

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Did God Really Say?

PART

4

TITLE

Male and Female

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Providence family. It's so good to see you today. If you are in this room or if you're over in Prisms or if you're at home, we're glad that you joined us. And if you happen to be new with us, a guest, we're glad you're here. If you have a Bible in your hand, turn with me to the first page of the Bible. We'll be starting in Genesis one. We will be in chapter two, three. Eventually, we'll get to Romans one and a few other places, but if you don't have a Bible in your hand, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. And if you don't have one of your own, take that home as a gift. We would love for you to have it. You just saw a video, and I think it's really important for us to help each one of us understand.

I think when we come into a place like this, whether it's our first time or you've been here many, many times, is we start to imagine this place is built for a reason. There's a purpose, there's a mission behind it. I wonder how I participate in that. And that's what the pathway is really about. It's simple steps that we just look and we think, "If everyone at Providence really participated in these ways, we really do believe that we would fulfill our mission," and that is to first connect with Christ, the relationship with him and then with each other, and then to grow in truth and love, and then to use our gifts to serve not only the church but our city, and then to go to take the gospel that we have received that is the news of great forgiveness of our sins, the only forgiveness of our sins, then to go into our neighborhoods, and then to the nations of the world to share it with others.

And so we welcome you to it. Next week at this time will be the first step of that. And so if that would serve you, I encourage you to look at it. Today, we are in a series. We're in the fourth weekend. It's called, Did God Really Say? And what we're looking at is God's plans for life. We're looking at those plans that are intended to create goodness and flourishing within society. By default, we're also looking at the ways that we've sort of rejected those plans and have brought confusion into a number of areas, including authority, life, race, gender, sexuality, personal responsibility, justice, and salvation. And then in each, we're looking at God's plan of restoration for each. This morning we are going to look at gender, male and female.

I'm about to walk you through what has felt two times through kind like a minefield, okay? Not that you're going to get hurt in doing so, I pray, but that it's a minefield for our attention. What I mean is this, is we're going to talk about not only a number of truths, but we're going to look at a number of different expressions and applications. And many of us, all of us, we live in the real world where we have friends and family members who are experiencing some of the things that we're going to talk about. And it's only natural when those things come up, is to stop listening to a sequence of sentences that are built one on top of another, and we start to imagine and think about our friend and what they must be going through and what life must be like and how am I going to talk to that person or how can I love that person?

And then all of a sudden you say, "Okay, I want to listen again." You come back and suddenly we're many sentences further than where you are, okay? That's why for a series like this and these kinds of culture issues, I think it's really important for you to have my notes in hand. And so if you want to go, you don't have to, but if you want to, you can go to pray.org/say, and all the notes for the sermons, including the one that we're going

to do right now, they're all there. And if you want to follow along in that way, you can find the one that's called male and female. And so one thing I need to say then I want to praise. We do not have to fear what comes from God. His provisions to us are good. His instructions to us are good. They're for us. We do not have to fear what he says to us so long as we trust his son. So let me pray.

Father, we ask that you would be gracious to us. As we open up your word, we ask that you would help us to see truth, the truth of your word as it relates to life. And we see, God, you know that our eyes see, I don't know it's just a tiny portion of what you see, but even this weak, we see expressions of brokenness, confusion in the world. We see brokenness. We see burden. We see loss of life. We see injustice. We see cities that are hurting. We pray this morning for Memphis and other cities. We pray for, Lord, families. We pray for the Nichols' family that you would comfort them today. And God, we know that there are families and cities and homes and hearts all over the whole world that are experiencing strife and injustice and brokenness and pain and sin that we just simply do not have the eyes to be able to see, but you see all of it.

And so would you help us to remember today that every time there's a famine of your word in the land, that land experiences tremendous confusion and pain? And so would you rescue us even in our own hearts, even if this is simply a blip in the map, just a little drop of truth in what feels like just an ocean, an avalanche of other ideologies, would you help us to see that your word is better, it is true, and it matters? We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen. Well, many of us have seen the film *Mulan*. It's cute, it's adorable, it's charming in many ways. If you haven't, there's a girl. It starts with little girl, and she's by all accounts extraordinary. She has unique talents, abilities, she has courage, and yet she's bound by the restrictions placed upon her as a girl within her own culture.

