

Honoring Our Complimentary Counterpart

Series: Making Relationships Work: Love, Sex & Marriage
September 24, 2017 – Brad Bailey

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18, 21-25

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.".... ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. ²²

Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. ²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Ephes. 5:33

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Intro

Today...we are **continuing** our **Fall focus** on **Making Relationships Work: Love, Sex, and Marriage**. Began with God's declaration that it is not good for man to be alone....and last week the purpose of marriage... how getting beyond our false expectations can bring deep freedom...and **today God wants to speak into our differences as men and women**.

Today we are going to hear what God has to say to us about our unique complimentary nature as male and female...men and women. God provides this **poetic summary of life**...revealing a larger reality...something about who we are.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18, 21-25 (NIV)

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Again...much can be said...but this morning I want to **focus on being created male and female**... on being **complimentary counterparts to one another**.

Human life bears God's nature – we have the ability to join God to further bring chaos into order... for life to flourish...and to be co-creators of multiplying such life.

But this cannot be done alone... it is designed as a partnership of two complimentary counterparts ...and God is uniquely reflected in that partnership...of male and female.

And we get a picture of when Adam discovers Eve and is wowed because she was **like him**...but **also**...because she was **not like him**.

You can almost imagine Adam saying: "Oh wow....God ...big improvement!" But hen begins trying to understand this mysterious difference.

And to this day man is still trying to figure out a woman...and women a man.

From whatever point one may believe it all began.... to this day...we are **still trying to know how to relate to our complimentary gender**. In fact...more research is being done right now than ever before.

Mark Gungor describes the differences between a man and women's brain in humorous way.

(Below is adapted from Mark Gungor's Relational Physics from... "A Tale of Two Brains" and was shared in more natural brevity.)

Men – Their brains are made up of little boxes, there's a box for every conceivable subject, and the boxes **DON'T TOUCH EACH OTHER**.

Women – Their brains are made up of a big ball of wire which connects everything to everything, and it's driven by the energy we call emotion. (Important Note: If you ever tell a person with this kind of brain that their feelings **IN ANY WAY** don't matter, you will likely find life to be lonely...and potentially short lives.)

This difference effects how each handles STRESS differently...

Men – Men have a box in their brains with nothing in it. Appropriately, it is called the "Nothing Box," and it is where a man goes any time he has a chance, especially if he is stressed out. This is how a man can do something seemingly completely brain-dead for hours on end, like fishing or mindless channel surfing on the TV.

Women – When women feel stress... they find it helpful to get some connection going... by talking about the problem...talking lessons the intensity. If a man happen to be the one this woman needs to talk to, it is important that you just shut up and listen. She doesn't want your help or your advice, no matter how good you think it would be.

Important Note: Men and women often try to offer to each other their own solutions to stress, but if you know someone who has the typical "man brain" and can sense that they're stressed out, just let them go to their nothing box – and don't try following them. Likewise if you know someone with the typical "woman brain" who is stressed, let them talk to you as you sit down, shut up, and listen.

Remembering Details

Men – With as much time as men like to spend in the nothing box – not feeling or thinking about anything – men don't really hang on to a lot of details, and when they tell a story or, for example, recount what the plumber said, it is usually just the bottom line.

Women – As women's brains are driven so much by emotion, they have a strong tendency to remember **EVERYTHING**, and when they tell a story of, say, something that

happened at work today, they don't just say what happened, they relive the entire event, practically transporting you into their experience.

These are just a few of the differences... that are emerging from finally getting a closer look at the way we are wired differently. There are now over 100 ways that have been identified.

I think it can be good to laugh at our struggle to understand our different natures... But **God has another aspect of how we relate to our differences** that is **even more essential**...and that is **HONORING the other**. God knows that humor may be a good way of getting some of the frustration out...but God also knows that we must ask, what are we taking in?

Don't let the humor we find in our differences...allow us to lose the sacred honor inherent in the gift of our complimentary partner.

God reminds us... we were created as a gift to one another.

In creation...God created complimentary partners....

The woman is described as a "*helper*"... and we hear that English word and might hear that which suggests being subordinate... inferior. But the Hebrew word is the same one which **described God as man's helper**. Far from inferiority... it is about the one needed to fulfill the goal.

This phrase, the describes such a helper as being '*suitable*'...or '*fit for him*', leads us to the idea of complementarian relationship. The man and the woman were **created unique by God**, both in the image of God, equal in dignity, value, and worth, but they have been **meant to complement one another, not compete** against one another. The weaknesses of the one are strengthened by the strengths of the other, and the strengths of the other one are made even stronger by the strengths of the other.

> Do you realize that **you were created to be a gift** to your complimentary counterpart?

Once separated from God... God depicts in the Genesis story...how there is blame...and conflict... and domination...and resentment.

