

## CONSIDER THE MOTHER OF JESUS

One of the phenomena of our century has been the Women's Liberation Movement. The result has been a mixed blessing. There have been many positive aspects as new opportunities have opened up for women. There have developed a healthier respect for and appreciation of women as equal partners with men. However, there has also been a cancerous growth of radical feminism that seeks to drive wedges of hostility, mistrust, and competition between men and women. Both the positive and the negative aspects have affected men and women alike both in the Church and in society. In sorting out the voices around us, it is important to seek the answer to the questions "What are women being liberated *from*?" and "What are women being liberated *for*?"

God did not create men and women to be in competition but to complement each other. In Genesis, we read, "God said, 'Now we will make humans, and they will be like us.' So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women. God gave them his blessing and said, 'Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth.'" (Genesis 1:26-28)

All of the attributes of God exist completely in man and in woman. Some attributes God chose to express primarily in man and some he chose to express predominantly in woman. When they become "one flesh," man and woman become more than each can become separately. Their offspring receive the attributes from both the mother and the father that they need to be a complete person. The sex role identity problems that people are having today are a direct result of the confusion among their parents as to their proper role and identity under God. Men and women alike need to recapture the divine vision for them if we are to cut through the rhetoric and false philosophies of the so-called "Women's Movement".

Men need to see the Godly attributes that reside in women who would become, or who are, their wives and mothers of their children. Women need to see the Godly attributes in the men with whom they seek to unite, or with whom they are united, as husband and father of their children. Children need to see the Godly attributes of their parents if they are going to learn how to grow "in wisdom and age and favor before God and men" (Luke 2:52) as Jesus did. Only then will human beings be able to regain the dominion over the world that God gave them in the beginning. As the climax of God's creative activity, human beings resemble God primarily because of the dominion that God gave them over the rest of creation.

One woman most embodies the womanly attributes of God. I would ask you to consider the mother of Jesus. She can teach both men and women how to fully express their sexuality.

No gospel writer more fully expresses Jesus' concern for woman than Luke. For this reason, we read much about the mother of Jesus in his account.

In the first chapter of his gospel, he tells us of the appearance of Gabriel to Mary. Here we learn that Mary was a maiden, a virgin, probably nearing or in her early teens. She

wasn't sleeping around with the young guys of her day, as many junior high girls are today. She was pure, and the Lord was with her.

She was engaged to Joseph, the last stage before becoming his wife, but she hadn't engaged in premarital sex with him. Thus, she could honestly respond to the prospect of conception with the question, "How can this happen? I am not married?" (Luke 1:34)

Mary knew her position and was comfortable with it. She was a handmaid, a servant, submissive to the will of God in her life, even if she didn't fully understand it. She wasn't constantly questioning God but "kept all these things in her heart." (Luke 2:51) Her response, from which she never wavered throughout her life, even when her son was killed, was "I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said." (Luke 1:38)

She was a woman of unwavering faith. Her faith was expressed in her obedience to the Law and in her relationship with Joseph. She consecrated Jesus, the firstborn son, to the Lord as it was written in the Law of the Lord. Though they were poor, they offered the required sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, in accordance with the dictate in the Law of the Lord. (Luke 2:22-24)

Mary and Joseph practiced their religion together faithfully, and under their influence Jesus "became wise and grew strong. God was pleased with him, and so were the people." (Luke 2:52) Jesus was obedient to them.

Mary supported Jesus in his ministry and evidently accompanied him as she is often mentioned among the women who ministered to his needs. We know from John's gospel that she gently interceded on behalf of the couple at the marriage feast of Cana (John 2:3-5). She didn't make an issue of it or take over and manipulate the circumstances; she simply stated the situation and allowed Jesus to respond as he chose. Her response to the servants is her response to us, "Do whatever Jesus tells you to do."

The mother of Jesus was there when it counted. She was at the foot of the cross, when all of his followers had run away in fear. She was willing to follow Jesus, even to the cross, regardless of the possible consequences to her own life.

Finally, she was a committed member of the early community. She is mentioned among those in the upper room who devoted themselves with one accord in prayer. (Acts 1:14) Thus, she was there on the Day of Pentecost when they were filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. (Acts 2:1-4)

Contrast this woman and mother with the "liberated" women and girls of today. Mary knew what she was liberated from - the same sin and death that you and I have been liberated from. More importantly, she knew what she had been liberated for - to be the woman, the mother, and the companion of the Son of God made man. In this, she fulfilled the womanly role for which God had created her and exhibited the Godly attributes that God had instilled in her.

This is the role model that women and girls need to see today if they are to be truly liberated. No man in his right mind could resist such a woman. No man in his right mind could abuse, or take advantage of, or divorce such a woman.

May God again raise up a generation of women of whom it may be said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28)