

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ISLAM VS. CHRISTIANITY: THE VALUE AND SEXUALITY OF
WOMEN IN ISLAM COMPARED TO THE VALUE AND
SEXUALITY OF WOMEN IN CHRISTIANITY

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CHAPTER ONE: THE QUR'AN

In order to understand fully how the Muslim family unit works, it is crucial to understand the religion in which Muslims operate. This is best accomplished by analyzing who Muhammad was, what he wrote, what he said, and the religious mores that he enacted. Furthermore, a strategic evaluation of the Qur'an provides ample insight into the practical application of Islamic household codes.

Muhammad ibn Abdullah was born in 570 A.D. and was orphaned at a young age.¹ His father Abdullah, died before Muhammad was born and his mother, Amina, died when Muhammad was six years old.² Early on, Muhammad was employed in Mecca's thriving caravan trade.³ Later, Muhammad became the steward, or business manager for the caravan of a wealthy woman, Khadija. He later married Khadija when he was twenty-five years old; Khadija was forty.

Mecca was a prosperous center for trade and Muhammad made a name for himself within the Meccan society. He eventually earned the nickname, al-Amin, the trusted one.⁴ Muhammad's religious prominence did not come until he was forty years old. One night, during the month of Ramadan, Muhammad had a dream, in which he claimed that the angel Gabriel spoke to him. This was the first revelation that Muhammad had, but he would receive many

¹ Winfried Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 1998), 78.

² John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

more over the next twenty-two years of his life. These messages would later be collected and written down in the Qur'an, Islam's sacred scripture.⁵

Allah is at the center of Islam. His name appears more than 2,500 times in the Qur'an. Muhammad declared the existence of Allah, as the only true god, the transcendent, all-powerful and all-knowing creator, sustainer, ordainer and judge of the universe.⁶ Muhammad served both as Allah's human instrument in bearing his revelation, and as the model or ideal whom all believers should emulate.⁷ The Qur'an is the Book of God for Muslims. It contains the direct and final revelations of Allah to Muhammad, sent as a guide for humankind.

This thesis serves to evaluate whether God, as seen through Christian and classical Islamic scriptures, is oppressive to women. Given the diversity of Islamic practice in the world, this thesis will only address the classical sources of Islam and the interpretations derived from them. Additionally, this thesis will evaluate the Christian treatment of women in the context of the New Testament, with a brief investigation of the creation account in Genesis.

VALUE

Man's Value

The best way to assess the value of man, as established in the Qur'an, is to look to specific passages that deal with man. It is through these passages that certain ideals and precepts concerning man are observed. Creation is one of these fundamental passages.

⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁶ Ibid., 22.

⁷ Ibid., 5.

The creation account within the Qur'an shares similarities with the creation story of the Old Testament, however, there are crucial differences between the two accounts as well. Within the Qur'an, Allah created Adam out of dust and then spoke him into being.⁸ While Adam was not molded and shaped by Allah's hands, he was created in the image of Allah, and he was created for a specific purpose. Allah had a plan and a duty for Adam that was unknown by the angels. In fact, Allah told the angels surrounding him that He was going to create a vicegerent⁹ for Earth.¹⁰ While delegating duty to Adam, the most notable evidence of the position and value that Adam was given is depicted in how Allah commanded the angels to treat Adam. Allah made no reservations that He was all knowing and commanded the angels who questioned His appointment of Adam to then bow down to Adam.¹¹ All the angels, save one, bowed down to Adam. Not only did Allah impart specific knowledge to Adam, but He also commanded the angels and the rest of creation to bow before Adam. Adam truly was valuable to Allah.

Man's word is also valued more than woman's, as noted previously. This is most clearly seen in the creation of a contract, deed, or other legal document where witnesses are needed to authorize the validity of the document. The Qur'an states that when forming such a document, a person should gather two male witnesses, however, if two male witnesses are not available, then

⁸ Surah 3:52.

⁹ *Riverside Webster's II New College Dictionary*, s.v. "Vicegerent." Vicegerent is a latin word denoting an administrative deputy appointed by a ruler or head of state. In this context, Allah had created Adam with the purpose of representing Allah on Earth. Allah gave Adam a certain amount of authority and knowledge in order to perform this duty.

¹⁰ Surah 2:28.

¹¹ Surah 2:29.

one male and two females are required.¹² This denotes first and foremost that a woman's word has half the value of a man's word, but the Qur'an continues on in this passage to describe that the requirement of two women is in place to protect against one woman forgetting the merits of the document. Therefore, a woman's word is only half that of a man's, because her mind is weaker than a man's.

This disparity can further be seen in cases of rape. A woman found in *zina*, sex, with a man who is not her husband has violated not only Islamic law, but also the moral codes set forth in the Qur'an. In fact, the Qur'an states that if a woman is accused of sexual relations outside her marriage, she must present four witnesses that testify that she was indeed raped, or the rapist must confess to his crime. If four witnesses are not found, and the woman admits to her being raped, she must swear four times that the man is lying, and invoke the wrath of Allah on her if she has lied.¹³ However, the same provision is given to a man who claims that he did not rape her but that it was consensual. Without witnesses, he must swear by Allah four times that he is truthful and invoke the wrath of Allah upon him if he has lied.¹⁴ This appears to be even treatment of both parties involved in the matter, except that a woman's testimony is only worth half that of a man's. Thus, if engaged in a "he said, she said" battle, the deference must be given to the man whose testimony is more highly valued. Ultimately, since man's word is valued more highly than a woman's, it is conceivable and legally possible for a man to take advantage of a woman and the law would acquit the man of all wrongdoing.

¹² Surah 2:282.

¹³ Surah 24:8,9.

¹⁴ Surah 24:6,7.

One can also see the value that Islam places on man in the authority he is given in a number of domestic situations. In the context of death, a woman may only inherit half of what a man inherits.¹⁵ Specifically, a male child will inherit double of what his sister inherits from their father, simply based upon gender. In the context of a marriage, a man will inherit half of his wives property, unless they have children, then the husband will inherit one fourth of the wife's property.¹⁶ In direct contrast, a wife will inherit one fourth of her husband's property, unless they have children, then she will inherit one eighth of her husband's property.¹⁷ In either context, the man is given more based solely on his gender. Many scholars insist that this disparity is due to the financial obligations and pressures that are placed upon males that a female does not have to endure.¹⁸ From this reasoning it should then follow that a woman who has been widowed and has children is now financially responsible for her children and thus should be given a greater inheritance proportion, but this is not the case.

Man is also highly valued within the marriage relationship. The Qur'an very boldly states that man is a degree above woman in status.¹⁹ Furthermore, it is the man who takes the first steps towards marriage by seeking a woman he wishes to marry. Unlike the Western culture, Islam does not allow a woman to be alone with a man who is not her kin. Thus any type

¹⁵ Surah 4:11.

¹⁶ Surah 4:13.

¹⁷ Surah 4:14.

¹⁸ Islamic Studies, "Towards Understanding the Qur'an," Islamic Studies, <http://www.islamicstudies.info/tafheem.php?sura=4&verse=11&to=14> (accessed April 15, 2011)

¹⁹ Surah 2:228.

of dating is completely forbidden. Instead, the man seeks a woman to wed, pays a dowry that is arranged with the woman's father, or guardian, and then marries the woman.²⁰ It is the men, not the women, who arrange all marriage contract negotiations. This is only the beginning of the authority and value that the Qur'an places on man within marriage.

Man is allowed to be polygamous according to the Qur'an, while women are only to have one husband. In fact, man is given the opportunity to have up to four wives at one time within the Qur'an.²¹ However, the lynchpin in this passage is the key phrase, "...who have fallen within your possession." An Islamic man can have four wives, while also pleasuring himself with any of the slave girls or women that he possesses. These women are not considered a "wife" in the context of Surah 4:3. Therefore, an Islamic man could not only have four wives but an endless number of slave women who must serve as sexual slaves, satisfying the man's lust whenever it arises.

Additionally, the Qur'an sanctions a religious form of prostitution in Surah 4:24. This passage teaches that the dowry paid to the bride is more of an obligation, or a wage, paid to the female in exchange for the man's right to have sex with her. Thus, marriage does not have to be a permanent relationship between two people, but rather a contractual obligation. Indeed, this interpretation of the Qur'an gives rise to the potential of temporary and traveler's marriages, where marriages only last a few days.

²⁰ Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri, *Reliance of the Traveler*, trans. and ed. Nuh Ha Mim Keller (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1994), m8.2, 532.

²¹ Surah 4:3.

While many Muslims deny this interpretation of Surah 4:24²², however it is quite similar to the interpretation made by one of the greatest and most revered Muslim theologians, Imam Ghazali.²³ Ghazali defined marriage vividly when he stated, “Marriage is a form of slavery. The woman is the man’s slave, and her duty therefore is absolute obedience to the husband in all that he asks of her in person. A woman, who at the moment of her death enjoys the full approval of her husband, will find her place in paradise.”²⁴ Imam Ghazali’s interpretation and teachings on the meaning of Surah 4:24 not only had an implication on the marriage relationship, but also on the factors that decide a woman’s eternal resting place.

Man is also given the priority and power in the issuing of a divorce. Divorce is an option only available to men, and is as easy as saying, “I divorce you,” three times.²⁵ Men can divorce their wives for any reason they wish, even if it is only to take a different wife to fill her position. In fact, the Qur’an itself warns the wife that she can be replaced. “Maybe, his Lord, if he divorce you, will give him in your place wives better than you, submissive, faithful, obedient, penitent, adorers, fasters, widows, and virgins.”²⁶ Even after being divorced, the woman must stay with her husband for an allotted amount of time to ensure that she is not pregnant. Throughout the

²² Nonie Darwish, *Cruel and Usual Punishment* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 40.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Madelain Farah, *Marriage and Sexuality in Islam* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1984), 120. The direct quote was taken from Al-Ghazali’s *Book of Etiquette of Marriage*, 2:64.

²⁵ Nonie Darwish, *Cruel and Usual Punishment* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 35.

²⁶ Surah 66:5.

marriage the man has the authority, and this authority is not dispelled within the issuing of a divorce.

