

Does the Bible Say Things That Harm Women?

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Sometimes I see a video that—even after everything I’ve seen over 50 years of ministry—still shocks me. And a recent video from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is one of those videos as an ELCA spokeswoman claims that numerous verses of Scripture are “harmful” to women and girls but, not to worry, we can just not take those verses literally!

Using wording from a 2019 church document, she says, “The Christian tradition is both a challenge and a resource when it comes to addressing sexism. And, let me tell ya, it’s been a big challenge.... Biblical texts say things about women and girls that *we now recognize* as harmful.” (emphasis added).

“We now recognize”—in other words, man (or woman) is the authority, not God and his Word. And that becomes abundantly obvious later in the video. But what specific biblical texts is she referring to? Well, the video provides a list:

Genesis 3:16 (not surprising that Genesis made the list!)

Judges 19

1 Corinthians 11:3–16

1 Timothy 2:15

Exodus 20:17 (the tenth commandment—“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife . . . or his female servant. . .” Yes, apparently not coveting women is harmful to women?!)

Deuteronomy 21:11–14

Ephesians 5:22–24

1 Timothy 2:9

1 Corinthians 14:34–35

Colossians 3:18

Peter 3:1–6 (Yes, the video just said Peter!)

Titus 2:4–5

Basically, any chapter that gives women a specific command feminists don’t like is “harmful” to women (based on their arbitrary standard of “harmful,” of course). But, no worries—you can just explain them away!

“...Some aspects of the Scriptures reflect the cultures and societies in which they arose. But a Lutheran reading, centered on Christ, frees us from taking all the Scriptures only literally. We don’t have to conform to the social and cultural practices of the ancient world.”

After she says this, she hands off the Bible to someone off-screen. Yes, she literally gives away the Bible! Her answer to so-called “harmful” passages is to just dump the Bible! How much more literal could she have been in showing her disdain for the very words of God? Rather than wrestle with the Scriptures, comparing Scripture with Scripture, to determine what God intended for us to understand from his Word, just throw the Bible away and listen to the culture! She has determined she is the authority, not God.

Think about it: In this view, what exactly is the point of the Bible? If Scripture isn’t from God, but is just a reflection of the culture of time, why should we listen to any of it? After all, culture constantly changes, and if Scripture was both written, and must be interpreted, through a cultural lens. . . why should we listen to it at all? Why not just listen to the popular people of our day?

I don’t think her view of the Bible could be any lower, but she would do well to heed Scripture:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and *do not lean on your own understanding.*” (Proverbs 3:5, emphasis added)

Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered. (Proverbs 28:26)

Every man is stupid and without knowledge. (Jeremiah 10:14)

Compared to what God knows, we know nothing! How arrogant of sinful, fallible human beings to think they know more and have greater wisdom than the God who knows all things, has all wisdom and all knowledge, and knows us (and our sin nature!) better than we know ourselves.

Scripture doesn’t harm women (though bad interpretations of Scripture, influenced by culture, rather than Scripture, sometimes do!). Scripture is a treasure of wisdom, knowledge, and insight for women and men, from Genesis to Revelation, given to us by God himself.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16)