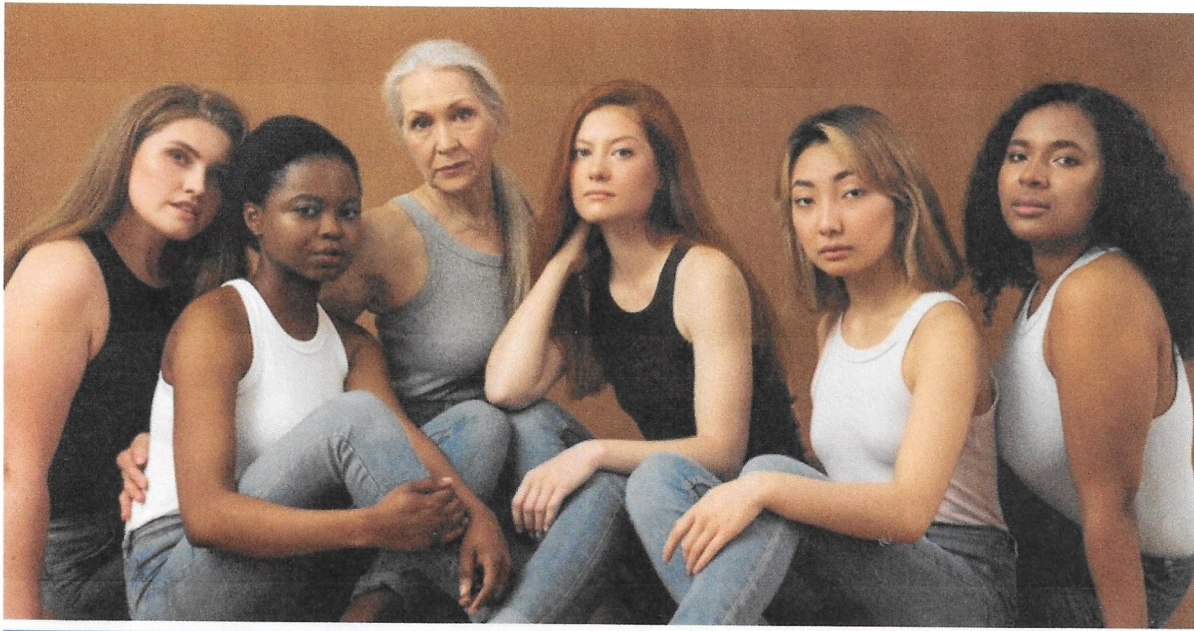


**BEST SELLING AUTHOR**

**“DR. MYLES MUNROE”**

**“UNDERSTANDING the PURPOSE and  
POWER OF WOMEN”**



**GOD’S DESIGN FOR FEMALE IDENTITY**

**Agape Love WPF Family Ministries – Bible Study Series**

Pastor Rudolph & Lady Zee Maybell

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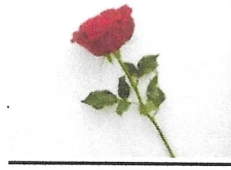
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## THE WOMEN AS SHE WAS MEANT TO BE



Women of every culture and society are facing the dilemma of identity. Traditional views of what it means to be a woman and changing cultural and marital roles are causing women conflict in their relationships with men. Women are under tremendous stress as they struggle to discover who they are and what role they are to play today – in the family, the community, and the world. In this expanded edition of Understand the Purpose and Power of Women, now with helpful study questions following each chapter, best-selling Author Dr. Myles Munroe examines societies' attitudes toward women and addresses vital issues such as:

- Are women and men equal?
- Why is a woman unique from a man?
- What does the Bible really teach about women?
- Is the woman to blame for the fall of mankind?
- What are the purpose and design of the women?
- Should women be in leadership?
- What is a woman's basic communication style?
- What are a woman's emotional and sexual needs?
- What is a women's potential?

To live successfully in the world, women need a new awareness of who they are and new skills to meet today's challenges. Whether you are a woman or a man, married or single, this book will help you to understand the woman as she was meant to be.

## CHAPTER 1-

### A WOMEN'S PLACE

In the mid-1960s, James Brown came out with a song that exposed the spirit of the age, entitled, *"It's a Man's World"*. The song sold a million copies. (I wonder who bought it?) James Brown was singing about an attitude that pervades the nations and cultures of the world. That attitude is, in effect, "Even though women are here, this world was made for Men. It's design for males. Women are just filling in where needed. You women stay in your place; this is a man's world."

