

Men and Women Together on Mission:

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Intro: “Family” on mission should look like God’s family living Kingdom together and inviting others to join the family and making room for them at our table-- not orphans on mission or even “teams of middle-aged white men” on mission. If we go back to the beginning, we see that God had family in mind from the start. Gen 1:26-31

Then God said, “Let us make man[h] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

27 So God created man in his own image, **in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” **29** And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. **30** And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. **31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.** And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

The design of God for mission is for men and women to work together to do his work. This is easier to give mental and verbal assent to than to actually live out.

A. God is refining His church

- The “lusts of the flesh” will corrupt any system we put into practice. We can have correct theological beliefs regarding His design for the church or the family, but if the people living in it walk in the “lusts of the flesh” rather than the “fruit of the Spirit” it will corrupt and fail to express the life of God that He intended. The actual culture that is lived will corrupt any theologically correct framework. This is why God always is about the process of refining (removing the impurities) the church. Many of the negative experiences people have had with gender roles or the expressions of authority in both the church and family have come more from people applying them with the “lusts of the flesh” than any wrong theological position.
- God sometimes uses cultural turmoil (civil rights movement, women’s suffrage movement, etc.) to correct His people in different eras. Throughout history God seems to use the turmoil in culture to bring light upon issues that need addressing in and through His Church. It is important to note that cultural turmoil has not always led to more Christlike perspectives being culturally embraced. Some “advances” have led to moral deterioration away from God’s design. Yet with some of the cultural turmoil, the Church has moved *towards* God’s design.
- We can see even during the past one hundred and fifty years in issues like the abolition of slavery (important to note that most of the leaders of the early abolitionists were God’s people who were motivated by His word and the Spirit). We have seen it in the woman suffrage and feminist movements which brought equal rights for women to vote and helped break off previously held ideas in the West that women were somehow lesser in value and status to men.

- Even the sexual revolution of the 1960s brought attention among God’s people to mistaken ideas that helped nudge them toward God’s design. Much of the sexual revolution was a reaction to a puritanical past that saw sexuality as a drudgery and duty simply for the benefit of men and the procreation of children. In the midst of the sexual revolution, the church began to teach and write books about sexuality and marriage that highlighted a Song of Solomon perspective that saw sex in marriage as designed to be both sacred and pleasurable. Now it is a common teaching in churches for marriages and couples preparing for marriage to give adequate attention to the marriage bed so it is a source of pleasure and delight.
- The challenge now facing Salt & Light, as well as the broader church, is that the culture around us is grappling with the issue of gender and biological sex-which are no longer interchangeable terms-and we are struggling to catch up with the conversation. We must not allow a broken world to dictate its version of truth to us. But, where the church is broken and functioning outside of the perfect design of God, a scolding from God through the world should be enough to cause self-examination and repentance.
- We cannot forget that much of the impetus behind the “Times Up” and “Me Too” movements was fueled (in part) by revelations of decades of horrific and hidden abuse of women and children by the priests of the Catholic Church. It’s not good enough to distance ourselves from the Catholic Church since we split ways centuries ago. The truth is that in many evangelical circles, women have been silenced and abused and made to feel as secondary members of church society; told to “be silent” and “stay home to raise babies and care for your husband” while Scripture was used as a bludgeoning tool to demean and manipulate. Just like the culture around us, the day of reckoning has come. Repentance and a return to God’s ideals must take place now if we wish to be a godly voice to the world around us. However, we must avoid swinging theology and practice like a pendulum in order to be “relevant” and “progressive.”
- In all likelihood, God will use the gender debates in culture to sharpen the focus of the church so she can lead the way in presenting through both lifestyle and teaching God’s better way of living. This will cause us to reflect on our theology and hermeneutic, as well as attending to our behaviour in the family, the church and wider community.
- THE BROKEN WORLD CANNOT HEAL ITSELF! The Church must first walk in the truth in order to be the “pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15)

B. God’s design: family

- **Family is God’s organizing principle that reflects His life**
 - The Bible clearly shows us that the “image and likeness” of the Godhead (Let Us...Our image...Our likeness) is best expressed in different genders living together in family.
 - While in the Genesis account God created male and female and established them together in family, we must understand that God’s design of expressing Himself through family is greater than the modern social unit called “nuclear family.” While the basic family unit established through marriage is important, Jesus and the New Testament writers highlighted the fact that God’s family are those who are adopted by the Spirit to become brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers in the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:34-25, 12:47-50, 19:28, Mark 10:29-30, Titus 2 etc.).
 - Family is God’s organizing principle of life. The whole story of the Old Testament is about God’s family. It begins with God’s family in the garden, through Noah and his family, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his 12 sons who together comprised the family of God. The Old Testament ends with God prophesying that He would send a prophet who would restore family according to His design (Malachi 4:6).
 - We then come to the New Testament and Jesus who launches His work and intention to birth God’s family through the “Spirit of Adoption” (Romans 8:15 Galatians 4:6). That family, the Church, becomes mothers,