Once separated from God... the very gift of having a complimentary partner – between male and female... is lost. Immediately they begin to **hide in their shame**...and there is **blame**...and **God explains the consequences of how the women would be oppressed with insecurity ...and a man would similarly be in bondage to work.**

It is this very alienation and shame which Christ reconciles men and women from...and from which honor between men and women can be restored. This is what the Apostle Paul expounds upon when he addresses husbands and wives. In the Book of Ephesians, he begins to speak to how **all social structures are transformed** by the way of Christ. Jesus confronts the

power that seeks to be Lord over others...and reveals that he who came not to be served...but to serve. [1]

So Paul instructs husbands to love as Christ loved the church... and lead their wives **in the way of Christ...who said those who follow him will not Lord authority over others... will not look down but lift up.... will understand that the first will be the last and the last will be the first.... who took the very nature of a servant...who washed his follower's feet as an example ...and then gave his life for every one of us.**

He concludes... **this section with this summary....**

Ephes. 5:33 (ESV)

“...so let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

We are to be transformed by the love of Christ. And **the marriage relationship...husband and wife...which is a sign post of God's covenantal love on earth...can lead to husbands loving their wives...and wives respecting their husbands.**

I don't believe that Paul is intending to suggest that wives should not love their husbands...nor that husbands should not respect their wives. ...for we are first and foremost all humans with similar fundamental needs... but we are also different in ways... **woven and wired** as such. The difference is in terms of **what we internally need and desire most.**

Clearly this text is speaking of husbands and wives. It's in such a union that the complimentary nature must find it's fit. However, I believe that the underlying posture of appreciating these differences...can speak to us all.

I believe these two needs call out to husbands and wives...and really to all men and women. So I want to take a moment to consider each.

Now I know that each may see the problem lies in the failure of the other side of this exchange. We believe that we need to get the other side of the compliment fixed ... and that would certainly help... but here is the truth... we are only responsible for what we bring...and can only change what we bring.

We can contend... “Well until they change, it's not fair to expect me to change.”

No it's not. It's about that which one chooses.

Begin with a **word to men...**

The Need For Men To Discover A Level Of Unconditional Value for Their Wives (Women in their Lives)... that affirms security and significance.

Paul calls men to now love their wives as Christ loved the church. He uses the word agape... God's unconditional love. Because that may seem so hard to grasp...I think it may help to see the central point as that of VALUE. From what I hear from the hearts of women...and what I read and learn from research... women generally feel less secure...and what their most natural desire

is to be loved in such a way that reflects their value...which roots them in security and significance.

So we need to learn....

Husbands (men) will serve the deepest need of their wives (women in their life), as their complimentary partner, as they truly value and care for them through commitment, thoughtful attention, and a willingness to sacrifice themselves to serve their good.

I want to note these elements...

- **Commitment**

Genesis 2:24

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”

> To “be united” or “cleave”- we may think of it as merely sexual, however cleaving also implies spiritual and emotional closeness.... to be connected.... to be committed.

It means leaving one’s primary commitment to parents... and embracing he is now bound to a new family. It means there is loyalty.

- **Thoughtful Attention**

1 Peter 3:7 (ESV) – “Live with your wives in an understanding way”

Doesn’t say have to understand... but that you trust her heart.

In terms of the analogy of husbands and wives love being like that of Christ and the church, as the church naturally wants to place the burdens of life on Christ, so a wife wants to place the burdens of life on her husband. A man can help bear burdens...on the broad shoulders he has been give.

This requires men to listen with a goal that is different than their usual nature. Usually if she wants to talk about something... **think PROCESSING not PROBLEM SOLVING**. She wants to be given understanding, not a solution.

Men tend to be more analytical... problem solving... so while it can be hard to focus on understanding more than solving...it can be freeing to realize that we don’t have to fix everything. Because he truth is that there is a lot of life we can’t simply fix. [2]

- **Willingness to Sacrifice ... we may not be risking our life in slaying dragons or going out on the hunt of wild animals...there are ways in which we show that we will risk for the needs of others.**

A challenge to men...

- Will you shake yourself free of your fears of inadequacy and rejection...and embrace the strength you have been given to initiate in serving the needs of your counterpart?

- How can you relate to women more thoughtfully...seeking understanding of their heart and mind?

Maybe you need to break away from your “nothing box”...the internet...video games... TV... and reaffirm she is valued.

- How can you honor her dignity? What can you stop that may be demeaning?

Do you need to shift your mind from sexual fantasies...to see her beauty? If you're a fan of hip hop...are you willing to put a check on the use of the word “bitch” to speak of women?

- How does your life reflect self-sacrifice for the good of others?