Does the world belong to men? If so, what place do women hold in it?

### A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE:

One of the most controversial issues of our modern times—a topic that has been debated with much discussion and dissension—is the role, position, and rights of the woman. Historically, in nearly every nation and culture, women have been regarded as inferior to men, holding a secondary place in the world. The following are traditional perceptions of women that still persist today. Women are considered...

- Inferior to men, second-class citizens.
- Objects for sensual gratification alone.
- Weak; incapable of real strength.
- Lacking intelligence and therefore having nothing to contribute to society.
- The personal property of men, the equivalent of cattle.
- Personal servants, whose only purpose is to meet the needs of their masters.
- Domestic slaves, to be used as desired.
- Objects to be passed around until finished with, and then discarded.
- Subhuman.
- Deserving of abuse.

Depending on where you live in the world, your past experiences, and whether you are a woman or a man, the items on this list might shock you, offend you, be discounted by you, or serve as a painful reminder of what you are currently enduring.

If you live in an industrial nation that has significant improvements in the status of women and the opportunities open to her, you may not think these negative perceptions of women are relevant to your relationships or the interactions between males and females in your society. Yet the underlying assumptions behind them persist in every nation because they are not so much influenced by legislative and societal changes as they are by ingrained attitudes in the hearts and minds of men and women. Women are misunderstood and degraded around the world, and it is causing them emotional, physical, and spiritual distress.

### A UNIVERSAL PROBLEM:

For thousands of years, in nearly every culture and tradition in the world, women have been devalued and therefore mistreated in some way. What accounts for this outlook? Why is this problem so universal? Why is

this problem so universal? The fact that the devaluing of women is so widespread across the globe points to a cause that goes much deeper than mere culture or tradition.

One of the reasons the plight of the woman has been such a difficult issue to remedy is that it's not easy to change a man's mind about a women's place in the world. The idea that this is a man's world is very deeply entrenched. Even though legislation might be passed, or public policy might change, you can't easily change a man's mind-set. This internalized devaluing of women is the reason why women generally continue to be discounted and exploited in almost every society in the world, regardless of certain social and political advances. In industrial nations as well as developing nations, the plight of the female is still very real. It is tragic to have to admit this is true in our modern society.

In the neighborhood where I grew up, it was common for me to hear men saying, "Woman, do you know who I am? I'm the one who wears the pants around here!" That statement was supposed to imply who was in charge. These days, both men and women wear pants, so who is that statement talking about now? This spirit of male dominance, this attitude of, "Stay in your place, you have no say in this; you have no contribution to make. You have no sense, anyway," has pervaded our societies for thousands of years, and it is a spirit that still has a hold on many nations.

This prevailing attitude is the reason why the social and political advances of women-which on the surface seem to be victories-can become burdens to women because they are in reality only one-sided victories. For example, women can declare that they are equal with men, and society can try to enforce this equality, but the attitudes of men (and also other women) may not necessarily be in agreement with this change in status. This can cause perplexity, stress, and conflict, thus much confusion about the role of the women still exists today.

### **WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS:**

Only in the relatively recent past, mainly in industrial nations, have people risen up and argued that the devaluing of women is not right. This protest has been manifested in various women's movements, such as the women's suffrage movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sometimes we forget that it is only recently that women were given the right to vote in many countries. We're not talking about two centuries ago; we're talking about eighty years ago even in America. Only recently have certain nations considered women viable and significant contributions to the mainstream of society.

Some of this change came about through expediency. Two world wars and the Great Depression altered people's perception of the role of women and their capabilities. While the men were off fighting wars or looking for work in other cities or states, women were needed to take on roles and jobs that men had traditionally performed. After the Second World War, men returned to their jobs, and many women were expected to return to their former roles, but the taboo against women working and contributing in areas such as business and government had been broken. Even though traditional views of women predominated, the culture had undergone a perceptible change.

In the last forty years or so, in America and in parts of Europe-in countries such as England, Sweden, and Norway-a spirit has risen up among women, a spirit counter to the prevailing attitude, which says "We are equal to men. There is no difference between us." In America this spirit has been encapsulated in the phrase "Equal Rights." The equal rights movement came to the foreground in the 1960's and originally had certain goals in common with the civil rights movement. The spirit of James Brown song, that we live in a man's world, gave this movement its impetus, and millions of women got on the bandwagon. "This is not a man's world," they said. "We are here, too" Thousands of women marched in front of the White House in Washington, D.C. They held big banners and placards and shouted in the streets. They held meetings in football stadiums and packed them to capacity. These women talked about passing the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). They wanted to amend the Constitution of the United States to declare that "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." They were crying out to be given their rights to be equal to men. They wanted the same rights as men to participate in the world and to be involved in everything men are involved in.