fathers, sisters, and brothers who together make up the “Bride of Christ” that Jesus returns for at the great family event “The Marriage Supper of the Lamb” (Rev 19:7-9, 21:2, 9). God’s family multiplies through rebirth and matures through discipleship. All of this points to the fact that God’s organizing principle of life, and the way in which He reveals His “image and likeness” is through family.

C. Biblical overview of God’s nature through family

- Creation
- The Godhead moved to fill the earth with their glory, “image and likeness” by creating male and female and joining them together as a family. He then called them to participate in His mission to fill the earth calling them to “be fruitful, multiply, fill, and rule over the earth.”
- *Genesis 1:26-28 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over...(27) 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 God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over...*
- In the second perspective of the creation account in Genesis 2:4-25 we see God’s family life lived out locally in the Garden of Eden as they walked with God and in family life together with each other. They went about fulfilling God’s mission locally as well as beyond. In this account God pronounces the cornerstone of His identity designed for all of mankind, “It is not good for man to be alone, I will make a helper suitable for Him” (Genesis 2:18-25). God joins them in family covenant that is the foundation for God’s design for His family together (with Him and each other) on His mission. Family among His people is the place of fruitful rest, work, growth, and fulfillment.
- God’s family through the Old Testament
- Family continued to be the way in which God moved with and through His people in the Old Testament. After the fall God worked to walk with and restore His family in His creation design (His family together with Him and each other as they moved in His mission). Mankind continued to deteriorate due to the corruption of sin until the flood. God preserved Noah and His family and once through the flood, God reaffirmed the covenant call to “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth: (Genesis 9:1).
- While the deterioration of sin continued leading up to the tower of Babel (Genesis 11), God still worked to redeem His family in His calling. He chose Abraham and Sarah establishing and reaffirming His covenant with them so that they would continue to fulfill His creation design of God’s family together on His mission (Genesis 12:1-5, 13:14-18, 15:9-19, 17:1-7, 18:18-19, 22:16-17).
- God continued to reaffirm His covenant family calling through Abraham’s sons Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob’s 12 sons and their families. Those 12 sons multiplied to become 12 family tribes who together made up the nation of God’s people. The rest of the Old Testament is the story of God working through His family through their failures and God’s continual interventions to guide them into His covenant design of being His family together with Him and each other as they pursue His mission, until we come to the time of Jesus coming to the earth to fulfill His covenant through Abraham (Galatians 3:7-29, 4:22-31, Romans 4:12-21, 9:7-8).
- God’s family through the New Testament
- As the Old Testament closed, God’s family continued to falter, and God gave a prophetic prediction in the last two verses of the Old Testament that He was going to continue to work to restore family among His people. Jesus later said the John the Baptist was the beginning fulfillment of that prophetic design.
- *Malachi 4:5-6 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. (6) "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.*
- *Matthew 11:13-14 "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. (14) "And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.*

- Jesus through His incarnation and redeeming work ushered in God's final phase of His covenant design to redeem His family to fulfill His mission, to fill the earth with His image, likeness, and glory through His family. This all culminates with the great family event at the end of this present age, "The Marriage Supper of the Lamb" in which His bride (family image) will be united with Him in perfection.
- *Revelation 19:7-11 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." (8) It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (9) Then he *said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he *said to me, "These are true words of God." (10) Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he *said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (11) And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. (Revelation 21:2-9).*
- Jesus clearly shows us that the foundational ethic of love between Him and among His people is the priority on which all His Kingdom rests, "Love God...love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:28-35, Luke 10:25-28, Matthew 10:18-19).
- **God's dwelling place is described in family terms:**
- *Psalms 68:5-6 A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation. God makes a home for the lonely... Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.*
- *Ephesians 2:19-22 you are no longer strangers and aliens. but fellow citizens with the saints and are of God's household.*
- A prominent phrase to describe God's dwelling place in the Bible is seen in the phrases "House of the Lord/House of God/God's House/God's household/Lord's House" found in 315 verses. The emphasis is clearly a family context.
- The terms "father(s), mother(s), brother(s), sister(s), son(s), and daughter(s)" is used 1276 times in the New Testament to describe God and His people. The two most prominent descriptors in Paul's writing about the church, are "body," and "family." This contrasts with the term "Christian" only found 3 times.
- Jesus clearly said over and over that His people would gain family relationships among His people even when they must give up natural family to follow Him:
- *Mark 10:29-30 Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, (30) but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. (Matthew 10:34-35, 12:47-50).*
- The Holy Spirit's work in bringing people into Christ is referred to as "The Spirit of adoption by which we cry out Abba Father." (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6).
- Jesus teaching on prayer has a family context, "pray in this way, our Father" (Matthew 6:9, Luke 11:1-2).
- In contrast to the individualistic way many Christians refer to Jesus, Paul refers to Him from a group or family context by using the phrase "our Lord" some 57 times. Only once did Paul refer to Jesus as "my Lord" in an individualistic way, Philippians 3:8.
- In the New Testament the term "Savior" is used 23 times in conjunction with the group of His family being saved. Only once does it refer to the Savior of an individual sense (Luk 1:46-47).
- Throughout the Scriptures the term "you" appears in a plural form in over 5000 verses. God is always emphasizing our family connections to others.
- Paul shows us the local churches are the "house of God" and when he gives the qualification for local church leadership, he shows that the way one manages their natural household is an indicator of how they will take care of God's house, the church:
- *1Timothy 3:4-5 "(An overseer) ruling his own house well, having children in subjection with all honor. (For if a man does not know to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the house of God?)"*