Suddenly, her nation is being attacked, it's under siege, and so they have to draft an army. And so service go to every home and they have to basically draft one man from every home in order to fill out an army. And she takes her dad's armor, and she fakes being a male so that she can join the army. And in due time, she eventually reveals her true identity before saving the empire. Eventually, she comes home, and she makes it home as a war hero. And her dad, there's a really important line at the end of the movie or near it, and he says to her, "You were always there, yet I see you now for the first time." This film and many others, they beg the question that we're going to look at today, what is gender? Is it biology? Is it social construct? Is it good or is it a prison? There was a time, even in my own life, there was a time when teaching on gender within the church was not provocative. Boy was a boy, a girl was a girl, and the culture and the Bible all agreed. But with the advancement of elective medicine, the reality that people experience of gender dysphoria, the reality of social contagion, and the authorization of self-discovery, well, those days have passed into an age of gender fluidity. Where on two extremes you have a male and a female, and there's all kinds of different iterations, we are told, in between these two. I read a report this week from, I say a report, it was a, I don't know what you'd call it. It was saying basically that they self-identified 100 different genders. And while this may confuse, let me encourage us all not to scoff, not in this room and not in any room.

The reason is because we're talking about people and people matter. People matter to God and they matter to us. The fact is the distress that some people experience when they feel a gap between their psychological and their biological gender, it's real. And by all accounts, it's excruciating. As such, some people suffer silently, sometimes in churches like this, and other people transition. The distress that people describe it is the inability to feel warm no matter how many layers you wear. I just want you to know, if this is you, if you happen to be going through this or you know somebody who does, I'm glad you're here. We don't want you to leave. You matter to Him and therefore you matter to us.

In other respects, when you think about gender and to teach it within the church, it's long been provocative, primarily due to our general resistance to everything God says, which includes instructions about being a man and woman, but also because of the historical diminishment of a woman's status and contribution, not only to society, but also to the church and home. That has at times been reinforced by misinterpreting biblical instructions, and at times by confusing things that are described that are descriptive of a broken world in the Bible in assuming that they are prescriptive for all humanity. And so whether your story is as a man or a woman, whether you are comfortable or confused, whether you are feeling respected or diminished, let me remind you that while our lived experience is real and it's important and it's formative to our experience and thoughts about life, is that it does not form the final authority.

It does not constitute the final authority of how we're supposed to think about life or how we're supposed to respond to these things. We live in God's world, and he has spoken into this world. He is the authority. And so what I want to do today is I want to trace once again the story of the Bible focusing on this idea called gender so that we can see His plan, how things broke, and how we can flourish again. Well, the story of the Bible, it does not begin with us. We're in the story, but it doesn't begin with us. It begins with God. The first sentence in the Bible, it says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." He created the heavens and the earth. Now, it's interesting he was already there when the beginning began. He's eternal. We all love to know something's age, a thing's age, a thing's starting point, and the reason is because we feel if we know it's age or starting point that we can measure it, we can predict it.

For example, we like to know the age, how old a car is that we might buy because we can anticipate how many miles it has left, how much maintenance will be soon required on the basis of how old it is. The same thing with an age of people. It doesn't matter what your age is, you tell it to people, and people assume not only the experiences that you've had in that span of time, but we also start thinking, "Oh, you probably have about this much left." And therefore, when you come to the Bible and you find somebody who begins, it's God who's eternal, who was there, who doesn't age, who doesn't have a beginning or an end, it sort of confuses us. And what you find though is it's the truth is that he's the eternal one.

He's the almighty one, he is the holy one, and he is the only one. He created all things. You know, cook with food and you paint with color and you build with materials that are available to you. If you don't have those materials, that food, if you don't have paint, if you don't have colors, you don't get to use them. You can't

create with what you don't have, but God created all things out of nothing. He's the creator of the universe. And as the creator of the universe, he has creator rights over all things. Answers to life that don't begin with God are distorted at best. And what we find in the story of the Bible is that after he, it says that he created, he explains how he did so on his own initiative.

He then began to create a world that was fit for human habitation. Then we get to the sixth day. And in verse 26 it says that "God said, let us make man 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. So God made man in his own image, in the image of God, he created him, male and female, he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion.'" So the first thing that we learn here, the first big rock, the first truth about gender is that God created us in his image as male or female.

I've mentioned this a few weeks in a row now, but in the one primary language that the Old Testament is written in, Hebrew, anytime that there's a break in the sequence of something happening, it's supposed to signal us to meaning or significance. In other words, if you see something, it happens that way and that way and that way and each time, and then all of a sudden it happens differently, you're supposed to pause and say, "Now why is this different? This must mean something of significance." And in the first two chapters of the Bible, there's actually three different, at least three I want to show you this morning, three different sequences that break, where we're supposed to say, "Now, that's important." And in each one, it's related to this thing called gender.