### **WHOSE RIGHT?**

I was in college during this period of uprising and revolution, and I used to sit in class and listen to people debate the issue of women's rights. I would also sit and watch television in the lobby of the university, and I very clearly remember seeing these women standing up, shouting for their rights. Although I appreciated their overall concerns, something about their approach bothered me. What came to my mind as I watched them was that if you ask somebody for something, you are admitting that they have it; if you have to demand something from someone, you are confessing that they own it. When you do that, you are devaluing yourself, because you are, in effect, relinquishing the possession of your rights to someone else.

This principle may be widely applied. For example, it pertains to race relations as well as to male-female relationships. If the white man asks the black man for something, then the white man is saying to the black man, "You have what I need." "You possess what is mine." If the male asks the female for something, he's acknowledging that she controls it. When you go to another person or group of people in order to get something that you claim you need, you are admitting that that person or group has ownership of it.

Therefore, if I say to the government, "Give me my rights," I am admitting to the government, "You have jurisdiction over my rights." Laws delineating our rights can be good, but we must remember that laws can't grant us our rights; they can merely acknowledge the rights that we already have. I decided years ago, as a teenager, that nobody has the liberty to control my rights because my rights are God-given and inherent. Some people are amazed at my outlook. A black preacher came up to me one time and said, "Man, you're a different kind of black man." I said, "No, I am in control of whose opinions are important." There is a significant difference between demanding one's rights from someone and *displaying* the rights one already possesses. This is a critical principle to keep in mind as we explore the underlying reason for the devaluing of women. If we understand that the women's position and rights in the world are inherent, it is going to change our approach to solving her plight worldwide.

Joseph is a good example of a person who displayed his rights in the way in which he thought and lived. His story is told in the book of *Genesis*. Joseph was falsely accused and put in jail. Yet he said to himself, "I'm not

a prisoner,” and he soon was put in charge of the whole prison. **(See Genesis 39)**. It’s about attitude. The Romans had Jesus bound in chains, but Jesus told Pilate, in essence, *“I’m not bound; you’re the one who is bound.”* Pilate said, *“Don’t you know who I am?”* Jesus answered, *“I know who you are. You’re a fool. You’re being totally manipulated by history and prophecy. You can’t kill Me; I don’t give you the right to have the power to kill Me. No man takes My Life. I am a free Man.”* **(See John 19:1-16)**. There are people in jail right now who are spiritually free, and there are people who have never been near a jail who only seem to be free. Inwardly, they are bound.

So, when you demand something, you have to be careful, because you might be subconsciously implying something. You might be suggesting that you don’t really have any rights of your own. I want to ask women, Do you really want to go to men and say, “I demand equality with you.” Implying that they have the power to make you equal? That is a dangerous thing to say. If you convince me that I have the power and the right to make you a whole person, then you are in trouble, because I could use it to play games with you, to manipulate you. I could use it to get what I want. I could give you some freedoms, as I pleased-just enough to keep you in check-and withhold the rest. I believe that many people in movements for equality are inadvertently confessing that they have given over their rights to someone else.

### **PREJUDICE PERSISTS:**

Even so, countries such as America and Sweden have recently elevated the status of women through legislative acts, achieving a certain amount of societal change. After a difficult struggle, the woman-who was once mainly thought of as a “Baby-bearer,” “Property,” “Servant-slave-maid,” and someone who did the work men considered beneath them-now participates to some degree in both civic and political affairs. Her contribution is beginning to be appreciated. Many women are involved in opportunities and activities that were formerly reserved for males, such as leadership, management, and sports.

However, although we can say that there has been some improvement, in most societies, women are still suffering the prejudice of the male against the female, and this bias continues to degrade women. Men’s hearts cannot be changed by legislation. People are still reacting and adjusting to the legislative and civic changes that have been made over the last several decades, so that, even though the law say, “Women are now equal to men.” This doesn’t mean that men think so. As a result, women are still being confused, misused, and abused. They are being frustrated and manipulated. The persistent devaluing of women continues to hold back progress, and women are being treated in every way **except** in the way God originally intended.

