding of that verse is that women the role of women are saved by the birth of a child. That is through the birth of Messiah. Jesus has come to reverse this trend that Eve started. It's interesting that whenever Paul talks about women's role and relates it to the fall, women are in a subject position. But whenever women are described in terms of the redemptive benefits of Christ equalities is the mode or the appeal. The appeal can not only be made therefore to woman's ruin but also to her redemption.

I think we understand better the current rethinking of women's role if we recall that text relating to slavery were being wrestled with a little over a hundred years ago. When conditions change our approach needs to be rethought. Although not necessarily changed.

Paul himself could show an adaptability to the changing social situations as seen in his differing instructions for widows. In 1 Corinthians 7:39-40 he encourages widows in light of the shortness of the time not to remarry but as time has gone on when he reaches 1 Timothy 5:14 he sees that it is important that younger widows have an opportunity to remarry and so encourages them to do. What is being showed here is a role of transitional application. Paul was concerned about any cultural practice of the church which would discredit its reputation in the world. And a very real sense what Galatians 3:28 does is plant the seed of Gospel liberation in three areas underneath cultural concrete. The cultural concrete is the distinction between Jew and gentile, the distinction between slave and free, the distinction between male and female. The gospel comes to plant a word of liberation which gradually as it grows breaks up the cultural concrete.

It is therefore my understanding that Galatians 3:28 and Acts 2:17-28 quoting Joel 2 reflect the controlling theological principle of women's role in the body of Christ. I again recognize that there are many fine believers and evangelical scholars who hold to a different point of view. But I think that is a reasonable point of view from the scripture. That no office in the church is a man only office and no gift in the church is a man only. But man and woman both together constitute the community of God and through the redemption of Christ God has restored within social relationships, within the family, between husband and wife the beginning of the kind of relationship that Adam and Eve enjoyed before their ruin. That the effects of the redemption began to repeal and role back some of the losses incurred in the fall.

With that as a basic theological underpinning I want to approach the next phase of the development of my material this evening and talk about the role of women and the church. It seems to me that one of the things the church needs to be talking about is that it is designed by God to be a model for society. Too many times the church has attempted to talk to the world before it has talked to itself. In talking to the world it has come across with a lot of pious posturing. I know for years I looked at the World Council of churches and all the political edicts that came out of their telling everybody else to get it right and it seemed to me that they weren't even cleaning their own house. It seems that God has planted the church in society to give

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society to give society as a whole an idea of what it is like for the kingdom of God to function. To the degree that the church is not being the model that it can be to that degree the world is bereft of something very positive.

There are about five things I want to speak of in regard to women and the church.

First it seems to me that there is a balance between hierarchical and relational roles within marriage. By hierarchical I simply mean a Bill Gothard chart where you have a very tight structure. A sort of pecking order within the chart and you find your order by being in the chart. The opposite of that is the relational model of Galatians 3:28 that in Christ there is neither male nor female. It seems to me that there are Christians today who are saying there is no hierarchy, there is no structure – it's all relationship. And there are other Christians saying it's all hierarchy and you must find your place in the pecking order. A look at scripture may suggest that both are models for the Christian community. I've generally found that in troubled marriages the concern often seems to be Who's got the authority? But in relationally whole marriages where there is a great deal of giving and taking in love and joy the emphasis is not so much upon hierarchy as upon a relational model. There's a shared kind of sense of approaching life with a recognition that God indeed has applied a hierarchical order to the family and if it comes to a matter of moving both might pray about it and talk about it but in the last analysis perhaps there will be a decision that the husband makes that the wife will be called to follow. But I've generally found that in the whole some marriages those kind of issues don't become a big thing. There's a beautiful kind of give and take. I think the church has the responsibility these days both to present the hierarchical model of marriage which some will fit into more easily and the relational role of marriage which encourages the full development of gift and talents within an atmosphere of love and subjection one to another.

I believe it is the church's responsibility to encourage women in the diversity of their calling.

The diversity of their calling within the home if that is where the woman feels that God has called her. Or to follow the diversity of God's calling if it involves ministry within the body of Christ such as Phoebe. Or even if it involves a woman in professional life such as Lydia in Acts 16. She was a seller of purple, an importer. Purple was a very costly import. She was a woman of obvious means and culture. Paul never says "If you really want to get with God's will in your life you can't be this successful in your professional life."