Woman's Value

The value of a woman as displayed in the Qur'an is significantly different from that of their male counterpart. As noted above, man was created in the image of Allah. This is the generic implication that mankind was created in the image of Allah, thus women also bear the image of Allah. However, a woman's value is not equal that of a man's. "Islam teaches that women are inherently inferior to men."²⁷ The Qur'an states that man and woman have equal rights against each other, but that man is a degree above the woman.²⁸

Furthermore, in Surah 4:34 the Qur'an states "men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God has gifted one above the other." Translators argue that this verse refers to the objective that women are created to help the man, and man is to provide for the woman in all things.²⁹ This verse is also said to empower women to know their rightful master is Allah, and her husband's demands may be left incomplete if it violates Allah's word. Whether or not one accepts this interpretation, it still leaves open the theory that Allah did not create woman to care for herself, or be equal with man. The woman, according to this verse, is made weaker and dependent upon the financial, emotional, and spiritual protection of the man.

²⁷ Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Caner. *Unveiling Islam* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 2002), 133.

²⁸ Surah 2:228.

²⁹ Hashim Amir-Ali, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1974), M4, 466.

As discussed above, a woman's word is not valued as highly as a man's. In fact, in matters of testimony, it takes two women to testify to the same facts as one man.³⁰ Again, this argument goes back to the creation of woman. If woman is not created with the same capacity as man, then her ability to recall specific details of a contractual agreement could be hindered. Thus, two women will be able to provide a more trustworthy recollection of the agreement.

The implications of this view are boldly seen in the cases of rape. As noted earlier, a woman who is accused of adultery or fornication must provide four witnesses to testify that she was not willfully committing adultery or fornication, but that she was raped. The Qur'an states that in cases of rape, the woman can swear by Allah that she is truthfully speaking of the crime against her and the law shall acquit her of punishment.³¹ Yet, that same verse states that a man has the same opportunity to swear by Allah of his veracity. In the context of rape, where rarely an audience is present, that leaves the court to determine the outcome between a man's word and a woman's word. Inevitably, by following the regulations placed within the Qur'an, the man's word must take authority over the woman's. Thus, a woman who has been raped must find four witnesses to testify on her behalf or risk punishment, and possibly death for her immoral actions.

A woman must be careful when she merely opens her mouth and speaks in a room where men could hear her. Her voice can be considered alluring to men and may cause one to stumble into sin. Thus the Qur'an states that a woman, specifically the Prophets wives, should only answer a man, other than her husband, if there is a genuine need for the answer.³² As a result,

³⁰ Surah 2:282.

³¹ Surah 24:8,9.

Muslim women are mindful not to add any undue softness in their tone, or allurements in their conversation, which might excite the male hearers and encourage them to make advances.³³

With this additional requirement placed on women, she is literally a servant in her own home, fetching that which her husband desires and serving her guests without a word.

When it comes to making decisions both for herself and for her family, the woman has few, if any, options. The woman was created weaker than the man as noted in Surah 4:34, so she is subject to his authority in matters of finances, household rules, spirituality and care. The value of a woman's opinion is not seen within the pages of the Qur'an. In fact, within the verses of the Qur'an, it is almost presented as a gift to women that they do not have these responsibilities or obligations, rather they should be pleased to stay at home use their skills within the context of the home.³⁴ It is then no surprise that the Dictionary of Islam says: "Let him not consult her on matters of paramount importance; let him not make her acquainted with his secrets, nor let her know the amount of his property, or the stores he possesses, beyond those in present consumption, or her weakness of judgment with infallibly set things wrong."³⁵

³² Surah 33:32.

³³ Geraldine Brooks, *Nine Parts of Desire* (New York, Anchor Books, 1995), 162.

³⁴ Surah 33:33.

³⁵ Thomas Patrick Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam* (Chicago, IL: Kazi Publications, Inc., 1994), 675.

SEXUALITY

Man's Sexuality

The importance of man's sexuality is seen throughout the Qur'an. Of utmost importance is the purity of the man. This involves not only the purity of himself, but also of whomever he comes into contact with.³⁶ A woman's value is practically non-existent without her purity. However, in man's situation, purity is a very fluid concept. It does not involve keeping himself for only one woman, since polygamous marriages are allowed. Purity does not require a man to veil his face, or not to speak in a room filled with women. A man actually has several religious and legal guards to protect his purity that are not afforded to the Islamic woman. Many are seen within the context of the Islamic marriage.

“Marriage in Islam is regarded as a contract because it is based on the mutual consent of both man and woman and because it is dissoluble when the rights and duties, which are fixed by law, are not met.”³⁷ Unlike Christianity, which holds marriage out as a covenant before God and unbreakable, Islam's concept of marriage is much more practical. Marriage is viewed as an institution that preserves mankind from going astray.³⁸ Thus, the sanctity of the marriage is portrayed as less important than the practical implications that it creates. According to Al-Ghazali, marriage serves as a protection of society in order that human beings may guard

³⁶ Surah 24:26.

³⁷ Madelain Farah, *Marriage and Sexuality in Islam* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1984), 11.

³⁸ Ibid.

themselves against promiscuity and unchastity.³⁹ This protection really only serves the Islamic men, as women are given to one man in marriage and are killed rather than rebuked if they stray from that institution.

Satisfying man's sexuality appears to be the biggest reason behind Islamic marriage. His insatiable desire and lust must be quenched, one way or another, and marriage is the key to this mission. The Qur'an not only enables the fulfillment of this desire, but also treats it as a man's right to satisfy his sexual urges. "The wife is considered the husband's sex object."⁴⁰ Within the Qur'an, a woman/wife is compared to a field. Allah states that man may "plow her as you please."⁴¹ Man really has very little limitations on how his lust can be fulfilled. A man can actually marry a young girl, sometimes as young as 6 or 7 years of age. Muhammad himself demonstrated this practice. He married Aisha when she was only six years of age. He didn't consummate the marriage until she was nine, however the marriage was legal and allowed. Since Muhammad is the great prophet within Islam, it follows that emulating his life would be righteous, thus a man's sexual appetite need not turn away from mere children. As mentioned earlier when discussing divorce, the man must wait a period of three months before the divorce is final to assure no pregnancy has occurred. The Qur'an guides the Islamic man in this verse and

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Caner. *Unveiling Islam* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 2002), 137.

⁴¹ Surah 2:223.

by doing so, also is justifying the notion that the man may have a wife who has yet to enter puberty.⁴²

If that were not enough to satisfy the lustful thoughts of a man, the Qur'an also ordains the marriage of up to four wives within Islam.⁴³ Man's one restraint in multiple marriages is to be fair to each wife.⁴⁴ In fact, this allowance is more so boasted as a prevention of sin rather than a degradation of women. The man cannot control himself, thus instead of committing adultery or fornication, he may marry this woman as another wife. As discussed earlier, divorce is rather simple for a man to obtain, so this provision for four wives only reflects the idea of four wives at a single time.

In addition to the numerous wives an Islamic man may take, the Qur'an grants him permission to have sexual relations with as many slave women as he wants and owns.⁴⁵ This provision again makes an exception for the man to satisfy his sexual desires. In fact, the women slaves are not considered part of the four wives provision and thus, a man could conceivably have hundreds of sexual partners within his women slaves. There are several passages within the Qur'an that further promote the Islamic man's sexual relations with his slave women.⁴⁶ This

⁴² Surah 65:4. This verse speaks of the waiting period for divorce with a woman is three monthly cycles, but it also mentions to wait three months for a wife who has yet to have her monthly cycle, thus making her a prepubescent girl.

⁴³ Surah 4:3.

⁴⁴ Hashim Amir-Ali, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1974), M4, 461.

⁴⁵ Surah 4:24.

further shows the high value that the Qur'an places not only on man's sexuality, but also on the fulfillment of his desires.

In yet another context, the Qur'an supports the filling of the man's sexual desires while he is away from his wives. "The term *mutaa*, or pleasure marriage, is a temporary marriage contract to sanction a night of pleasure."⁴⁷ Women who are otherwise covered from head to toe on the street are treated and act like prostitutes in these religiously sanctioned temporary "marriages" that could last for an hour.⁴⁸ The justification for these marriages comes directly from the Qur'an, Surah 4:24. This is said to be yet another way to fight against "illicit" sex within the Islamic community.

Last, there is yet another provision within the Qur'an for the man's sexual urges to be satisfied without the loss of purity. The Qur'an provides that a man, while away from his wives traveling, may enter into a temporary marriage with another woman as long as an appropriate dowry is paid to the woman. This is known as a *misyar* or "traveler's marriage."⁴⁹ Given this addition, an Islamic man need never spend a night alone without the company of a woman. Whether it be one of his four wives, a slave woman, a night of pleasure, or a random woman along his trade route, the sexual desires of the Islamic man need never go unsatisfied. Every possible situation where lust would arise, the Qur'an has created and justified a way for the man

⁴⁶ Surah 4:2; 23:5,6; 33:50; 70:22-30. All of these passages permit male slave-owners to have sex with the slave-girls.

⁴⁷ Nonie Darwish, *Cruel and Usual Punishment* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 35.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

to act upon and fulfill his wants without damaging his religious piety. All of these marriages and sanctioned sexual encounters are supported by Surah 4:24 which is used as a basis for Allah's support of these actions.

“Islam is one of the few religions to include sex as one of the rewards of the afterlife—although only for male believers.”⁵⁰ The Qur'an does not eliminate or reduce the sexual pleasure of the man to here on Earth. In fact, the Qur'an actually promises Islamic men that Paradise will be a sexual buffet for them as well. As noted by Geraldine Brooks, one of the many descriptions of Paradise found in the Qur'an, “reads like a brochure for a heavenly whorehouse.”⁵¹ Paradise is described in Surah 55. Faithful men are promised virgins who neither *jinn*⁵² nor man has touched. The Qur'an again notes that Paradise is a place to reward the faithful Islamic follower.⁵³ The Qur'an is literally stating that Paradise, a garden filled with virgins for men to have sex with, is the appropriate reward for the faithful follower. The sexuality of the man in Islam is not only highly valued on Earth, but is also the source of his reward in Paradise.

Woman's Sexuality

In stark contrast to the sexuality constantly exercised by man, the woman's sexuality is something to be hidden, ashamed of, and protected at all costs. Unlike men, women's honor is

⁵⁰ Geraldine Brooks, *Nine Parts of Desire* (New York, Anchor Books, 1995), 39.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Surah 55:56. Jinn are spiritual beings within the teaching of Islam. They are able to change their shape, and are said to be one of the three sentient creatures made by Allah. Jinn have been equivocated to the idea of angels within Christianity.