This depreciation of women is preventing them from living in the fullness of what God created them to be. There have been some notable examples of women throughout history who have been able to accomplish great things, display exceptional work and talent, and contribute much to society. Yet the majority of women have not been allowed to develop their unique personalities and gifts fully so that they may enrich their own lives, their families, their churches, their communities, and the world.

### **CAN NEGATIVE IDEAS ABOUT WOMEN BE CHANGED?**

Can the world’s negative perceptions of the women be transformed? What is the cause of the universal devaluing of women in societies across the centuries and around the globe? Why is it sometimes so difficult for

men and women to understand one another and to work together harmoniously in this world? Culture and tradition, while apparently part of the problem, cannot take the full blame, because the problem spans ages and cultures and seems to point to a deep-seated discord or adversarial relationship between men and women.

What, then, is the cause of this age-old dilemma? It is that we have lost what it means to be human. We have lost what it means to be male and female. An understanding of the essential makeup of human beings has been discarded or forgotten and has been replaced with distorted views of humanity. Culture and tradition have then contributed to the problem by perpetuating these distortions.

Women as well as men need to understand the inherent nature of the woman, because most women have developed their identity from men, and they do not see themselves as God does. Women have essentially become the products of the societies and traditions into which they were born and bred. As a woman, you might not like who you are, yet your self-concept probably came from the environment in which you were raised.

### **EQUAL AND DIFFERENT:**

If the nations of the world had understood God's purposes for women and men, they would have realized that the Spirit of equal rights that demands equality from men and never intended by God, because He has already made men and women equal. Men and women were created equal. Men and women are equal. That's not for a senate or a congress or a cabinet or a parliament to decide. God already made this decision in creation. Again, when you allow others to declare who you are, you are submitting your rights to them, and you must be prepared for the consequences. Don't ever give anybody the right to say what kind of human value you have. Don't let anybody else tell you how much of a person you are. When you understand that equality is inherent and discover how it is to be manifested in your life, then you can begin to live in the full realm of that equality, regardless of what others tell you about yourself.

There's another point we need to carefully consider, because it is at the forefront of the current misunderstanding between females and males. Many of those who advocate equal rights say that there is no difference at all between women and men. Yet while women and men were created equal, they were also created different. This is part of their unique design. This statement may confuse some and anger others, because somehow, we have come to believe that different means inferior. It is true that many societies have promoted the false view that because women have a different physical and emotional makeup, they are somehow inferior to men. A few women have adopted that attitude that men are inferior because they are different from women. Both views fail to appreciate, value, and celebrate the complementary differences between men and women.

In many spheres of life, we don't consider differences to be weaknesses but rather mutual strengths. In music, who is more important to a full symphony orchestra, a violin player or an oboe player? Oth work together in harmony. In sports, who is more important to a medley relay, the swimmer who swims the breaststroke or the swimmer who swims the backstroke? Both have to be strong swimmers in their particular specialty, for a medley race cannot be swum with only one type of swimmer. The answer to the historical devaluing of women does not lie in declaring that there are no differences between females and males, but in recognizing and affirming their



complementary differences. The problem is that we don't understand and accept these differences so they can be used in harmony.

### **THE CAUSE OF CONFLICT:**

When we don't understand and appreciate our God-given differences, we will inevitably have conflict. If the female doesn't understand why she is the way she is, and the male doesn't understand why he is the way he is, then three kinds of conflicts will occur. Women won't be able to successfully get along with other women, men won't be able to successfully get along with other men, and women and men won't be able to successfully get along with each other.

This misunderstand and discord between women and men may be illustrated by the way many people approach marriage today. Most people are unprepared for the marriage relationship. They approach it in the same way that they buy a car. When you want to buy a car, how do you go about it? You go to the various car dealerships, compare the models and features, make your selection, sign the papers, and then drive your new car home. The mere act of getting married is like purchasing that new car; both are relatively simple to do. You look at the choices, find somebody you like, go to a minister or justice of the peace for the ceremony, receive your marriage certificate, and then go home with your new spouse.

At first, everything seems effortless. Buying a new car, driving it home, parking it in the garage, and admiring it in its mint condition isn't any problem. Driving with the full tank of gas that the car dealership gave you isn't any problem. Similarly, it's easy to marry a spouse, step over the threshold, and enjoy the honeymoon. Cruising on lovey-dovey honeymoon feelings is fine for a while.