You may not be called to war... or to go off on hunt for wild animals to eat...but how are you providing for what others need to flourish? How have you followed Christ in refusing the throne of power ...and initiated washing feet because they were dirty? Been thoughtful about spending time in a way that would serve your wife or others in your life?

What might God be saying to the hearts of women?

The Need For Women To Discover A Level Of Unconditional Respect for Their Husbands (Men in their Lives)... that Is Not Simply Earned.

Now the idea that a man's deepest need and desire is for respect...may not be easy for men to admit. Men may have a hard time expressing the desire or need because such **admission in itself it may seem less respected**... too vulnerable. But women...we fear your rejection.

Some may wonder why it was a women, **Aretha Franklin**, who created a hit record entitled: R-E-S-P-E-C-T that declared women wanted a little respect? What most don't realize is that the song was **written two years earlier by Otis Redding** who wrote it as a song to his wife. The song was the cry of a man's deepest soul for respect.

Every man lives with the **deep fear of inadequacy**...never certain they have what it takes ...or have earned their honor.

In one national study, four hundred **men were given the choice between two different negative experiences**. If they were forced to choose one of the following, which would they prefer to endure?

a) to be left alone and unloved in the world

b) to feel inadequate and disrespected by everyone

> 74% chose the former... not indifferent to needing to be loved... but most deeply needing to experience respect.

Every man understand what the Bible in Proverbs declares that it is better for a man to deserted in the desert than to live in the house of a critical woman. [3]

Our more simple way to note the difference... Many wives may freely state, "I love my husband but I don't respect him." But if asked how they would feel if their husbands were to say, "I respect my wife but I don't love her."... they sense what a man may feel when presented with the former. (Eggerichs, p. 68)

We **tend to see** the nature of **respect** as **something which must be earned**. However, there is a level of respect that can flow from the very ultimate nature of a person... that which is inherent in their design even if undeveloped in their expression.

Respecting the Desire (Design) Not Just the Development of Your Husband

Note that what can be appreciated most fundamentally is the 'desire' that lies within him... apart from the actual development or expression of this nature.

- Example – He has the desire to provide regardless of his income. Few men are deeply content to be without work and the ability to provide. Men most naturally fight depression when underemployed or unemployed. So even if stuck for various reasons, it may be simply a matter of respecting the desire itself.

Accepting that some level of healing of the soul is often required a part... and you may be a vital part. Such respect for the 'desire' and inherent design can also be encouraged by recognizing that the lack of development may involve areas that were wounded, rejected, and shamed... and as such will require healing to get break through and re-engage.

We as men are trying to navigate a world that doesn't even seem clear that it needs us...or at least can affirm what is in us.

Until a man knows he is a man he will do everything to prove he is and shrink from anything that questions that he is.

The film *Saving Private Ryan*...—Private Ryan's three brothers have been killed in battle in the last year of World War II. Military headquarters learns of their deaths and decides the fourth son must be saved. Captain John Miller, played by Tom Hanks, sets out with a few others on orders to find Ryan in France and bring him to safety. They find Ryan but are not sure he's worth saving. Toward the end of the movie, nearly everyone in Miller's group is killed in a battle. As Captain Miller himself is dying, he manages to let young Ryan know that he must now *earn* his life by living it as proof that he was worth saving. In the final scene, when Ryan is now in his seventies and standing over Miller's grave, he says to his wife, "Tell me I've led a good life. Tell me I'm a good man." As she replies to him that he has and he is, her face belies that she is missing how crucial this statement is to him. An elderly man, Ryan knows that if he has not been good and proven his worth, then his own life and the lives of all the men who saved him have been meaningless.

Wives (women) will meet the deepest need of their husbands (men in their life), as their complimentary partner, as they appreciate and affirm the unique God-given design and desires of their husbands ...and the responsibility they bear to be sacrificial leaders.

A challenge to women...

- **Will you see and affirm the positive aspect of his nature and desires as a man (such as achievement, peace, and sex)**
- **Will you seriously confront any critical spirit or tendencies you have?**

Critical spirit and words... not repeating more than clarity requires.

Criticism never improves a man.

One of the worst things a man can experience is looking daily into the “mirror” he loves and seeing his faults and shortcomings relentlessly being played back to him.

This may start with unlocking yourself from the negatives you may be focused on?

- **Will you express what you appreciate and affirm...especially in public?**
- **Will you counter the tendency to fall more in love with your kids than with your husband.**

That’s easy to do as the years go by. I call it “the great swap.” You get caught up in all the things the kids are doing, often seeing more of them than you do your husband. What you don’t notice is the growing distance developing between you and the man you vowed years ago to give your life to.

CLOSING:W e have become adversarial....used and abused our complimentary counterpart....and today... the question is whether we will choose again to stop and see that beneath our fears and failures...we were created as a gift to the other.

God gave each to the other as a gift. Are you becoming that gift?