The first is that he created all things but not all things equally. We looked at this over the last few weeks, but in verse 12, you notice that when God is making trees and vegetation, each time it says that he made these things according to their own kinds. And you get to verse 21 and he wants to talk about the sea creatures and the birds. And he says, "And he did and he made them according to their kinds." You get to verse 25, he wants to talk about the livestock and the animals that creep on the ground and it says in each case that he did so and he created them according to their kinds. And then you get to verse 26, and there's a break in the sequence. In verse 26, God says, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness or according to his kind." You look at a puppy and you learn something about a dog. You look at a human and you learn something about God. When a king ruled or a queen, especially in ancient times when there was no internet, there was no pictures, there was no TV to see their face and know what they look like, is the monarchs used to put their face, their image on money or buildings so that the citizens in their kingdom would know what they look like. Similarly, God created two image bearers, a male and a female, set apart by their biology to compliment one another and showing what he is like. And this is very important that you understand. You see, it's sort of like a frame. You can imagine two different picture frames. And through those two different frames, what God is saying is this, "I made two, and the reason is because one was inadequate to tell everybody everything that is critical that they know about me." The reason that gender is so important is not because life is about being a man or a woman, Life is about knowing God.

But one of the mechanisms, the picture frame through which we learn something about God is a man and a woman, and each one of them in their created differences tell us something different about the person of God and the character of God, the ways of God, the activity of God. They're all important. And after designing the man and the woman, each with half of the needed ingredients to reproduce, God said, "Be fruitful and multiply." Well, when you get to the second chapter, God wants to zoom in on day six, so he goes back and he treats day six and he goes, "Now, this is really special. There's some big things happening that you need to know about reality, about the world that you live in, about yourself, and so I want to give a whole nother chapter just to zoom in on this creation account of humanity."

And the very first thing we learn in chapter two verse seven is that God created Adam first. It says, "The Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground. He put him in a garden. He says, "This is work, this is personal responsibility, this is relationship with me." And then all of a sudden he looks and he says in verse 18, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him." Now, this is the first denouncement in the Bible and this marks the second break of a sequence that we find. Throughout chapter one, every time that God created something, he looked, he stood back and he goes, "very good. That's good. Now, that's good, and that's good and that's good," And he looks at man by himself and he goes, "That ain't good. That is not good."

It's we're supposed to learn something. There's something of significance, and this is what's so significant. In doing so, God is proving that the woman was not an addition to an already complete picture, but she was essential and indispensable to the purposes of God. So you asked the question, "Well, if she was so indispensable to the purposes of God as much so as the man, then why didn't he make him simultaneously?" Everything God does is good and everything that God does that is good is good for us. And so if you interpret it through that lens, "Okay, I know he's committed to my good and the evidence is Christ dying for me," what happens is you begin to lean into the story looking for the goodness that could be evident and creating one and then the other and not simultaneously. And what you find next is a story that helps us do that.

It's really an interesting story, and it actually Marks the third break of a sequence in Genesis one and two. You see, up until now, God is speaking, God is creating by speaking. Every time God said, the next sentence is, "And it was." Let there be light and there was light, right? Let there be stars and a sun, and there was. Let there be an expanse, and there was. Until we get here. Had God kept with that sequence once, he said, "I will make," he's speaking, she would appear in verse 19, but she doesn't. She doesn't appear until verse 23. So why is that? Actually, verse 22. What happens in between? Well, God has to do something that's really weird. He's like, "You know what? All these animals really need a name. They need a name. So Adam, you sit down, I'm going to pray at all the animals in front of you and you give them a name." Now, what's the purpose of this? God said, "You know what? This isn't good. I'm going to do something." But before we do that, let's name all the animals. Well, what happened as a result of it? Well, the Bible tells us that Adam's eyes were open to what God already knew and that is that every animal had a partner, a like kind, but for Adam there was not found

helper. And once Adam saw his need, God created Eve. God's designs were then further clarified when he said, "A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh."

Marriage. Marriage was created for a number of reasons. One of them is partnership. If you happen to be married, one of your job descriptions is to eliminate aloneness in your spouse's life. I mean, think about it. It is not good for the man to be alone. Here's the solution. So companionship is one of the primary reasons. Another reason is procreation, right? God says, "Look, I built you both. You've got half the needed requirements to do what I need you to do and I'm asking you to do, and that is to be fruitful and multiply," and so that becomes the second purpose of marriage, but then there's another. You don't find it in Genesis chapter two, you find it in the rest of the Bible that's speaking about Genesis two, and it happens to be the most important reason why there is the institution of marriage. You see, life is not about being married, that's not the point, life is about Christ, it's about God, it's about having a relationship with him. And so you find in Ephesians chapter five, you find Paul giving clear evidence as to what is the primary reason for marriage.