It seems to me in looking at the few examples we have from the New Testament that there is an encouragement for women in the diversity of their calling.

The church needs to recognize and utilize women throughout all levels of the church based first upon their character and then upon their gifts in the same way we recognize and utilize men – based first upon their character and then upon their gifts.

The church needs to offer special support in times of special vulnerability.

The early church practiced this especially as it related to widows. The contemporary church needs to practice ministry to women in special vulnerability as it relates to widows, battered wives, divorcees and single mothers.

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The church in both its ministry and in para-church organizations including denominational structures needs to practice fair employment practices within the church and the church organization and not simply see women on the low rank of the pay rung.

I think it is a disgrace what many church organizations pay their women personnel. There needs to be advancement opportunity within such organizations for women to achieve and utilize the full giftedness that God has given to them. I think some church boards and presbyteries are going to be answerable to God for the way they have discriminated economically against women within their organization.

The third area we want to talk on is women and society.

That of course pertains to the whole issue of feminism and the feminist movement and the equal rights amendment. The only problem I have from my understanding of the scripture and from certain principles with the equal rights amendment is the word "amendment." And the agenda of the feminist movement as it's presented in the National Organization of Women – NOW – whose symbol is the clenched fist inside of the female symbol.

It seems to me that there are some agendas of the feminist movement represented in NOW which are simply inaccessible from a biblical point of view. One of the key things that is most commonly not talked about but in any serious reading on the literature of the feminism is the attempt to redefine the family and define the word "family."

In 1979 NOW defined family "family is two or more people who share resources, responsibility, values and goals and have commitments to one another over time regardless of legal ties or marriage." Family is constituted as either heterosexual or homosexual persons living together whether or not they are bonded by legal marriage ties. Whenever adults are living together they may choose to define themselves in a legal sense as family. That has all kinds of implications of course in civil law.

I think part of the attempt of the women of the feminist movement to restructure the family is many times a real decided anti-marriage bias, a pro-divorce mentality and a recognition of lesbian families.

One of the agendas, not all feminists but especially National Organization of Women, one of their strong agendas is to redefine the family.

Another agenda of the feminist movement which is difficult as a Christian to accept, impossible, is the adoption of the legalization of abortion. Abortion is seen as a reproductive right. A woman needs control over her body. The Christian position is that woman does have control over her body and a woman need not involve herself in sexual sin which is going to be degrading to her, which result in guilt she doesn't need to live with, that Christ can set her free from and she doesn't need to risk the consequences. Once a child is conceived we feel the state has an interest in the protection of that child as much as the state has an interest in protecting a born child. Mothers do not have the right to kill children one outside their womb. We simply hold as Christians that it is improper to kill a child when it is inside the womb.

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A third thing in the feminist movement that makes it impossible to accept their agenda is the insistence on lesbian and gay rights.

In looking at these three issues – the family, abortion, gay rights – I am veering clear on the whole discussion of the grab for federal power that may be reflected in the equal rights amendment.

What then specifically would ERA do and what is the equal rights amendment. It has three sections. It's brief.

Section 1 simply says equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

Section 2, congress shall have the power to enforce by appropriate legislation the provisions of this article.

Section 3, this amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

That's all the ERA says and it sounds like a really good deal. I personally believe in equality of rights under the law. In fact, many people are not aware that there is equal employment legislation now currently on the federal statutes. Equal pay is mandated by federal law by equal work performed.

But some concerns against the ERA by persons speaking in the public sector who have not been evangelical Christians. Two people, Senator Sam Ervin who argued against the ERA when it was before the Senate in 1972. He points out in his recent 1983 article eight arguments against the ERA.

First he says laws that grant women special rights and special economic protection because they are wives, mothers or widows would be lost. Laws which impose on husbands and fathers, obligations to provide a home, food, and other necessities of life for their wives and children would also go down. Third, laws which require men to pay alimony to their wives or former wives would go down again because of the equal rights provision because men should not be placed in a position of being treated unfairly economically in a divorce. Fourth, laws which insure privacy to men and women by requiring separate restrooms in schools and in public and commercial building would also be subject to challenge. Fifth, laws which permit segregation by sex in educational institutions and hospitals or jails and prison could also be subject to challenge and perhaps would fall. Sixth, laws which exempt women and girls from compulsory military service or service in combat units of armed services in time of war would fall. Seventh, laws which define as criminal such acts as forcible rape, etc these would also fall because they're only committable by men and therefore there would be sex discrimination against men. And the law would mandate equal rights under the law without respect to sex. And finally the government would be required to recognize homosexual marriage under the ERA.