⁵³ Surah 55:60.

directly associated with her purity. Thus to remain a good woman within Islam, a woman must never place herself in a situation where her purity is questioned. “Many Muslims say that women are to cover their body for their own protection as a way of honoring women, but in reality a woman’s body is considered a thing she should be ashamed of.”⁵⁴

“Every part of a woman’s body provokes sexual temptation to the Muslim male, who has been trained to regard them all equally as erotic as her private parts.”⁵⁵ However, his temptation and perhaps sinful actions as a result of that temptation are not his responsibility, but her problem.⁵⁶ When this purity is seen in light of the family honor, the entire family depends upon the women for their place in society.

Marriage does not provide women equality with the male either. As mentioned earlier, men can marry young girls well before puberty. Thus a girl has a very short childhood before she is required to be someone’s husband and fulfill the duties associated with this position. As one can imagine, the young girl is not the one looking at the male in love and choosing him as her husband; rather it is her father or grandfather who is tasked with the marriage contract.

Men are allowed to take up to four wives at a time in Islam. Women are not given a choice in the marriage, and she certainly is not allowed to take another husband. She can be

⁵⁴ Nonie Darwish, *Cruel and Usual Punishment* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 77.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

punished even if her voice reflects a desire for another man.⁵⁷ Thus a woman's sexuality before and within marriage is subject to the desires of the men in her life.

The Qur'an orders women to be the passive possession of her husband. She is nothing more than a piece of land to him. Allah commands husbands to "plow her {wife} as he will."⁵⁸ There is no mutual respect within the Islamic marriage. The woman is to be available to fulfill the sexual desires of her husband whenever he demands it. In fact, a woman is not allowed to take control of her body when her husband demands sex and she does not wish to oblige. The Qur'an states that the "angels curse the woman until the morning" for denying her husband's request. This can turn into something much more extreme if this denial is seen as direct disobedience to her husband, the Qur'an also sanctions the beating of the woman in order to encourage obedience.⁵⁹ That passage will be examined more deeply in a later section, however it does serve to expose the lack of control a woman has over her sexuality within Islam.

Paradise for the women who can attain it does not provide her any freedom with regard to her sexuality. In fact, Paradise for the woman involves a type of competition between her, her husband's other wives who entered Paradise, and the other virgins available to her husband.⁶⁰ It is not the woman who is rewarded with virgins in Paradise; rather she is one of the rewards given

⁵⁷ Surah 33:32.

⁵⁸ Surah 2:223.

⁵⁹ Surah 4:34.

⁶⁰ Nonie Darwish, *Cruel and Usual Punishment* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 55.

to her husband.⁶¹ In his commentary on the Qur'an, Al-Tabari states that the word *aswaj* is the plural form of *saxj* meaning man's wife.⁶² He explains these new wives are pure, free from the defilement and pollution of this fallen world.⁶³

When describing Paradise for man and woman, Allah only mentions man's rewards. Muslim polemicists argue that the virgins promised to believers in the Qur'an do not only refer to the maidens earned by the men in Paradise.⁶⁴ This argument can hardly stand scrutiny, as it is one from silence. The virgins described in the Qur'an have beautiful bodies, large breasts, and wide eyes only focused on their husbands.⁶⁵ This hardly sounds like the description of a male. From what the Qur'an states, Paradise for women is the same existence they have here on Earth: as sexual beings owned by their husbands.

⁶¹ Surah 2:25. Earthly wives in Islam will continue to be matched with their husbands in Paradise. The only difference is that the woman's earthly impurities will be gone.

⁶² Abu Ja'Far Muhammad B. Jarir Al-Tabari, *The Commentary on the Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 179.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Bassam Zawadi, "Misconceptions About the Islamic Paradise," Answering Christianity, http://www.answering-christianity.com/bassam_zawadi/islamic_paradise.htm (accessed April 10, 2011).

⁶⁵ Surah 37:44. Also described in Surahs 52:20, 38:52, and 44:51.

CARE

Man's Care

Man's care is directly linked to the respect that he is given from his family and his wife. This respect is most clearly found in the obedience that is given to the man from his wife. She was created to be his support system and thus out of deference for his position in the family, her obedience to his direction is a direct reflection of the respect

Man's honor, unlike a woman's, does not come from within himself. Rather, a man's honor is placed within the purity of his wives and any other women within his family. This honor extends to his entire family. His sexual activities, nor his spiritual piety, garner the respect that is established within the purity of the women in his household. Therefore it is incumbent upon the man to guard the purity of his women, and if that purity is tarnished, he must restore honor in any way Islam allows.

Woman's Care

In many ways, a woman is responsible for caring for herself. While the marriage contract provides for her financial well being, and the well being of her children, it does come at a cost. The Qur'an not only establishes the duty of the woman to guard her honor, but if that honor is tarnished, her husband can easily divorce her and leave her to fend for herself.⁶⁶ While many scholars argue that the Qur'an also places guidelines on how the woman is to be treated, such passages must be considered in light of the entire book. When a married woman reads that she

⁶⁶ Madelain Farah, *Marriage and Sexuality in Islam* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1984), 18.

can be replaced at any time, as sanctioned by Allah⁶⁷, there is not an overwhelming indication that she is honored within the religion.

As far as respect for the wife, there is little within the Qur'an that demands such respect, and in totality, there are many passages that describe why women are not deserving of respect. She was created inferior to man, her husband is a degree above her in his authority, she inherits half of what a man does, and her testimony is worth half of what her male counterpart's is. With all of these passages against her, it is hard to imagine that Islamic teachings truly care for and respect women. The Qur'an does state that women are to be treated with love and kindness and respected by their husbands.⁶⁸ If taken merely at face value, the Qur'an states that women, just like men, will be rewarded for their righteousness.

These passages that place great value on the woman are then placed next to the passage that demands a woman's obedience to her husband under threat of physical abuse. Surah 4:34 allows for a man to beat his wife if she disobeys his desire. This physical abuse, ordained by Allah, is the greatest disrespect to women. Regardless of any other passage within the Qur'an, to sanction the physical abuse of women negates all other passages. Muslim polemicists argue that the beating described in the Qur'an is that of light tapping, that it is not allowed to cause pain, but is meant to train a woman into the righteous actions that she is called to. Furthermore, proponents of Surah 4:34 also state that the man must have a just cause for hitting his wife. While the just cause is not specifically stated within the Qur'an, proponents recite certain parts of hadith that also support the beating of one's wife. However, while a section of the hadith

⁶⁷ Surah, 66:5.

⁶⁸ Surah 4:19.

requires just cause for a beating, there is yet another portion of the hadith, which states that man is not to be questioned about his reasons for beating his wife. Whether alleged justification is required or not does not matter in light of the fact that the husband is not required to make such justification known. Thus the respect allegedly demanded for women within the Qur'an must be lost somewhere in the translation of the word "beat."

CHAPTER TWO: THE HADITH

In order to study Islam's foundation and theology in its totality, one must look further than the Qur'an. While the Qur'an holds prominence within Islam, it is only half of the equation. To understand fully the words, meanings, and commands in the Qur'an, one must look to the hadith for guidance. The word hadith could be translated as a speech or a saying or even small talk.⁶⁹ The hadith is a collection of sayings and practices of Muhammad, as collected and reported by a few of his closest companions. The sayings and practices of Muhammad, in addition to being repeated for the spiritual edification of the believer, were codified as legally binding precedents.⁷⁰ "These volumes expounded upon Muhammad's crucial, everlasting commandments."⁷¹

The analysis of the hadith could be relatively simple if agreed upon by the majority of Islamic scholars. If the hadith, like the Qur'an, consisted of one mutually agreed upon collection of sayings and practices, there would not be a large problem. However, since this is not the case, the mere volume of hadith introduces a new, important, and very difficult problem with the hadith: which hadiths are authentic, and which ones are not.⁷²

⁶⁹ William Campbell, "The Hadith and the Sunna," Answering Islam, <http://www.answering-islam.org/Campbell/s2c2.html> (accessed February 25, 2011).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Caner. *Unveiling Islam* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 2002), 95.

⁷² William Campbell, "The Hadith and the Sunna," Answering Islam, <http://www.answering-islam.org/Campbell/s2c2.html> (accessed February 25, 2011).

Traditions regarding the life of Muhammad and the early history of Islam were passed down orally for more than one hundred years after the death of Muhammad in 632 A.D.⁷³ Muslim historians suggest that it was the third caliph, Uthman, who urged Muslims to pen both the Qur'an and the hadith in a fixed form. However, Uthman's efforts were not accomplished as soldiers assassinated him in 656.⁷⁴ The Muslim community (ummah) then fell into a prolonged civil war, termed the *Fitna* by Muslim historians.⁷⁵ Yet another caliph was assassinated and the Islamic empire was seized by the Umayyad dynasty in 661 not to be returned to the Islamic people until 758. Muslim scholars suggest that the hadith collection and evaluation continued during this tumultuous time period, however, most of this likely happened through oral transmission. If any early scholars committed any of these collections to writing, they have not survived.⁷⁶ Thus, the histories and hadith collections we possess today were written at the start of the Abbasid period, more than one hundred years after the death of Muhammad, while some hadith collections continued into the 10th Century.⁷⁷

Scholars use a number of techniques to test the veracity and authentication of hadith, known as the science of hadith. Perhaps the most common technique involves the study of the chain of transmission. To validate any hadith, there must be evidential proof that the chain of transmission is both possible and reliable. In hadith science, the reliability factor rests on a

⁷³ Sacramento Area League of Associated Muslims, "What is Hadith," Salam Center, <http://salamcenter.org/islam/discover-islam/what-is-hadith> (accessed March 2, 2011).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

reference to Muhammad's life and action, a reference to an eyewitness, or preference for those that were Muhammad's closest companions. After these considerations have been made, the hadith are then classified as sound, good, weak, and forged based upon their chain.⁷⁸ Due to the varying degrees of authenticity, this chapter will only include citations from the Sahih Al-Bukhari's and Sahih Muslim's version of the hadith, which are regarded as the most authentic collections.

VALUE

Man's Value

The story of man's creation takes a different turn in the Hadith. Instead of reiterating the story of Adam and Eve, the Hadith lends more to the physical attributes of Adam than the incredible creation story itself. The hadith purports that Adam was created in the image of Allah in a rather unusual way. While cautioning against hitting a brother in the face, one is told the reasoning for this command is that Allah created Adam in his image.⁷⁹ In addition to Adam's image, the Hadith also attributes value to the creation of man in describing the magnitude and joy of Allah on the day that Adam was created.⁸⁰ Again, while this hadith does not reference the actual molding of Adam out of clay, or his being spoken into existence, it does provide a small insight into man's creation.