However, buying a car is one thing: operating and maintaining it is something else. Likewise, getting married is one thing, while maintaining and growing in the relationship is another.

A car is meant to be a benefit to you, to help meet your transportation needs. However, you must understand the needs of the car, because there will come a time when that gas tank will need to be refilled. There will come a time when the car will need an oil change. There will come a time when repairs will need to be made. If you don't know the needs of a car, you will say, "What's wrong with this crazy car?" All the time you are swearing at the car, the car is sitting there wanting to serve you. Yet it can't because you don't know its needs and aren't attending to them.

Suppose you then say to yourself, "Well when I get thirsty, I drink water, so the car must need water. I'm going to fill the gas tank with water." You try to attend to the needs of the car based on your needs. Now you're in trouble, because the water you put in the gas tank has gone through the car's system and damages it. Now your car won't run at all. So, you say to your car, "When I drink water, I'm relieved. What is wrong with you? Your needs are not the same as your car's needs, and your car's needs are not the same as your needs. When you want a car or anything else to function, don't give it what you need. Find out what it needs, and then give it what it needs; then it will work for you.

What has been happening in relationships between males and females is that we have, in a sense, been putting water in the gas tank. We've been trying to function without understanding or addressing the other's

individual needs. We have been trying to operate based only on what we need. That's why many relationships are at a standstill. That's why there has been so much misunderstanding and conflict between men and women throughout history.

We assume that a man needs what a woman needs and a woman needs what a man needs. In many ways, this is not the case. The differences are so great they will astound you. Suppose ribs are your favorite food. Can you imagine trying to feed a plant with a plateful of ribs? You enjoy ribs, but the plant can't take them in or digest them. To grow plants, you must understand that they need absorbable nutrients, water, and light. The same basic principle applies to men and women. There are certainly similarities between males and females, but each also has a unique design and unique needs. We must come to understand the purpose of all the elements related to the function and design of men and women. Otherwise, we will be continually frustrated in our relationships.

Moreover, because the nations of the world have tended to be governed by men, most societies have been set up to address the needs of the male before the needs of the female. To address the plight of the female and the conflict between men and women, we must learn, understand, and appreciate the women's unique design. It is important for all people to understand the nature of the female as she was created in God's image and as she relates to the man.

This knowledge is not just for those who are in a marriage relationship. Whether you are married or single, male or female, young or old, you have interactions with women in the family, the workplace, the church, the government, and almost every other arena of life. If you don't understand how a woman is designed, you will not be able to deal honestly and effectively with her in these realms of life.

Of course, understanding the design of a woman (and a man) is also extremely important for a marriage relationship. When we learn what it truly means to be female and male, we can effectively enter into relationships with others, including the marriage relationship. If you are currently unmarried, you can learn who you are and why you are the way you are. You can discover how the opposite sex is designed and functions. Then, if you do marry, your marriage will be successful. You won't have many of the conflicts that arise out of ignorance of the purpose and value of women and men.

The needs of both males and females need to be learned. However, because the woman has been so misunderstood and devalued over the years, the focus of this book is on her design and needs; at the same time, it makes reference to how her makeup relates to the makeup of the man.

### **GOD'S PURPOSE:**

Nobody knows how something is supposed to function better than it's maker. Can I suggest to you that the best way for us to make progress in the relationship between men and women is to go back to the beginning-to see what was in the mind and heart of the Creator when He made humanity? Knowing our original design and inherent makeup is the only way to bring about lasting, positive change in the way men and women interact with one another in all the realms of life.

I am persuaded that understanding and living in God's original purpose is crucial to restoring right relationships between men and women. **Proverbs 19:21** summarizes this idea well; *"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."* God is a God of purpose, and everything that He made in this life, including men and women, has a purpose. We can fight against His purpose, but if we do, we will be unfulfilled and frustrated. He made us the way we are for His purpose and for our benefit.

Throughout this book, we will continually come back to these two essential principles:

- The purpose of something determines its nature (or design).
- The nature (or design) of something determines its needs.

The nature of the woman must be understood in light of her purpose, and her needs must be understood in light of her nature. Otherwise, she will be unable to fulfill the purpose for which she was created. The most important thing we find out about ourselves, and others, is the purpose of our existence. The sad consequence of men and women misunderstanding each other is that, when purpose is not known, abuse is inevitable. We've had enough of that.