This is what he says. "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh." Now, you notice it's a quote and he's quoting Genesis chapter two, verse 24, and then notice what he does. He says, "Now this mystery is profound." In other words, he says, "I'm about to tell you something that's going to blow your mind just a little bit." He goes, "I'm saying that it refers, this refers to Christ in the church." Now, what's the significance here? The significance is that before there was a need of a spiritual rescue, sin came into the world in chapter three of Genesis and he created marriage in chapter two. Before there was a need for a rescue, before there was a sin problem, God made marriage to display the rescue. God created this relationship before there was the need for salvation to point people by how we treat one another to that salvation. This is so significant because it shows that the participants in marriage, a male and a female, are no more interchangeable than Christ and his churches to the gospel.

My boys ask me all the time, "Why do you get so jazzed up by telling everyone, 'In the beginning.'? Why do you always go back there?" If you think about what we just talked about, and if you've read chapter one and chapter two, within the first two chapters of Genesis, we have the institution of things such as the value of work, personal responsibility, sexuality, gender, marriage, the understanding of divine authority and personal relationship. So our enemy, who is not for the Lord, where do you think he wants to attack it? It's the Genesis account, it's that we are created in his image and therefore we are different, that he has creator rights over us. He can speak into everything that I just described. He has authority to tell you how to do so. And one day we're going to stand before His throne and he's going to hold us accountable on the basis of His words.

If you want to be a person of faith, do you know where it begins? In Hebrews chapter 11, we find this thing called the Hall of Faith. It's all these people from the Old Testament, all these heroes, of people who trusted God in significant ways and God worked in their life in order to bring restoration to their culture in that moment. And you go one afternoon, you're like, "Wow, I want to be one of these kind of people," but do you

know where it all begins? In Hebrews chapter 11 verses one and two, do you know what it says is the precursor to being a person of faith? Believing creation, believing that God Almighty created the world, he created us, he created male and female, he created marriage, he created the institution of personal responsibility and work, he created creativity. He created all these things.

So don't ever get over created intent, and the reason is because Christ in the kingdom that he is establishing is going to resemble chapter one and chapter two, reversing the curse, bringing us back to these good and noble ways. You see, the peace that we find in Genesis one and two is quickly destroyed, however, when Satan came into the garden after a failed attempt on heaven in order to dishonor God and destroy those created in his image, and he said the words, "Did God really say?" Questioning God's goodness, His truthfulness, and His justice? And friends, let me remind you that nobody ever rises above their thoughts of God. That's why he attacked their thoughts about God. You will never be more loving than your understanding of God's love. You'll never be more forgiving than your understanding of God's forgiveness. That he is the bar. Whatever you think about Him is the bar of your behavior and my behavior.

Nobody ever rises above this. And so to be wrong in our thoughts about God irreparably distorts our sense of direction and morality and justice until we begin to think rightly about God. Well, they thought wrongly about God, and so they sinned against God and suddenly brokenness ensued. And that brings us to the second point, that sin against God destroyed the harmony of our created differences. It's such a sad thing. So Adam, this first man, the rest of the Bible, in particular Romans chapter five, tells us that he forms sort of a representative sampling of all of humanity, okay? That all of us, it says, "We're born into this first Adam, having a sin nature," and it's interesting that the Bible quotes Adam, the real man named Adam three times. Adam spoke and someone says, "We should write that down," and it really is a picture of humanity.

I want to show you each of the episodes. They're all on one slide here. In chapter verse 23, God creates Eve and he brings Eve to Adam and he says, "This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." So the first thing that happens is when we come face to face with God Almighty is there's affirmation. That's a good plan. That's a good thing. And then all of a sudden we begin to have a distorted understanding of who God is. We sin against him, and suddenly we feel guilty because we are guilty. Suddenly we feel shame. The second thing Adam says is right after he sinned and he says, when God came and he goes, "Why are you hiding behind this bush?" And he says, "I was naked and I hit myself." Where's Eve? I don't know every man for himself.

The second statement of Adam, it highlights self-preservation and isolation. It starts with us saying, "God, I affirm your plan over all things." We sin against God and suddenly, it's, "I matter. My wealth, my understanding, my future, my desire, my will, it's all about me. I got a bush, I'm hiding behind it. You get your own bush," And that leads us to the third statement that Adam has recorded in scripture and that is that God says, "Why'd you do this?" And he says, "The woman you gave me," and so he first wants to blame Eve. And he goes, "Wait a minute. It's not her problem first. It's your fault. Things were fine around here until you brought

her,” and this is exactly what happens in the world. We start by affirming God’s plan, we sin, and we start caring exclusively about ourselves, and then we blame God for the problems. And this is representative of us, and God says next, he gives out a curse. He starts laying out for us, “This is going to be the result of what happens because you broke fellowship with me.”

