

SUSANNA WESLEY

Topic: Christian Women Then and Today

Prepared by Ted W. Fuson and Deborah Upton as the first of seven topical studies in the Summer of 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic for Bon Air Baptist Church

This the sixth of seven studies based on Scripture and Eric Metaxas' 7 Men and 7 Women and the Secret of Their Greatness, Nelson Books, 2013, 2015, & 2016.

Some Scripture References:

Proverbs 13:24—He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.

Proverbs 31:10, 26-31—A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

Ephesians 5:25-30—Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body.

Ephesians 6:1-4—Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

The topic is Christian Women Then and Today.

In spite of a ne'er-do-well husband, absent too often, Susanna developed a **disciplined and structured schedule for her children**. She home-schooled them in the basics of education as well as in the basics of Christian living and faith. Her sons Charles and John, after returning home from a missionary trip to America, both were both converted. Charles on May 21, 1738 and, John on May 24, 1738. The effect on Christian believers has been overwhelming to this very day.

The Foundry became the home of Susanna and John for her last three years of life. The meeting space was the beginning of John's effective preaching of salvation by grace through faith. He traveled all over England preaching and establishing small groups of believers and enquirers led by lay folk. His methods led to him being called a Methodist. (Many congregations in America have adopted the name Foundry Methodist Church.)

England and America were to experience the Great Awakening of the church. Their methodology of small groups where individuals were accountable to one another for their lifestyle and Bible reading was very much like the early followers of Christ who met in homes. Of course, they preached to very large and small congregations throughout their ministries.

How many women today could or would put up with a husband like Samuel Wesley? Certainly the pastor of this church would be admonished to "straighten up and fly right" if he treated his wife and children as did Samuel Wesley. The culture has changed for good recognizing the rights and privileges of women and children.

Single mothers and unmarried women are not addressed in the scripture passages or in Susanna's story. However, it cannot be left out of this discussion. Single ladies are active in our church. Single mothers are welcome here, too. In Susanna's day, it was not always accepted by all. Her husband was absent. Thankfully we have come a long way. Yet, single women are sometimes victimized by folks who whisper about them. May God forgive the whisperers. After all, there are more women born than men.

Single mothers need our support when a husband is unfaithful to his marriage vows. Godly men must respect these ladies and offer assistance where needed. Children who have an absent father need the influence of godly men.

We will never be able to thank John Wesley for his methods, but hopefully we never think we have outgrown them. We thank Charles Wesley when we sing his hymns.

Some Discussion Questions Follow:

1. Read the last paragraph on page 291. What other woman in our world has made such a large impact for Jesus? (Of course, Mother Teresa has. That's next week's lesson.) How about in Baptist life, in BABC life?
2. 'Wonder how many women have spoken to their sons as Susanna did to John about "human love"? How many fathers? See page 283.
3. Do women these days have the theological training Susanna had? How about men? Of course, some do on our staff, but as a whole do we train our members theologically?
4. Susanna was fiercely committed to a fixed schedule. What about that for us? See pages 273-279.
5. Nine of her children died in infancy (p. 277.) We have come a long way since then. Pregnant women today have far better health care, usually. What more help needed for pregnant women?
6. Give an example of women or a woman who is able to teach and disciple Christians in our church. Do any of you "I C N U" a woman whose ability needs to be encouraged?
7. What about the knocking inside the house? See pages 280-283.
8. The treatment of Hetty is awful. Her sister Mary and brother John disagreed. Could Susanna have interceded or did she agree with her husband? What about such a situation today?
9. Susanna functioned as a single mother much of the life. How does BABC minister to single women? How about single mothers and fathers? What about folks going through divorce and afterward?