

## Books

A CORD OF THREE STRANDS By Linda Raney Wright, Fleming H. Revell Co., Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1987. Reviewed by Alvera Mickelsen.

This book, written by a woman on the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ, makes a distinct contribution to the current literature on biblical teachings about men and women in the marriage relationship and as co-workers in the service of Christ. The title is taken from Ecclesiastes 4:12: "A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart." The three strands, in Wright's book, refers to man, woman and God.

The book is divided into two sections: the first discusses the marriage relationship; the second concerns how men and women can and should work together in Christian service.

Wright's approach to the marriage relationship is well summarized in her statement on p. 81. "The real foundation of a Christian marriage is the relationship with God of both individuals. Both partners must be sold out to Jesus Christ and individually led by Him. This will enable both parties to submit to each other as well as encourage, serve, please, build and love each other."

This thesis is spelled out in the rest of the first section, amply illustrated by the experiences of Linda in her own marriage to Rusty Wright, and by scores of other husbands and wives with whom Linda has talked.

This abundance of illustrations is one of the strong points of the book. The author recounts stories of many marriage partners who thought the "chain of command" (with the husband above the wife) was the biblical imperative, even though it may not have been bringing satisfaction or joy to the couple. She tells of marriages that failed because that concept was not suited to the individual couple and neither pastors nor church leaders helped them to find what Wright believes to be the biblical teaching of true partnership and oneness in Christ.

Wright deals carefully with the passages regularly quoted by those who insist that God ordained the husband to be the dominant one in the family and that the wife is to be subordinate. She points out that nowhere does God tell Adam or any other man that he is supposed to have authority over his wife, or to have the last word. She points out that such attitudes on the part of husbands indicate that they are treating their wives as perpetual children, rather than as their adult counterparts who were made in the image of God and responsible to God for the use of their abilities and gifts. In story after story, Wright shows how marriages improved when the more biblical model of partnership, mutual love and submission was slowly (and sometimes painfully) built into the marriage.

The second half of the book deals with men and women in Christian service. The author states, "There is more to life than a fulfilling marriage. *When the higher charg-*

*es of becoming what God has designed us to be become our preoccupation, a good marriage falls into line.."*

Wright strongly emphasizes the primary demand of each man and woman to please and glorify God. She points out the paradoxes that exist in many Christian organizations—a woman may preach and teach men on the mission field, but not in her home church that supports her.

The book then recounts the many biblical illustrations of women whom God used in public ministry—Huldah, Deborah and others. She recounts Jesus' non-sexist approach to women, and the ministry of women in the early church. She also tackles the "problem" passages, such as I Timothy 2:9-15, drawing on the work of biblical scholars. In this section, as in Part I on marriage, Wright peppers her discussion with illustrations of women who were hindered from full service for Christ by church leaders or incorrect early teaching. Other stories tell of contemporary women who are being remarkably used by God to win others for Christ when they are free to use the gifts given by the Holy Spirit.

The style of *A Cord of Three Strands* is conversational and easy to read. Other books may deal in greater depth with theological and biblical interpretations, but this one puts flesh and blood and living applications into each discussion.

This book is a good one to give to pastors who are counselling marriage partners in the "submissive wife" approach. Some pastors who find it difficult to look theologically at a viewpoint different from their own may be challenged to consider case study evidence that another biblical approach may promote better marriages and happier families. They may even consider how many more workers for Christ might be available if encouragement were given to women whom God has gifted.

### WE RECOMMEND HIGHLY

EQUAL TO SERVE by Gretchen Gaebelien Hull. Fleming H. Revell Co., Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1987.

"We are to concentrate on the inner characteristics of a person, not on his or her gender." So states author Gretchen Gaebelien Hull, a biblical feminist whose new book, *Equal To Serve*, comes to grips with the controversial social issues of today. What are the roles of women and men in marriage, parenthood, the workplace? They are to be assumed with complete freedom and shared responsibility, answers Hull.

*Equal To Serve* takes a close look at the women of the Bible and the men they lived and served with. The author takes issue with the many traditions that Christians seem to be comfortable with today. She garners strong scriptural evidence that with truly Christ-like attitudes, male and female can serve God completely and sacrificially, each using their God-given talents in whatever role he or she feels led to follow.

The author points out that biblical feminists such as