⁷⁸ Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Caner. *Unveiling Islam* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 2002), 96.

⁷⁹ Al-Muslim 32:30:6325.

⁸⁰ Al-Muslim 4:152:1856,1857.

All of this is relatively minor in comparison to the last reference about Adam. In one other set of passages, Adam's physical body is described in detail that is found in no other passage, in both the Bible and the Qur'an. Adam is then described in six different hadiths, with some variation, as being created to stand 60 cubits high, or 90 feet!⁸¹ Several of these passages go on to say that Adam began to shorten after he sinned and that man has been decreasing in height ever since. While some Muslim scholars explain these passages as metaphorical, they all agree that whether Adam was 90 feet on earth or not, all those who dwell in Paradise will take on Adam's original 90 ft. form.⁸² While the actual earthly height of Adam has very little to do directly with the issues presented within this paper, it is at the very least notable that the only mention of man's creation in the hadith has been limited to these few passages that neither mention nor hint at the creation passages of the Qur'an.

Man's value can also be seen in the weight given to his word. The hadith supports the Qur'anic premise that a man's word is more valuable than a woman's. The hadith attributes the greater value of a man's word to the deficiency of a woman's mind.⁸³ This was the only passage to be found within the two books of the hadith that mentioned the value of a man's word over a woman's. However, it did follow along with the teachings of the Qur'an on the subject.

⁸¹ Al-Bukhari 4:55:543, 544. Al Bukhari 8:74:246. Al-Muslim 40:6796:6795, 40:6809.

⁸² Answering Islam, "Misrepresenting Muhammad's Teachings on Adam," Answering Islam, <http://www.answering-islam.org/Responses/Menj/60cubits.htm> (accessed March 2, 2011).

⁸³ Al-Bukhari 48:826.

The hadith also displays the greater value of man in its passages concerning inheritance. A male will inherit two times as much a female.⁸⁴ The fate is the same for a widowed woman who would inherit less than if her husband was widowed.⁸⁵ While no further discussion is associated with these payout determinations, these doctrines align with what has been proscribed in the Qur'an.

The hadith also recognizes the endless limits of a man's worth when choosing a bride. Not only is man granted more than one bride, he may also choose to wed a child as Muhammad did. It should be noted that the hadith contains passages where Muhammad commands men to marry, so as to avoid illicit sexual relations with a woman and thus sin against Allah.⁸⁶ Marriage is used throughout the hadith as a way to protect a man's honor, religion, and piety. Rather than deny his sexuality, the man can marry the woman, even if only temporarily, to satisfy his lustful desires and divorce her without violating his religious duties. Since Muhammad had encouraged marriage, it is natural that his followers would imitate him. However, this imitation goes as far as marrying young girls who have not even reached puberty. As noted in the hadith, Muhammad married his wife Aisha when she was only six years old, then consummated the marriage when she was nine.⁸⁷ Child brides were given to men as well as an endless number of wives. Granted, men were only given freedom to have four wives at a time, but with divorce so readily available to men, the particular wives could change at any given time.

⁸⁴ Al-Bakhari 80:731.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Al-Bukhari 62:1,3,7. Al-Muslim 8:3231.

⁸⁷ Al-Bukhari 62:64-65.

Divorce in the hadith also gives the power to the man. He must only repeat his words three times for the divorce from his wife to become final. While it is said that woman has the ability to divorce a man, the entire chapter on divorce within the Al-Bukhari's hadith related to men divorcing women. The same thing shows up in the chapter on divorce in the Al-Muslim hadith. While women are given the option of divorce, neither hadith was able to list an example.

Woman's Value

Notably absent in the hadith is a mention of the creation of Eve. While there is one reference to woman being created out of man's rib, it is like a "footnote" to the passage's meaning, that women are made with a crooked character.⁸⁸ Instead, the pages of the hadith are filled with passages warning men of the evils hidden within the woman. Men are told that women advance and retire in the shape of the devil,⁸⁹ they are deficient in both intellect and religion,⁹⁰ and that there is nothing more detrimental to the man than the woman.⁹¹ "It is clearly not just one troubling Bukhari hadith about women being deficient in intelligence and religion; it is the totality of Islamic teachings that treat women as evil and inferior."⁹² While the hadith tend to expound upon the creation and value of men in Islam, its treatment of women coincides with those passages found in the Qur'an. The subordinate role of the woman is not due to functional

⁸⁸ Al-Bukhari 7:62:113.

⁸⁹ Al-Muslim 8:3240.

⁹⁰ Al-Bukhari 1:6:301.

⁹¹ Al-Bukhari 7:62:33.

⁹² Nonie Darwish, *Cruel and Usual Punishment* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 86.

subordination, but consistently reiterated by Muhammad that it is due to their deficiency in intelligence and religion.⁹³ A woman's value is far less than that of a man's in both texts.

A woman fails to equal the man's value in matters of her word as well. The Hadith, like the Qur'an, insists that a woman's mind is deficient and thus her word is only worth half as much as a man's.⁹⁴ The same is true with a woman's inheritance. Whether a young girl or a widowed bride, the woman will always inherit half as much as her male counterpart. The hadith states that inheritance was bequeathed to the children in the early days of Islam, however, Allah wished to change the way in which inheritance was figured and cancelled his former ruling with one that diminished the woman's share.⁹⁵ However, no other reasoning is given as to Allah's sudden change of heart. Instead, with one sentence, woman's inheritance rights were cut in half.

Paradise can often be seen as a matter of inheritance - an inheritance given to the deserving. This is yet another area where a woman's worth is attacked. The hadith boasts several passages describing those who are seen entering Paradise, and those who will dwell in hell for all of eternity. Women are said to be the majority of inhabitants in hell.⁹⁶ This same passage, or variations of it, is repeated throughout the hadith. In fact, the hadith even claims that the reason more women are in hell than men is because of a woman's ungratefulness to her

⁹³ Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Caner. *Unveiling Islam* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 2002), 134.

⁹⁴ Al-Bukhari 48:826.

⁹⁵ Al-Bukhari 80:731.

⁹⁶ Al-Bukhari 54:464, 62:124, 126.

husband, as well as her deficiency of intelligence and religion.⁹⁷ While some Muslim polemicists try to defend these passages with examples of a higher female population in the world⁹⁸, others acknowledge that the passage contains its defense.⁹⁹ According to the hadith, women are ungrateful to their husbands and are deficient, thus the passage is seen more as a warning to other women to be mindful of their husbands less they become part of the majority.¹⁰⁰

Marriage in the hadith offers little value to women. Women are no more than an asset to be gained by a man. The hadith again supports the foundation of marriage that is found in the Qur'an. Men are given the power to have more than one wife¹⁰¹ and allowed to marry children.¹⁰² The husband's rights over the woman are seen most pointedly in a hadith translated by Aisha. In this hadith, a young girl, who was betrothed to be married, asked Muhammad what the husband's rights were from a woman. Muhammad answered, "Were he covered with pus from the tip of his head to the soles of his feet, and were she to lick him, she would not compensate him enough."¹⁰³ This depiction of what a woman owes her husband demonstrates the meaningless value given to women.

⁹⁷ Al-Bukhari 1:6:301.

⁹⁸ Islam World, "Paradise and Hell," Islam World, <http://www.islamworld.net/docs/heavenhell.htm> (accessed March 15, 2011).

⁹⁹ Islam QA, "Paradise and Hell," Islam QA, <http://www.islam-qa.com/en/cat/2020#3869> (accessed March 28, 2011).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Al-Bukhari 62:1.

¹⁰² Al-Bukhari 62:63-65.

The one alleged safeguard to the fair treatment of women in marriage was intended to be the dowry. Each bride was to receive a gift, of value, to be paid to her prior to the marriage. It was said that if this gift did not meet the standards for which a woman of her standing was worth, then the marriage was not valid and thus would not be executed. However, several passages in the hadith undermine this requirement. Muhammad himself proceeded in marrying a man who was unable to provide a suitable dowry to his bride. In fact, one such story is repeated several times within the hadith. A woman had asked for Muhammad to marry her, but a companion of Muhammad asked to be married to her. Muhammad asked if he had anything to give to the woman but the man had nothing. Muhammad then asked if the man had an iron ring to give, or cloak. The man did not have anything. However, Muhammad married the man to the woman because he had knowledge of the Qur'an, at least specific Surahs within the Qur'an.¹⁰⁴

Interestingly, this marriage was executed even when the bride was given nothing. Her dowry consisted of memory verses given to her by her husband, something that had no monetary value to her. The one area where something equitable might be enforced within the marriage contract and Muhammad himself ignores it. Instead, the first gift he asks of the groom is an iron ring. Due to the narration of the hadith, it is clear that an iron ring was not what would typically be given as a dowry, but something below the standard that the bride deserved.

¹⁰³ Madelain Farah, *Marriage and Sexuality in Islam* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1984), 121.

¹⁰⁴ Al-Bukhari 62:23,24,54,55.

Not only are brides not guaranteed their due in dowry, they are forced into a type of sexual abuse within their marriage, as deemed appropriate within the hadith. A woman is not allowed to deny her husband sex unless she is menstruating. However, if a woman does deny her husband, the hadith states that the angels will curse her until the morning.¹⁰⁵ Thus her religious standing is affected by her sex drive or lack thereof.

The last area of inequality displayed within the marriage relationship is the number of different marriages that men are allowed to partake in. Women are only allowed one husband, and her dedication and purity to her husband is of utmost importance, not only for the well being of her family, but also for the well being of her status with Allah. Men however are given the option to have four wives at any one time and, if traveling, can arrange for a temporary marriage to satisfy his lustful desires while he is away.¹⁰⁶ Many argue that the temporary marriages are no longer allowed in Islam, however, their mere existence displays the devaluation of women within the marriage relationship.

As noted above, men are given the greatest value and power in the marriage when issues of divorce arise. In fact, the hadith implies that it is better for a woman who expects divorce from her husband to offer him another wife as opposed to divorce.¹⁰⁷ No woman wants to be divorced and carry the stigma that goes with it. Instead, as the hadith suggests,

¹⁰⁵ Al-Bukhari 62:134.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Bukhari 62:52. Al-Muslim 8:3249-3255.