As Christians if we are opposed to ERA should not keep us from backing those goals which would correct injustice against women. And there has been a great deal of employment injustice within our society. As church members especially we need to be more conscious of pain in the body, especially for those of you who are more gainfully employed in terms of income you are

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receiving, and have disposable income. Look around the body of Christ and watch for the woman within the body of Christ that is a single head of household struggling in a low paying job to raise two or three minors. Have sensitivity to that woman's responsibility and the tremendous pressures that are upon her. She has little ability to go back to university. How is she to take care of her children in the evening if she's working in the daytime and going to university preparing for more highly paid job in the evening. It simply cannot be done and take care of the children. We need as a church to affirm and financially help and find ways of helping and augmenting those in the body of Christ that are the victims of poor housing and poor employment simply because they're a woman and have the responsibility of children. We need to be sensitive to that injustice even in our own midst.

It seems to me once more that the Christian church ought to be a model in its treatment of people for the world. I think to the degree the church is not a model, the world is looking in vein for models in legislation and other means. But if the church of Jesus Christ would be a city set on hill and show the world how it can be done and how we can take care of those who are the needy – the last and the least within our structure economically and in other ways, will provide a model of hope and a model of what Christ would want where he talks to us about doing it to the least of these.

I think to the degree the church is not a model, the world is looking in vein for models in legislation and other means. But if the church of Jesus Christ would be a city set on hill and show the world how it can be done and how we can take care of those who are the needy – the last and the least within our structure economically and in other ways, will provide a model of hope and a model of what Christ would want where he talks to us about doing it to the least of these.

Our Father, there are so many things at stake in our nation today. There are those who would bring our country into radicalized difference in our world that would bring kind of a new holocaust of immorality and the mistreatment of human life and righteous values. We pray for the protection of our country from those forces which would destroy the family and destroy the home and destroy human life. We ask that these forces be swept back. But we pray that as Christians we'd do something more than simply be against what others may be talking about. Help us as Christians to present positive alternatives. Let it not be said that within the church's midst there is any kind of treatment of brothers and sisters that would be unlike your treatment of them. Help us to discover anew the tremendous camaraderie of the early church which joyfully equalized their income in order that those who really were suffering on the lower ends of the economic scale might not be without. Help us to evaluate our own consciences that allows us to spend on luxuries when there are others in the body who do not have necessities. Somehow speak to us about our own values and our own responsibilities. Let your judgment begin at the house of God.

We pray for the women who are a part of this church family. We thank you for the women who have followed a calling you've placed upon their lives to be wives and mothers as a full time vocation. We ask that in these days they would be strengthened and helped and encouraged to know that their worth is not measured by the size of a paycheck or by a title behind their name. But their worth is always ordained by you. It is you that gives to each one of us an inherent worth. Help us as the Christian community to value and esteem and give respect toward those in our body who follow this high calling.

## **E.R.A**

### **The Christian Faces the Issues**

Help us also give support to the women in our body involved in the secular marketplace of work. Help them to know as well that their value is not in their title, nor in the size of their paycheck. But their value is again, defined by you. May we as the body of Christ not set in judgment upon one another and upon women as to what your will might be for their life. Help us not to look at singles and presume they're missing God's best because they're not married. Help us to affirm their calling to follow the Lord in singleness if that be your will. That they might as Paul says have time to devote themselves to the Lord's work and not simply the pursuit of their own interests. Help us to value and esteem and appreciate the freedom within Christian communities to be all that you have called us to be as persons responsible as priests unto you for our life. Thank you that you have given to us the right of priesthood. The right in you to discover who we are and what our calling and vocation may be. Help us to prize that calling. Let your body be blooming of the many talents and gifts of all your people so that the entire body can benefit from an atmosphere of freedom and contribution on the part of all. We ask this in our Lord's name. Amen.