- *1 Timothy 3:15 "But in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support."*

D. Application: Be careful what are we aiming for

- When we talk about gender roles and God's design for them in His family, we must be careful about our reference points. After the Fall, God has been working to restore His ideal of family. He is still about the business of filling the earth with His glory through His image and likeness revealed through His Church (Ephesians 1:22-23, 3:1-21).
- When we look at gender issues, we must remember that we are not trying to restore the image and likeness of the patriarchal nuclear family of the 1950s and 60s. While traits like sacrifice, a sense of covenant, and a better sense of responsibility to raise children might have been better expressed in the 50s and 60s than today, much of that era was still deeply flawed in its expression of masculine and feminine roles. That cultural model of family and gender roles is not what we want to see restored. We are trying to see God's design restored. We want to follow God's design for gender and family, not any one example or generation we have seen on this earth.
- In spite of the errors of previous generations, we should be greatly troubled by the current move toward a genderless, sexless, fluid society in which biological sex is seen as unimportant or secondary to perceived "gender." God, in His infinite knowledge, created two genders to fully express His image and likeness, and we need both.
- Neither male or female can express God's image and likeness. It takes both. Kingdom is not only seeing the need for both genders, but also celebrating them both immensely. We need to both see and celebrate gender differences, but also see and celebrate our shared human experience and family unity in God.
- Male and female should never be in conflict. God's family sees the opposite gender not in terms of conflict, but in terms of completion. God contains the essence of both male and female. Never is there to be the "battle of the sexes" because God is both. God's beauty and fullness is in both. We should never just consider the male or female perspective on any issue, we need both. One without the other is incomplete.
- God did not create genders to be interchangeable. Being male and female creates distinctly different experiences in this life. The current western feminist movement has a tendency to use the language of equality to mean "sameness" to argue for equal treatment and value, but this will continue to lead to more brokenness as the world tries to "fix" itself. The Church must be the place of "shalom" (restoration, wholeness, and peace) where men and women are both highly valued and not forced to compete for titles and responsibilities against one another in the same way that they do in this world's system.
- Men should be free to be fathers, brothers, and husbands in the fullness of God's design and women must be free to be mothers, sisters, and wives in the fullness of God's design. A woman should not be valued because she resembles a man in her personality or conduct as the world does, but should be valued just as she is and be free to be different from men while giving all of her gifts, talents and intellect in the building of the Kingdom of God.

Conclusions:

- A. In our churches, we must value both men and women for who God has made them to be. A woman does not have value and a voice when she is more like a man or the converse.
- B. Our leadership teams should reflect as much as possible the people we want to reach. Are you only called to reach white men? Then who are you inviting to have a voice at the table?
- C. PERMISSION IS NOT THE SAME AS INVITATION. Of course, everyone here would say yes, we want the voices of women. Or people of color. Or every socio-economic group. Or political party. (See how all of those other groups can be part of this same sermon when we're trying to be a reflection of the global family of God??) THOSE OF YOU WITH A VOICE MUST INVITE THOSE WITHOUT ONE TO THE TABLE.

Questions:

- 1. In your sphere of leadership (church, home, workplace): who are you making room for at the table?
- 2. In your churches and families, are men and women, young and old, married and widowed and single, black and white and brown thriving? Are they bringing their gifts to serve the church?
- 3. Do your leadership teams reflect the voices of the community that you are called to reach?