¹⁰⁷ Al Bukhari 62:134.

it is better for a wife to suggest another woman rather than divorce. It is hard to imagine a religion that would force women into a position where polygamy is the only viable solution, but the hadith and the Qur'an display the dangers of a divorce for the woman.

SEXUALITY

Mans' Sexuality

The hadith, like the Qur'an, accounts for and makes necessary provisions to protect man's sexuality. A man need not control his behavior or have the least bit of restraint because the teachings of Muhammad support his lustful actions. In fact, Muhammad's sexuality is boasted about within the pages of the hadith, giving all other men an ideal to attain.¹⁰⁸ While a woman's sexuality is something to be ashamed of and covered, a man's sexuality is one that is to be boasted of. He has no need to control his thoughts or his actions. He only needs to make sure that his actions are covered by religious doctrine.

Men need not limit their lustful glances only to women, since child marriages are deemed appropriate, and practiced by Muhammad, men are allowed to be aroused by young girls. These child brides, if like Aisha, literally go from playing with dolls, to having sex with a twenty or thirty year old man, and it is all sanctioned by his religion.

However, men need not stop there. They are allowed up to four wives at one time. Therefore his sexuality need not be contained, he must merely pay a dowry to each of

¹⁰⁸ Al-Bukhari 62:142. Al-Muslim 8:3240. These two passages describe Muhammad's nightly visit to each of his wives. It is stated within these two passages that Muhammad visited each of his nine wives in one night, having sex with them all.

his brides. As mentioned earlier, this dowry was supposed to be of value equal to the woman's position, but now can be as little as a few memorized passages of scripture.¹⁰⁹

Additionally, the hadith supports the temporary marriages of men to women for a period of three days.¹¹⁰ Where a man is on a business trip or traveling alone for some reason and needs his sexual desires to be fulfilled, he is able to contract for a temporary marriage with a woman outside of his four wives. All he need do is arrange to pay her a dowry for the marriage. Whether within the marriage relationship or not, the hadith and the Qur'an allow for man's sexuality to continue being insatiable. Women are merely objects of desire for men and are treated as such in the writings of the hadith.

Woman's Sexuality

A woman's sexuality does not fare any better in the hadith than it did in the Qur'an. "Islam's view of a woman's body is the foundation of her virtual imprisonment."¹¹¹ Muslims say that a woman's body should be covered for their own protection and as a way to protect their honor, however in reality a woman should be ashamed of her body, according to the hadith.¹¹² A woman, and her purity, bears the burden of the family's honor. If her purity is questioned, or her reputation tarnished, her entire family feels the impact.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Bukhari 62:24,25,54,55.

¹¹⁰ Al-Bukhari 62:52.

¹¹¹ Nonie Darwish, *Cruel and Usual Punishment* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 77.

¹¹² Ibid.

A woman's sexuality can be hidden under the heavy clothes that she is forced to wear, and yet she is still considered a provocateur. Men who cannot resist their impulses insist that women are the problem, and the hadith supports this belief. In one hadith, "Those women who are naked even in their dresses and lead their husbands astray will go to hell. . . They incline to evil and make their husbands incline to it."¹¹³ This hadith makes it all but impossible for an Islamic woman. If she wears every covering available to her, she is no better off than if she were naked. Her sexuality is blamed for the lustful thoughts of men. Whatever the woman does, she is condemned.

Women are also said to advance and retire in the shape of a devil.¹¹⁴ Whether at the supermarket or merely in her own home, a woman's actions are always critiqued. It is the woman who bares the responsibility for a man's thoughts, whether or not she intended him to think them. The hadith goes so far as to say that Muhammad did not leave anything more harmful behind to men than the woman.¹¹⁵

Not only is purity demanded of the woman outside of marriage, but her duty to please her husband at any time is required of her within marriage. If her husband calls for her to have sex with him and she refuses, the angels will curse her until the morning.¹¹⁶ The type of restraints and responsibility that are put on a Muslim woman and supported by

¹¹³ Al-Muslim 24:5310.

¹¹⁴ Al-Muslim 8:3240, 24:5310.

¹¹⁵ Al-Muslim 36:6603, Al-Bukhari 7:62:33.

¹¹⁶ Al-Bukhari 62:121-122.

the hadith are remarkable. First, the unwed woman must cover herself and attempt to ward off the evil thoughts of men around her, only to be married at a young age and expected to sexually perform for her husband at any given point in time. Truly, women's sexuality within Islam is constantly lusted after but devalued immensely.

CHAPTER THREE: THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament household codes are similar to those found within the Qur'an and the Hadith, in as much as they instruct followers on the way to act toward and treat each member within the family. As in Islam, however, there is a difference of opinion in the Christian scholarly world as to whose responsibility certain household tasks are. There are two main positions about family roles: complementarianism and egalitarianism.¹¹⁷ For comparative reasons, this thesis will focus on the closest patriarchal type system like that is seen in the household codes of Islam: complementarianism.

Complementarianism, like egalitarianism, acknowledges the ontological equality of man and woman. It states that God created man and woman equally sharing the same dignity, value, essence, and human nature. However, this position purports that God created man and woman with different and distinct roles to fulfill within His created order.¹¹⁸ It is this functional difference that places man as the head of the household, lovingly caring for and protecting his wife, while the woman is to offer a willing and glad-

¹¹⁷ Bruce Ware, "Summaries of the Egalitarian and Complementarian Positions on the Role of Women in the Home and in Christian Ministry," The Council on Biblical Manhood & Womanhood, <http://www.cbmw.org/Resources/Articles/Summaries-of-the-Egalitarian-and-Complementarian-Positions> (accessed February 2, 2011). Egalitarianism is the position that purports that God created man and woman equally in the Garden of Eden, known as ontological equality. However, this position also states that man and woman were both given equally the responsibility to rule over God's creation. This is known as functional equality. Egalitarianism proposes that at the moment of the fall, an illegitimate hierarchy was set in place, leaving women with the disposition of subservience, while men had the disposition of superiority. It was not until Christ's life and ultimately His death on the cross that eliminated this hierarchy and restored the equality between man and woman as was intended within the Garden. Therefore, as egalitarian supporters propose, the servant attitude is not only meant for women but for men as well.

¹¹⁸ Gen. 1:26-27.

hearted submissive assistance to her husband. However, because of the fall, these roles have been corrupted from the God's intended purpose, leaving woman attempting to usurp the leadership role away from the man, and the man wielding his headship over the woman in abusive ways.¹¹⁹ It is only through the redemption that is in Christ that these roles are restored to their intended places where man lovingly takes on the headship of the house, while the woman willingly submits to her husband, all the while acknowledging the equality in which they were created. It is on this understanding of this complementarian position that the role of husband and wife will be based.

VALUE

Man's Value

First and foremost, the understanding of man's value will shape the discussion as it relates to all other areas of the man's life. While the New Testament does show man's value within the context of the church and family, it is essential to first look at the creation story to grasp fully the value God places on man.

Man possesses intrinsic value that comes directly from his creation.¹²⁰ God's indelible fingerprint is seen within the making of man. In no other area of creation does God step down and interact with His work, except when He creates man. God's interaction

¹¹⁹ Gen. 3:15-16.

¹²⁰ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 96.

with His creation, both directly and personally, separates man from the rest of creation, and places special value in him.

In Genesis 1, God created the world. With one verbal command, Earth began to exist. This pattern is followed day after day. For every plant, animal, body of water, and mountain cap, God merely commanded its existence and the object appeared.¹²¹ It is not until His final creation that God took a step closer.

Second, God made man in His image.¹²² No other aspect of creation reflects the image of God. Some scholars presume that this image is seen in the man's soul, which reflects God's righteous character.¹²³ Others have proposed the idea that the reflection of God's image in man is a bit more general, including human rationality, conscience, creativity, relationships, and everything that we are as man.¹²⁴ Ultimately, whether one interprets God's image within the soul of man, or within his general character, it is clear throughout the scriptures that man is the only created being that personally reflects its Creator.

¹²¹ William J. Bauer, "Creation and the Seven-Day Week," Institute for Creation Research, <http://www.icr.org/article/creation-seven-day-week/> (accessed April 7, 2011).

¹²² Gen. 1: 26.

¹²³ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 96.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

God also granted man the power and dominion over the rest of creation.¹²⁵ In this act, God entrusted man with a great deal of responsibility. Man was made to be the crown of God's creation.¹²⁶

Last, God declared an individual blessing on man.¹²⁷ Earlier within the creation story, God gave His benediction over all of his lower creation. God departs from the generalized blessing to speak directly to man and give his blessing to man personally.¹²⁸ The Bible boldly indicates man's value through the unmatched relationship that God had with man.

Man's value is also displayed in the responsibility that God gave to Adam. God created man to work: this was displayed by his treatment of Adam.¹²⁹ God, as noted earlier, gave Adam dominion over the rest of creation.¹³⁰ God gave Adam specific responsibilities and duties within the Garden. These tasks included naming the animals and maintaining the Garden.¹³¹ This responsibility is unique in the story of creation, but continues to maintain significance in the New Testament where man is tasked with other duties.

¹²⁵ Gen. 1:26.

¹²⁶ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 96.

¹²⁷ Gen. 1:28.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Dave Dravecky, *The Worth of a Man* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 108.

¹³⁰ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 96.

¹³¹ Gen. 1:28-30.

In the New Testament, man still bore the responsibility of presiding over the family. This headship did not mean absolute ruler, rather the Greek word used, *kephale*, refers to the head of an object.¹³² “The Bible, in adopting this word, therefore implies the kind of unity which a body and head share.”¹³³ Since the husband is not set above his wife and family, he too is a part of the family unit he leads: thus, when one part of the unit suffers, all suffer.¹³⁴

Man is required to provide not only for the physical wellbeing of his family, but must also take responsibility for his personal and his family’s spiritual and mental growth. In Titus 2, Paul points out the areas where man must work to maintain their moral character. First, man must be temperate.¹³⁵ This has been translated to mean, “abstaining from wine,” but has also been translated to have a wider meaning, “clear-headed” manifesting self-possession under all circumstances.¹³⁶ Second, Paul notes that man must be worthy of respect. Third, a man must be self-controlled, possessing mastery in both thought and judgment.¹³⁷ Last, men must be sound in faith, in love, and in endurance, which reveals a Christian healthiness of heart and mind.¹³⁸ While each man attempts to better themselves in the four areas mentioned, it is imperative that

¹³² V. Paul Marston, *The Biblical Family* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1980), 71.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Titus 2:2.