Resources: Some of the emphasis on the different needs of “love and respect” drew from “Love & Respect” by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs

While not particularly drawing from these resources for this message, I would like to recommend some articles that can serve men and women who want to better understand and love the other.

6 No-No's for Relating to Your Man By Robert Lewis -

<http://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/marriage/staying-married/wives/6-nonos-for-relating-to-your-man>

What Should Be the Husband's 'Role' in Marriage? By Dennis Rainey

<http://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/marriage/staying-married/husbands/what-should-be-the-husbands-role-in-marriage> Notes that: Intentionally connecting with your husband takes hard work.

The Battle of the Sexes - Men vs women: no clear winner. Jul 02, 2012 -

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hide-and-peek/201207/the-battle-the-sexes>

Good summary of what is known about the different strengths of men and women.

Notes:

1. More extended thoughts about how Paul's words in Ephesians can be received...

Once separated from God... the very gift of having a complimentary partner – between male and female... is lost. Immediately they begin to hide in their shame...and there is blame...and God explains the consequences of how the women would be oppressed with insecurity and bondage to men...and a man would similarly be in bondage to work.

It is this very alienation and shame which Christ reconciles men and women from...and from which honor between men and women can be restored. This is what the Apostle Paul expounds upon when he addresses husbands and wives. In the Book of Ephesians, he begins to speak to how all social structures are transformed by the way of Christ. Jesus confronts the power that seeks to be Lord over others...and reveals that he who came not to be served.

This is found in the broader text of Ephesians 5:21-33.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²² Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- ³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³² This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Some observations to help hear the heart of Paul more clearly.

We tend to isolate a couple phrases and become frozen on them. Some women will naturally find certain words strike them...“submit”...and that phrase “respect their husbands.” (And some men are staring at those too...but likely with a different reaction.)

But I invite you to step back from reacting to what we might think this implies.

- What Paul is saying was quite subversive to the whole culture of the Roman and Greco world. The culture of the time did not honor women with high value nor regard. Ancient sources do not speak frequently of husbands loving their wives. Husbands had relatively few obligations towards their wives.
- The context is clearly that of Paul declaring that because Christ has come to reconcile us to God and one another, all social structures should be transformed by a mutual concern for the other. The larger context is a call to “be filled with the Spirit”...and how it changes us.
- Paul begins with the call for “mutual submission” ...as both are now to live in submission to Christ. Everything is to now to reflect the love and way of Christ. We are not called to exert authority over people. We are *instructed* to love, serve, and lay down our authority as Christ did.
- Referring to the husband as the “head” is translating a Greek word which can be used as “source”...and in the “head of a river.” Given the analogy with Christ, it describes the husband as the initiating source of sacrificially serving the other...which should be responded to with respect. (Nothing implies dominance, control, or authority in general decisions. The only time Paul speaks of a married couple making a major decision (1 Corinthians 7:5), he insists that it should be made by mutual agreement.)

It may be difficult to initially understand the nature of what Paul implies when he states that “husbands are the head of their wives.” This idea, I believe is implicit in the Scripture, must be understood in the light of Christ loving the church. I believe Paul is saying that when we join the pattern of Christ...the whole nature of power is transformed... from that of being self-serving to that of being self-sacrificial.

I do believe that men are to serve by leading... but in the way of Christ...who said those who follow him will not Lord authority over others... will not look down but lift up.... will understand that the first will be the last and the last will be the first.... who took the very nature of a servant...who washed his follower’s feet as an example ...and then gave his life for every one of us.

Consider...

Luke 11:46 (NIV)

Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down

with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

Matthew 20:25-28 (NIV)

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

1 Peter 5:2-3 (NIV)

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Philippians 2:5-8 (NIV)

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

Phil.2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

2. It can also be noted that women sense things, use their intuition, and when men don't talk, or validate what's sensed, it leaves her confused. She continues to want to figure it out, because she longs for his love, which is experienced in her by connecting openly with his heart.

Illust.- Two types of Electrical Circuits... some you can pull out a bulb from a string of lights...and all the others stay on...they are separated. But others... interconnected...one out and they all go out.

Wife is like the first circuit. If serious marital conflicts exist this affects her whole being. All lights go out, she can't function properly. "If I'm battling with him in one area, I'm at war with him in all areas." (Eggerichs pg. 136)

3. We hear these descriptions on how painful a woman's criticism or shame can be to a man... Proverbs 21:19 Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and nagging wife.

Proverbs 27:15-16 A continual dripping on a rainy day and a contentious wife are alike. Trying to keep her in check is like stopping a wind storm or grabbing oil with your right hand.

Proverbs 25:24 It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

Proverbs 12:4 A wife with strength of character is the crown of her husband, but the wife who disgraces him is like bone cancer.