### **WHAT IS A WOMEN'S PLACE?**

The controversy over the role, position, and rights of the women over the years has often centered around these apparently competing views or what a woman's place is:

- "A woman's place is in the home."
- "A woman's place is in the world-in business, education, and government."

Both of these views fail to capture the essence of a women's purpose and design.

Where, ultimately, is a woman's place? A woman's place is, before anything else, in God. (The same is true for a man.) It is in the way He created her, in the tremendous value He gives her, and in the purposes He has for her. Only when we grasp the implications of this truth will we resolve the controversy and conflict surrounding the role of the woman in the world.

### **PRINCIPLES:**

1. If you have to ask somebody for your rights, you are admitting that he or she has ownership of them.
2. A women's position and rights are God-given and inherent.
3. The essential nature of women and men has been forgotten by the world.
4. Culture and tradition have passed along distorted views of humanity.
5. Most women have obtained their identities from men rather than from God.
6. The devaluing of women is preventing them from living in the fullness of God's purposes for them.
7. The way to make progress is to go back to God's original intent in creation.
8. The purpose of something determines its nature or design.
9. The nature of something determines its function and needs.
10. A woman's true place is in God.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. In what ways is it “A man’s world” in the society or culture you live in? What do you think of this mind-set? How has this attitude affected you in your own life experience?
2. Name several traditional perceptions of women that still persist in the world today.
3. To what extent has your self-image or identity been formed by your family? Your culture? God?

## EXPLORING GOD’S PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES:

4. Why do social and political advances on behalf of women not do enough to change negative societal attitudes toward women? *It’s not easy to change a man’s mind about a woman’s place in the world.*
5. Women’s movements have traditionally approached the problem of the devaluing of women by demanding equal rights with men. Yet one of the principles given in chapter one is the following: “If you have to ask somebody for your rights, you are admitting that he or she has ownership of them.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
6. What do you consider women’s rights? On what or whom do you base those rights?
7. Ultimately, what is the underlying cause of the devaluing of women? *It is that we have lost what it means to be human. We have lost what it means to be male and female.*
8. Do you think women and men can be equal and different in their physical and emotional makeup? Why or why not? *(Maybe, Women, as well as men need to understand the inherent nature of the woman, because most women have developed their identify from men, and they do not see themselves as God does.)*
9. What kinds of conflicts have you or those you know experienced with members of the opposite sex?
10. What happens when you seek to meet the needs of another person based on your own assessment of what he or she needs rather than considering that person’s perspective?
11. These two essential principles are underlying themes of Understanding the Purpose and Power of Women:
  - The purpose of something determines its nature (or design).
  - The nature (or design) of something determines its needs.

The nature of the woman must be understood in light of her purpose, and her needs must be understood in light of her nature. Otherwise, she will be unable to fulfill the purpose for which she was created. The most important thing women and men can find out about themselves and others is the purpose of their existence.

- a) What do you think is the purpose of your existence?
- b) How would you define God’s purpose for your existence-as an individual and as a person with a God-given gender?

## CONCLUSION:

Where, ultimately, is a woman's place? A woman's place is, before anything else, in God. (The same is true for a man.) It is in the way He created her, in the tremendous value He gives her, and in the purposes He has for her.

Only when we grasp the implications of this truth will we resolve the controversy and conflict surrounding the role of the woman in the world. We begin to discover these implications as we explore God's original intent in creation for both males and females in chapter two.

## APPLYING GOD'S PRINCIPLES TO YOUR LIFE:

### *THINKING IT OVER:*

- Do you think there is a difference between the way you see yourself and the way God views you and the purposes He has for you? If so, are you willing to become all God has created you to be?
- In what ways, if any, have you or women you know been hindered from personal growth and the development of gifts and talents because of negative attitudes or misunderstanding about women?

### *PRAYING ABOUT IT:*

- Ask God to begin renewing your understanding of who He created the woman to be in her purpose, design, needs, and role.
- If you are experiencing or have experienced conflicts with those of the opposite sex, ask God to reveal to you the true cause of these conflicts and how to respond to them based on His Word.

### *ACTING ON GOD'S TRUTH:*

- If you have been hurt by society's or a particular person's devaluing of women, allow the grace of God to enter the situation by forgiving in Christ those who have wronged you and allowing Him to bring healing and even good out of the situation. (See Romans 8:28)

*The most important thing we can find out about ourselves and others is the purpose of our existence.*

## **NEXT WEEK: CHAPTER 2 - GOD'S PURPOSE IN CREATION**