¹³⁶ D. Edmond Hiebert, “Titus” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 436.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

these qualities and characteristics be taught to the younger men as well. Paul specifically noted the responsibility of this instruction falls upon man. Whether working to provide for the family, better one spiritually, or training young men in that which is proper, men have been tasked with a number of responsibilities throughout the New Testament.

Man's responsibility is also seen in Romans 5 where Paul attributes the fall to Adam.¹³⁹ While Adam may not have taken the first step in the sinful act that destroyed God's perfect creation, he as the leader and the head of the union, bore the primary responsibility to lead that partnership in a God-glorifying direction and thus was held accountable.¹⁴⁰ This God-given leadership reveals the last area where man's value is displayed.

Following the creation story of man, the second chapter in Genesis establishes a hierarchy in which the male/female dynamic is to be observed. Man was created first, and man was given the responsibility and privilege of having dominion over God's creation. Eve was made to complement Adam, and to be his helpmate.¹⁴¹ God gave Adam the leadership role in his relationship with Eve. It was his authority that named her, it was from his side that she was created, and it was for his help that she was created. Even though male and female were created equally in God's image, God placed man at the head of the partnership.

This hierarchy established within the creation story is highlighted in the New Testament, and again points to the headship and leadership role that the man plays within the family context.

¹³⁹ Rom. 5:12-21.

¹⁴⁰ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 108.

¹⁴¹ Gen. 2:18.

Paul references the fall in I Timothy as he emphasizes that the wife's role of submission to the husband is inherent in creation.¹⁴² Here Paul again teaches about the order of creation and emphasizes the leadership role that God gave man.

Less is known about particular Jewish marriages in the Greco-Roman world of the first century, however they do seem to share many characteristics of the ancient world.¹⁴³ In conducting their public affairs, there was an expectation that men interacted with each other as married heads of the household.¹⁴⁴ This was the practical application of a biblical concept in the ancient world.

In Ephesians 5, Paul addresses the family unit directly. God placed Adam as the head over Eve. Following that pattern, New Testament men are to be the head of the New Testament family, exercising leadership and accepting the responsibility. "Head" does not mean an overzealous lord who demands obedience. Paul draws a comparison between the marriage relationship and the church, reasoning that Christ provided for the church, and went so far as to lay down his life for the church, so to should a husband love his wife.¹⁴⁵ Quoting from William Hendriksen's commentary, Dennis Rainey points out, "He is her head as being vitally interested in her welfare. He is her protector. His pattern is Christ who, as the head of the church, is its

¹⁴² Ralph Earle, "I Timothy" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 362.

¹⁴³ Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris eds., *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament* (London: Routledge, 2010), 35.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 76.

savior.”¹⁴⁶ The “head” in the New Testament did not consist of being the master, but rather of being the servant. With this model, God intended the husband act as the servant leader to his wife.¹⁴⁷

Woman’s Value

As with the man’s, a woman’s value comes directly from her creation. She was formed with the same care and intimacy and is equally in the image of God. Woman, like man, shares in the image of God. Genesis 1 states, “. . . God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created He them.”¹⁴⁸ Woman’s intrinsic value is established through her creation.

Not only was her mere creation a reason for woman to have intrinsic value, but also the purpose for her creation gives value to the woman. God had made the entire earth, every creature living on the earth, and every plant growing from the ground, and in all of this He said it was “good.” However, even after His creation of Adam, God noticed that something was not right. “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.”¹⁴⁹ There was something missing from His creation prior to Eve’s existence and God knew that for His masterpiece to be complete, Adam needed a companion. It is only after Eve’s creation that God

¹⁴⁶ Dennis Rainey, “What Should Be the Husband’s Role in Marriage,” The Council on Biblical Manhood & Womanhood, <http://www.cbmw.org/Resources/Articles/What-Should-Be-the-Husband-s-Role-in-Marriage> (accessed March 31, 2011).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Gen. 1:27.

¹⁴⁹ Gen. 2:18.

can look at the world in its entirety and say it is very good.¹⁵⁰ Woman was created with a specific purpose only she could fill. Woman was created to be man's helper, a companion like no other within the garden. God displayed woman's value when he created her to be the help meet to man. No other creature on earth was made for Adam; she alone was Adam's equal.¹⁵¹

Woman also shared in the personal relationship with her Creator. God's blessing on man was not strictly limited to Adam. After her creation, God pronounced his benediction on Adam and Eve together. Eve shared a personal relationship with her Creator giving her value and worth as a human being.

Eve certainly had value bestowed upon her by God before the fall. However, arguably the greatest value given to woman was placed on her after the fall. The serpent deceived Eve and she was the first to sin by disobeying God. The curse fell upon Eve the same as Adam. However, God established yet another form of value within woman, when He declared that salvation would be through the woman.¹⁵² Paul referenced this same concept in the verses of I Timothy 2. Within that scripture, Paul demonstrates how influential Eve was regarding the fall into sin, but he continues on to present how indispensable she will be in the history of redemption.

¹⁵⁰ Gen. 1:31.

¹⁵¹ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 101.

¹⁵² Gen. 3:15. In this verse, God states that He will put enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. God continues and states that woman's seed will crush the head of the serpent's seed. Many scholars point to the fact that it is from the woman that the Messiah will be born, and thus, Eve's seed will crush the serpent's seed just as Jesus will crush Satan.

Jesus himself demonstrated the high value He placed on women by ministering to them, both physically and spiritually, in the New Testament. Numerous healings and casting out of demons from women display Jesus' care and concern for women.¹⁵³ Such examples are seen throughout the Gospels. Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law¹⁵⁴, He ministered to the widow in Nain who had just lost her only son¹⁵⁵, as well as the woman who was bent over for eighteen years.¹⁵⁶ Jesus prominently displayed his compassion and care for women through his actions.

Jesus also demonstrated the value He placed on women when he afforded them dignity within His ministry.¹⁵⁷ Women were still often treated poorly, as inferiors, and like property. In fact, the Jewish oral law declared that the testimony of one hundred women was not equal to that of one man.¹⁵⁸ Whether it was using women as examples within illustrations, teaching them theological truths, or having them participate in His ministry, Jesus gave a renewed respect to the place of women in His society.¹⁵⁹ Jesus was not timid in displaying His great affection for the fairer sex and in doing so He established their value within the context of the New Testament.

¹⁵³ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 115.

¹⁵⁴ Mark 1:30-31.

¹⁵⁵ Luke 7:11-15.

¹⁵⁶ Luke 13:10-17.

¹⁵⁷ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 117.

¹⁵⁸ Shirley Stephens, *A New Testament View of Women* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1980), 57.

The household codes of the New Testament practically reveal the value of women in Christianity. Husbands are commanded to love their wives like Christ loved the church. This is an incredible comparison for the view of marriage and revolutionary view of the relationship. As mentioned earlier, in Greco-Roman society it was recognized that wives had obligations to their husbands, but not vice versa.¹⁶⁰ By merely indicating that husbands had a duty to their wives, the value of the wife is increased.

The passage says that husbands ought to love their wives like as their own bodies. Within this context, one can deduce that Christ not only loves the Church as if it were His body, but because it in fact is His body.¹⁶¹ Thus husbands are not only to love their wives as if they were their own body, but acknowledge that once the marriage relationship is complete, the wife becomes the husband's own body. In creating this metaphor, Paul reestablishes the equality of creation between man and woman. As illustrated within the Garden, man and woman were created equally in God's image and loved each other as such. Within the fallen Greco-Roman context, this love and equality of value had lost its place within society. Paul now begins to show how Christ has restored that concept of the marriage relationship. Thus women were not to be treated as property of her husband, but as part of her husband.

Ephesians 5 also puts submission to the husband in the context of a woman's responsibility. Wives are to submit to the authority of their husbands as placed on them by God.

¹⁵⁹ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 117.

¹⁶⁰ A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 76.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

This includes the not only acting in the best interests or support of the husband, but it also means that the attitude must be a holy one as well. In obeying her husband, the Christian wife is obeying the Lord who has sanctioned the marriage contract.¹⁶² This submission is not forced but is voluntarily given by the woman. The Christian wife who promises to obey does so because her vow is “as to the Lord.”¹⁶³

Titus 2 adds additional information to the woman’s responsibility. First, Paul is speaking to older women in that they have a responsibility to train the younger women in how to care for their husband. Thus Paul is giving the duty of teaching to the older women, and also laying out the duties of wives in describing what the older women shall teach. Paul explains in Titus 2:3-5 that women are to love their husbands and children, they are to be self-controlled and pure, busy at home and kind, and subject to their husbands. This is the duty of the woman in the New Testament. It was noted earlier that self-control is a duty of all Christians, but Paul makes a point of acknowledging that this is something that must also be taught. Purity, both in terms of sex and the purity of the heart and mind in their conduct also remains the responsibility of women to teach their children.¹⁶⁴

Undoubtedly with the growth of a family comes a growth of responsibilities. The woman is to maintain her household, which no doubt will keep her busy. “This is a more stimulating

¹⁶² A. Skevington Wood, “Ephesians” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 74.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 436.

concept and agrees with Paul's condemnation of idleness in I Timothy.¹⁶⁵ However, the pressure of maintaining a household, no matter the size, will also bring about stress. It is also the duty of the woman to learn how to handle this stress and not lash out at those in her household, though she may be tempted. Last, as stated many times within the context of the woman's work and value, she must be subject to her husband. This will involve effort on her part to maintain the proper attitude and actions towards her husband.

SEXUALITY

Man's Sexuality

Man's sexuality within the New Testament is largely an issue of restraint. Paul tells his readers in I Corinthians that to remain celibate and instead focus on the relationship with one's Creator is a noble cause.¹⁶⁶ However, as Paul also clearly notes that purity is of utmost importance, so if purity cannot be maintained, then marriage is to be obtained so that sin is refrained from.¹⁶⁷ Focus on the Family echoes Paul's notion stating, "sexuality is a glorious gift from God, to be offered back to Him either in marriage for procreation, union and mutual delight, or in celibacy for undivided devotion to God."¹⁶⁸ Paul also makes it clear that if man is to marry, he should only have one wife, and vice versa. The intimacy and nature of this relationship is further expounded in future books, but is always in the context of one spouse.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ I Cor. 7:7.

