

**"When Aquila and Priscilla had heard Apollos, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Acts 18:26**

## When Will We Be "Real"?

For years I've loved the story about the Velveteen Rabbit who was preoccupied with her identity - - whether she was real or not! Sitting among the toys in a child's room, she asks the skin horse about it, and gets the profound reply, "You are real when you are loved. When I was cuddled so much that I began to lose my skin, then I knew that I was real."

As women, many of us have found out how wonderful it is to be loved by our families. We agree with the skin horse that we are real when we are loved. But then we venture out beyond the shelter of our home and loved ones, and go to the edge of the woods - - into the male world - - and we discover that we are not taken seriously.

"But she's not real. She's not like us," the rabbits in the woods shout. In the world of the Velveteen Rabbit, the Fairy Godmother comes on the scene and makes everything right, so that she gets the same hind legs as all the other rabbits in the woods. But in our male-dominated evangelical world, how can we grow the "hind legs" that will give us status as real disciples of Jesus Christ, ready to lay down our lives for the Kingdom?

Instead of a Fairy Godmother to right the wrong, we have the Gospel: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel. It is the saving power of God . . . because here is revealed God's way of righting wrong" (Rom. 1:16 NEB) Because we are created in God's image, redeemed by Christ on the Cross, and empowered by the Holy Spirit with all the gifts given to the church, we are real disciples, in partnership with our brothers.

There is no limited atonement for women, even though one popular radio pastor preaches one Gospel for men and another for women. We will always bear the sin of Eve, according to his teaching. Paul was prepared for such heresy when he wrote: "I am astonished to find you turning so quickly away from Him who called you by grace, and following a different gospel . . . there are persons who unsettle your minds by trying to distort the gospel of Christ. But if anyone, if we ourselves or an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel at variance with the gospel we preached to you, he shall be held outcast . . . the gospel you heard from me is no human invention . . . I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:6-8,11-12 NEB)

While the dramatic issue in Galatia was circumcision, the great issue facing the church today is woman's equal status and responsibility in home, church and society. To us being

## When Will We Be Free?

by Kari Malcolm

accepted as "real" should not lead to sexual promiscuity, nor to selfish ambition to find fulfillment in a career at the expense of family. When we are "real" - - set free by Christ - - we are set free to serve - - to lay down our lives for family, friends, enemies and strangers.

As I am writing these lines, today's mail brought a Christmas greeting from Sweden, from Rose-Marie Frebran. I shall never forget one of her challenges: "I am not free till every woman on earth is free." That's why we cannot just lay down our lives for our families and forget about the rest of the world. It is not a matter of either/or, but both! God can enlarge my heart and my capacity to care for my family and go beyond the four walls of my home to care for the world for which Christ died (Jn 3:16, Acts 1:8).

Being "real" - - or set free - - means looking beyond ourselves and our homes, first to the conservative women in our churches who are not "real" - - not taken seriously. Our task is to provide friendship, forums for discussion on women's status, information and Bible studies on women, written from a conservative perspective about the freedom Christ has given us in the Gospel. After penetrating evangelical churches with the liberating Good News, we have to go beyond the church and beyond our shores to women of other cultures who continue to live in some sort of patriarchal bondage that makes them less than "real" human beings. What about the 500 million Muslim women who have not been set free by the Gospel, and therefore are not taken seriously?

As a missionary and as a Biblical feminist, I have to agree with Rose-Marie: "I am not free till every woman on earth is free."

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