

Don't Muzzle The Ox

"For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop." (1 Corinthians 9:9-10, ESV)

What effects have resulted from generations of mothers working full-time outside their careers as homemakers by necessity not choice? Few would argue against the right of mothers to choose to work outside the home, circumstances pending, yet what about conditions which force them to work? When a family has certain expenses and its income cannot meet them based solely on the husband's salary, this is often when women make the sacrifice for their families and enter the working world to make ends meet. This can sometimes be avoided by reducing unnecessary expenses or by the husband increasing skill through training to enter a higher-paying career. Indeed, children need their mothers and husbands need their love too. (cf. 1 Tim. 2:15) The husband unwilling to support his wife compelling her to work full-time misunderstands the stewardship God has given him and his role as head and provider. (cf. Gen. 50:21; 1 Tim. 5:8; 1 Cor. 11:7)

Likewise, Paul wrote of a situation in which church might take the same attitude: forcing her evangelists to work full-time outside of the one career of preaching and teaching. Few would argue against the right of preachers to choose to work outside of preaching, circumstances pending, yet what about conditions which force them to work? What effects have resulted from generations of preachers working full-time outside of preaching by necessity not choice? Paul argued that evangelists have the right to have their basic needs met by the church: to take a wife, have children, and have their needs met, and to refrain from working a secular job. (1 Cor. 9:3-6) It is not only the local church which meets these needs but all Christians, all churches, willing to partner with evangelists in meeting their needs. (Phil. 4:15; 2 Cor. 11:8)

Evangelists avoid a second career through avoiding unnecessary expenses, but churches should not muzzle these men as they labor. (1 Cor. 9:9-10) In the same way that Israel supported its priests, the church should support her evangelists' needs solely through the gospel. (1 Cor. 9:13-14) The army that supports this soldier and his family is the church; The vineyard that feeds both the keeper and his family is the church; The flock that provides milk for the farmer and his family is the church. (1 Cor. 9:7) Remember: Yahweh God has secured these rights. As the needs of evangelists grow, let us recognize that it is the stewardship of all Christians to support evangelists and their families, not just the local church. The worker is worthy of his wages.