¹⁶⁷ I Cor. 7:2.

¹⁶⁸ Pure Intimacy, "The Value of Male and Female," Focus on the Family, <http://www.pureintimacy.org/piArticles/A000000665.cfm> (accessed March 31, 2011).

Paul further states in I Corinthians that the interaction between man and wife is one of care and benevolence. “Paul’s advice in 1 Corinthians 7, for example, sees sex as something man and wife want to share because they enjoy it.”¹⁶⁹ Each spouse gives to the other freely, and there is not a domination of one spouse over the other. This mutual ownership of each other demonstrates the sexual equality established through marriage. It is this benevolence toward each other, and mutual respect that is further expounded upon in future texts.

Ephesians serves as a great model for the marriage relationship as a whole, and more specifically, the sexual equality that each member has within the marriage. In Ephesians, husbands are told to love their wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.¹⁷⁰ “Within the Greco-Roman society it was recognized that wives had obligations to their husbands, but not vice versa.”¹⁷¹ Within this verse, Paul chooses the verb *agapao* to insist that the love of a Christian man for his wife must be a response to and an expression of the love of God in Christ extended to the church.¹⁷² While this gives a very broad outline of what type of love the husband is to show his wife, Colossians 3:19 gives the practical application of this concept: “Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them.”

¹⁶⁹ V. Paul Marston, *The Biblical Family* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1980), 51.

¹⁷⁰ Eph. 5:25.

¹⁷¹ A. Skevington Wood, “Ephesians” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 76.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

Paul notes further on in Ephesians that man is to love his wife as his own body.¹⁷³ Paul says no man hates himself, and therefore, if he loves his wife as himself he will not treat her as property, as would have been custom in Paul's time.¹⁷⁴ Rather Paul is indicating that when the husband recognizes this strong intimacy between the two within the context of marriage, the husband will not think nor treat his wife like his property, but rather as an extension of himself. Following this verse, Paul restates what Adam said when he first saw Eve, his other half, saying: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."¹⁷⁵ This restates God's plan for marriage, as was indicated at the time of creation. There was to be one man and one woman united in marriage by a love which was like Christ had for the church. The sexual union that takes place within marriage is so intimate and so personal that the two become as one and thus monogamy was a crucial aspect of the marriage relationship.¹⁷⁶

Man can dishonor God through his sexuality when he strays from the guidelines given by God. Given man's sexual desires, he must be vigilant to guard against the temptations that he faces in this area of his life. Man dishonors God when he treats another person as an object, sexual or otherwise.¹⁷⁷ Since the wife owns the husband's body and vice versa, whatever

¹⁷³ Eph. 5:28.

¹⁷⁴ A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 76.

¹⁷⁵ Eph. 5:31.

¹⁷⁶ A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 78.

activity the couple engages in, both partners must have a clear conscience over it.¹⁷⁸ Love is the giving of oneself to another freely, without expecting something in return. This self-sacrificial love was demonstrated by Jesus in the New Testament, and is used as the primary example of how a husband is to love his wife.

God created sex, not only as a physical stimulation for man, but also as the intimate communion between two people.¹⁷⁹ For this reason, pre-marital and extra-marital sex dishonor God and His creation. The vulnerability that exists in the sexual expression of oneself is intended for only one person. The shared vulnerability between the man and woman create a bond that is unlike any other union known to man. Thus, guarding the trust and intimacy in marriage is a key aspect of man's sexuality.

Woman's Sexuality

Women's sexuality must be seen in light of her creation. God created woman to be man's equal, to fulfill a void, so that man would not be alone. It is through the creation of the woman that man is able to reproduce. Another man could not fill the roles that Eve did. Sure another man may offer the companionship and the help, but no man could carry the seed of another man and bear children to continue the race. Woman was created, including her sexuality, for the man and vice versa. John Piper explains that after Adam sees Eve for the first

¹⁷⁷ Glenn Stanton, "How We Dishonor God in Our Sex Lives," Focus on the Family, http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/sex_and_intimacy/gods_design_for_sex/how_we_dishonor_god_in_our_sex_lives.aspx (accessed March 31, 2011).

¹⁷⁸ V. Paul Marston, *The Biblical Family* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1980), 53.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

time, he perceives her not as his rival but as his partner, not as a threat because of her equality with himself but as the only one capable of fulfilling his longing within.¹⁸⁰

A woman's chastity and purity regarding her sexuality was also of the utmost importance. Women carried the honor their families in their virtue. Titus 2 gave older women the instruction to teach the younger women to be self-controlled and pure. This was in reference, in part, to sexual purity. Women who remained pure were valued and held in high esteem, not only in the family but in society as well. This is particularly noted in the treatment of women found in adultery or prostitution. Any honor that they once had was now destroyed and not to be regained. However, Jesus himself provides the grace needed for a woman to shed her sin stained past become honorable once again.

Two specific examples lead to the conclusion that Jesus wanted the sin in the past to dictate the joy of the future in Christ. In fact, when the Pharisees brought the woman accused of adultery to Jesus, her punishment by law was death. However, Jesus in his most gracious spirit acknowledged the sinful action of this woman in reference to the sinful nature of the Pharisees as well. “. . . He who is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”¹⁸¹ Jesus hereby acknowledged the sinful deed of the woman but did not dismiss her for eternity because of it. Instead, he used this opportunity to showcase the sinful nature of all mankind, each deserving punishment of their own, and existed as the ambassador of grace to this woman. When he rose to speak directly to the woman, he simply commanded her to go and sin no more. These words

¹⁸⁰ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 101.

¹⁸¹ John 8:7.

set this woman free from the bondage of this sinful act. She was not forever burdened with the mistake, but rather was given a new opportunity to become pure again.

The second example of Jesus' treatment of the failed chastity of a woman is when He meets the Samaritan woman at the well.¹⁸² Jesus asks for a drink of water from her. A striking observation can be made here that Jesus, a Jew, was speaking with a Samaritan and a woman at that. Jesus placed value on this woman merely by breaking the silence between them. He then spoke to her of her past husbands, and the indiscretion of her current relationship. After speaking spiritual truths into her life, the woman ran from the well to tell the others who she just met and what she had just learned. Again, Jesus did not condemn the woman for eternity because of her actions but rather allowed forgiveness to change her heart and give her a new chance at purity.

Creation also gives reference to the way that the woman was to be cared for as well. As noted much earlier, man was created first, he was given the responsibility of exercising dominion over all of creation. It was the woman who was created to be the helper. Given that woman was intended to help, it follows that woman was not intended to take the leadership role of the family and provide for the family. The weight of provision ought never to be solely on the woman. Man was created as head of the household for a reason and one of his duties is to provide for the woman.

Within the New Testament, Paul teaches that women are to be treated with respect. In I Timothy, elderly women are to be treated as mothers and the young women as sisters, in purity. This type of relationship again reinforces the concept of the family of God that Paul speaks of.

¹⁸² John 4:7-42.

Additionally, in Ephesians, Paul commands husbands to love their wives. The love mentioned here goes far beyond the romantic or sexual love shared between man and woman. This love is equated with the love that Christ had for the Church. When compared to this type of love, it is impossible for a believing husband to disrespect or mistreat his wife, as this would never happen between Christ and the Church. This type of love is sacrificial and a love that considers the other in higher esteem. Paul demands in this passage that men forgo the traditional concept of women as property, and instead treat them with the respect, dignity, and honor that Christ treated the Church. This passage effectively and concisely establishes the proper care of women.

CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICAL ANALYSIS

After researching the religious texts from Islam and Christianity, one deduces that there are significant differences in the way the two religions view and treat women. Household codes that inform and determine family life for both religions, especially as to the husband wife relationship. After evaluating each text and understanding the arguments of the proponents of each religion, it is overwhelmingly clear that women are both valued and treated better in Christianity than in Islam. Two general ideologies separate these religions. Islam tarnishes the value of women from birth to death and also imprisons its women in a type of religiously sanctioned sexual slavery. The combination of these two ideologies lays the foundation for a perverted type of leadership style that is seen in Islamic countries from the head of state, down to the head of the household.

VALUE

First, and most importantly, Islam tarnishes the value of women. From the creation of the first female, to the each woman's final resting place, Islam ravages women's value while demanding their respect and obedience. Islam teaches the creation of woman from man, by Allah. However, her creation lacks personalization by Allah, it lacks appreciation by man, and it is void of any authentication of her value. In fact, given the description of women in both the Qur'an and the Hadith, it seems that woman was created by Allah to act as a pitfall for religiously pious men in the quest for spiritual fulfillment.

The Qur'an speaks of a woman not as an entity of her own, and not as a being of equal worth with her male counterpart, but rather as an inferior possession in need of careful control and guidance. Surah 2:228 attempts to qualify the Qur'anic implication that men and women are

created equal, yet cannot make such a flagrant claim without qualifying the fact that men are indeed created a degree above women. One need not look far to see the justification for such a statement, as Surah 4:34 reasons that men are above women due to the qualities with which Allah gifted them. Furthering the justification that women are inferior at creation, the hadith goes so far as to compare women with the devil.¹⁸³

Islam clearly depicts the creation of the woman as a departure and a dramatic decline from the creation of man. This leaves little to debate as to why women are devalued so drastically within Islam. Twins, brother and sister, born of the same parents and in the same economic class will never be equal. No matter her efforts, she cannot ever attain the value of her brother, all due to the religious beliefs of her family.

As the Islamic woman ages, she encounters another arena where she fails to measure up to her male counterparts. Her word, no matter how trustworthy, will never attest to an issue with the same force and authority as a man's. She is taught that this is due to the mental deficiency with which she was created.¹⁸⁴ Her capacity to remember the truth is not as acute as a man's. Her mind is not as able. In fact, she must have another female attest to the same fact to prove it true.¹⁸⁵

For this reason, an Islamic woman can never stand alone in a crowd and proclaim the truth. Her mind remains her prison in which the truth is kept, and her voice the guard. Her ability to defend herself from the slanderous comments hurled unjustly at her is non-existent, as

¹⁸³ Al-Bukhari 24:5310.

¹⁸⁴ Al-Bukhari 48:826.

¹⁸⁵ Surah 2:282.

she must rely on others to corroborate the truth. Instead of living in reality, the Islamic woman must learn how to navigate inconspicuously around the reality created by the men in her life.

As she reaches early maturity, a word no longer synonymous with puberty, she confronts the hardest reality for a rational individual to face: she will always be treated as inferior by those allegedly closest to her in life. From father to husband, her life is determined by their word. When an Islamic girl makes the rapid transition from child to bride, she takes on new set of responsibilities and demands from her husband.¹⁸⁶ However, what she does not inherit is the respect that should accompany these responsibilities.

In many cases, Islamic women are kept as virtual prisoners in their own homes, often secluded from the rest of the world, and almost always forced to live within the confines of her husband's rules. Her duty is to his happiness and well-being. Her religion teaches her that the husband's role in her life is to set her limits, confine her perimeter and control her freedom.¹⁸⁷ It is through fulfilling her husband's desires and commands that her eternal resting place is decided.¹⁸⁸ However, if the Islamic woman fails in this area of her life, her religion sanctions her husband to beat her in order to bring about the proper conduct of a wife.¹⁸⁹

To ordain the beating of an individual for purposes of behavior modification is a concept rarely found outside of animal training facilities, yet religiously sanctioned in Islam. A woman

¹⁸⁶ Farah, Madelain, *Marriage and Sexuality in Islam* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1984), 124-126.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 122.

¹⁸⁸ Al-Bukhari 62:1.

¹⁸⁹ Surah 4:34.

is viewed like a mindless child, treated like a piece of property, and punished like an animal all within the pages of the Qur'an. A woman in Islam enters the world with diminished value and attempts merely to exist as her value diminishes with each day.

It is within this abusive perspective that Islamic women attempt to gain whatever respect or favor they can find out of their oppressors. In a reaction most closely related to Stockholm Syndrome¹⁹⁰, Islamic women succumb to the oppressive restraints imposed on them by Islamic men. Stockholm Syndrome is caused when captives “emotionally bond” with their captors.¹⁹¹ “Small acts of kindness by the captor are magnified because under such duress all perspective is lost.”¹⁹² Islamic women are no doubt emotionally bonded with their captors since their captors are their fathers and husbands. The only reasonable way to gain favor with their Islamic men support and proclaim the very religion and law that imprisons them.

Christian Response

Christianity involves a complete reversal of theology from Islam, as it relates to a woman's value. The Bible states that woman was created in the image of God.¹⁹³ She too was formed by God's hand, made from the rib of Adam, and given the breath of life by God

¹⁹⁰ Joseph Carver, “Love and Stockholm Syndrome: The Mystery of Loving an Abuser,” Mental Health Matters, http://www.mental-health-matters.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=167 (accessed March 28, 2011).

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Darwish, Nonie, *Cruel and Usual Punishment* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 94.

¹⁹³ Gen. 1:27.

himself.¹⁹⁴ Her creation was symbolic of the role and value that God places on women. “God took something from man’s side, to make a companion to be at man’s side, for this is the kind of companionship man lacked.”¹⁹⁵ However the Bible states that God closed up the flesh in the side of man, leaving him incomplete.¹⁹⁶ “Woman was not designed to be a duplicate man, but to complete what is missing in man and to add far more.”¹⁹⁷

Eve also shared the personal relationship with God that Adam had. God’s blessing was not strictly limited to Adam. After her creation, God bestowed a blessing over both Adam and Eve.¹⁹⁸ Eve’s intimate creation by God, along with her personal relationship with God both bestow value on Eve personally and display the value God placed on women in general.

Christianity has no concept of the value of a woman’s word being different from that of a man’s. In fact, the only mention of this within the entire Bible is found in the book of Numbers. Here it states that if a woman makes a vow unto the Lord, her word is given ultimate authority if it is not rendered void by her father or husband.¹⁹⁹ Essentially, the Bible states that a vow made by a woman, and not corrected by her father or husband will stand as valuable as a vow made by a man. Within this passage, woman’s word is seen to be just as valuable as man’s.

¹⁹⁴ Gen. 2:21.

¹⁹⁵ V. Paul Marston, *The Biblical Family* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1980), 24.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Gen. 1:26.

¹⁹⁹ Numbers 30:3-16.

Christianity's concept of the family unit differs greatly from Islam while placing the man and woman in similar roles. Within the Bible, God gives man the authority and headship in the family. God created the woman as the helpmate to the man. Woman was made to submit to the authority of the man in the family unit. However, to God, submission means something different than the inferiority of Islam's submission. "To be submissive means to yield humble and intelligent obedience to an ordained power or authority."²⁰⁰ Woman was not created with the deficiency of mind which requires her to submit, but rather she was created with unique characteristics that allow her to help man like no other being could. "God has given wives the opportunity to choose freely the submissive role."²⁰¹ This family unit concept requires man's sacrificial love toward his wife, and woman's willing and voluntary submission to her husband.

Most important to note within the Bible, is the understanding that all of creation has fallen. Women are no more sinful than men are, and all are in need of the saving grace from Jesus Christ. Christianity does not assert in theology or in practice, the devaluation of women due to a creation flaw. Both man and woman were created equally in perfection, and both man and woman fell from perfection. However, God's love for His creation compelled Him to send His only son to die for the world, thus providing a path to Heaven for anyone who would accept it.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Larry Christenson, *The Christian Family* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1970), 32.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁰² John 3:16.

SEXUALITY

Second, Islam imprisons women in a type of religiously sanctioned sexual slavery. Islamic women cannot escape their sexuality. It is the central focus of their honor and worth to their families. Although not valued, women carry the weight of the family's honor under their burqa daily. From childhood, women are forced into a sexual slavery within their own body. While told to cover their bodies for protection, women are taught that their bodies are something to be ashamed of.²⁰³

Since the hadith teaches that she advances and retreats in the shape of a devil, her sexuality must be covered so as not to arouse males within her vicinity. But no amount of clothing can hide her allure from men.²⁰⁴ Whether completely naked or covered in layers of bulky black clothing, Islamic women's bodies act as their sexual prison. Women are forced to carry the weight of this burden alone.

Islam also requires women to be a sexual slave to their husbands. As noted in an earlier chapter, one of the leading theologians in Islam, Imam Ghazali, compared marriage to slavery.²⁰⁵ The Qur'an teaches men that their wives are like fields, to be "plowed at will."²⁰⁶ The sense of mutual respect and love for one another is lost within Islamic marriage.

²⁰³ Nonie Darwish, *Cruel and Usual Punishment* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 77.

²⁰⁴ Al-Muslim 24:5310.

²⁰⁵ Madelain Farah, *Marriage and Sexuality in Islam* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1984), 121. This is a direct quote from Al-Ghazali's *Book of Etiquette of Marriage*, 2:64.

Women are required to pleasure their husband whenever it is asked of them. Women who do not comply risk physical beatings²⁰⁷, curses of angels²⁰⁸, as well as divorce.²⁰⁹ Perhaps the heaviest burden of all for Islamic women is carrying the honor of their husband and family in their sexuality and purity. One misstep, no matter how innocent, can result in the loss of all family honor. Even though the religion teaches that women were created inferior to men, it seems to contradict this teaching in the level of responsibility that it places upon them.

Islamic women are not only imprisoned in sexual slavery here on earth, but this abuse continues on for eternity according to the descriptions of Paradise. The Qur'an teaches Paradise to be a sexual buffet for the appetites of its religious men. Each man is guaranteed 72 virgins for his pleasure.²¹⁰ In contrast, Islamic women who actually achieve Paradise, are rewarded with an eternal struggle for her husband's attention among his bevy of virgin brides.²¹¹ In fairness, the Qur'an does warn the Islamic wife of this cosmic struggle²¹², but does not provide the possibility of eternal monogamous bliss in Paradise. Her presence, both on earth and in Paradise, is to fulfill the lustful and sexual desires of her husband whenever he wishes to partake.

²⁰⁶ Surah 2:223.

²⁰⁷ Surah 4:34.

²⁰⁸ Al-Bukhari 62:121-122.

²⁰⁹ Nonie Darwish, *Cruel and Usual Punishment* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 35.

²¹⁰ Surah 55.

²¹¹ Surah 2:25.

²¹² Surah 66:5.

Christian Response

Christianity stands in stark contrast to Islam. God created sex, and if acted upon in the context of marriage, there is nothing sinful associated with the faithful sexual expression of love.²¹³ Sex was intended to be within marriage, and in this context Christian marriage (through grace) is to restore the picture of marriage before the fall.²¹⁴ It should be noted that there is a difference between “making love” and “having sex.” “The focus of someone “making love” is the other person; the sex is a beautiful and gratifying expression of that love and commitment in sharing.”²¹⁵

Christianity does not put as much pressure on the woman as Islam does. Men are to be held accountable for their lustful thoughts and actions just as much as women are. Women in Christianity are taught to guard their purity until they are married. Chastity is a treasure that only one person is allowed to uncover. Furthermore, sex is more than an action; it is an expression of love created by God to be shared by a husband and wife.²¹⁶ It is not to be demanded of from one another but rather a mutual display of affection between spouses.

²¹³ Thomas M. Martin, *Christian Family Values* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 48.

²¹⁴ V. Paul Marston, *The Biblical Family* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1980), 50.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

²¹⁶ Carolyn McCulley, “Raunch Culture Rip-Off,” *The Council on Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, <http://www.cbmw.org/Journal/Vol-13-No-2/Raunch-Culture-Rip-Off> (accessed April 1, 2011).

Second, a woman is not the sexual slave to her husband. Just as she was created to be his helpmate, God made woman as a sex partner for the mutual help and companionship to man.²¹⁷ This mutual submission to the other does not give one spouse the ability to demand action from the other. This bond, founded in equality, does not allow for the objectification of one spouse over the other. Whatever expression goes on, both partners must have a clear conscience over it, and one should not try to override the other.²¹⁸ It is through this equality, that marriage and sex can truly be pursued as a pure expression of love for one another.

Last, Christianity does not center Heaven around the lusty desires of man's flesh. Rather, Heaven is described as a place where all praise God for His glory and His grace. Since no follower inherits Heaven based upon his works, it is only God's grace that allows any individual to enter Heaven's gates. Upon entrance into Heaven, the magnitude of God's glory will encompass each believer. Heaven, unlike Paradise, is not focused on the sexual expression and fulfillment of the created. Rather, Heaven will be creation's focus and acknowledgment of the glory of the Creator.

²¹⁷ V. Paul Marston, *The Biblical Family* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1980), 50.

²¹⁸ V. Paul Marston, *The Biblical Family* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1980), 51.

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