And you get to chapter three verse six, and God says, “You’re going to fight a lot in your marriage.” He says, “Not just your marriage, your friendship and the world cultures.” He says, “Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.” Now, some man read this and go, “Wow, this is great. I’m going to be found desirable by my wife.” That’s not what it’s about. Okay? Don’t forget, this is the curse. Whatever this means, it’s not supposed to be this way. We’re not supposed to be ruling over people. And so to gain more clarity as to what this actually means, you find these same words echoed a chapter later when God is warning Cain not to kill his brother Abel.

Notice what he says, chapter four verse seven, notice how similar it is, “Sin is crouching at the door of your heart,” and he says, “it’s desire is for you.” Look at this, “Desire shall be for you, but you must rule over it, rule over you.” In other words, what’s happening here is this, when sin is ruling in our heart, we tend to use our strength, whatever is to exploit the weakness of another in order to dominate them. My life for your good becomes your life for my good. And what we find in Romans chapter one is a sad expression that represents all of our lives and what happens in the incremental and exponential devastation of sin without a fundamental change of heart.

Starting in verse 21, Romans one says, “For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal men and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore, God gave them up in the lust of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever. For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions for their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

“They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They’re full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They’re gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish faithless, heartless, ruthless.” We are in that story. I am in that story. And because I know me more than I know any other person in the world, I can tell you this, I don’t know anyone who is more a part of that story than me and more in need of grace than me. It is true and it is sad,

but praise be to God that into this pain God made a promise, a promise to send a special son who would be born of the woman. “Satan would strike at his heel,” we’re told in chapter three, verse 15 of Genesis, “but he would crush Satan’s head.” The rest of the Old Testament traces this special son through amazing men and women, but normal men and women whom God used to bring temporary relief. But then at the right time, God sent his special son. His name was Jesus Christ.

It was his son into the world and Jesus lived without sin. He died for our sin. He was buried in a grave, and then he rose from the dead and he extended to us an invitation, “If you will put your faith and trust in me, I will forgive you of all of your sin. I will wipe all of it away. I will give you my righteousness. I will give you my spirit to live in you so that you can learn to love again in a way that would allow culture in your home and your heart to flourish again.” And that brings us to the third point that Christ came to rescue us from our sin. We have a sin problem and Jesus alone is able to rescue us from that sin problem. And the good news of the gospel is everyone is invited. In the book of Galatians chapter three, we read, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male or female for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

He’s not eliminating gender. What he’s doing here is this. He’s taking old identities that were primary identities and making them secondary identities to a new primary identity, and that is that we are children of God because of Jesus, that we have a new identity in him. And yet even with our new identity in him, we are to be considerate of our old secondary identities, such as gender, which is why one Timothy five says, “Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters in all purity.” In other words, we are still to see the difference between old and young, male and female and to identify behaviors that show respect to each.

As we trust Christ, the Holy Spirit enters our heart and begins to empower us to love in new restorative ways. For example, in the arena of marriage that is touched and burned by sin, the Bible says, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Notice everyone, if you happen to be in a relationship, you are a one another. Submission is your calling and the motivation for you to carry it out is to have a reverence for Christ. It’s to see how he submitted his own will, his comfort in order to serve us. Then he says, how does it work out, “Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,” so it was Christ who submitted in order to enact the gospel. And it is husbands and wives who submit to one another in order to display the gospel.

Husbands are to submit to their wife by loving their wife like Jesus submitted in loving the church. Wives are to submit by respecting their husband like the church respects Jesus. The Bible gives limits to our submission in the areas of truth, purity, and personal safety. In other words, if those are at risk, you yield to God and not to man. But notice that serving for the sake of the other is restorative. You see, our reverence for his love and worthiness provides the fuel to give the kind of goodness that brings about goodness. This is what I mean. Men love to be respected. It’s just natural and loved. Women love to be loved. And this is what I know. You

find a man who feels respected, and his heart is at least more inclined to show love. And when a woman is feeling loved by her husband, what happens? She's more inclined to show respect. And so it can go one way or the other.

It can also go the bad way, right? If someone's not feeling loved, they don't show respect. If someone's not feeling respected, they don't show love. And so what he's saying is this, is that by keeping our eyes on Jesus Christ where we see submission in action and we begin to yield to one another in our relationships, we pour out goodness on the other, and as a result it reciprocates back in goodness to ourselves. And God wants this restorative love to be known and seen by all the peoples of the world, which gets to the fourth and last point, which is Christ called men and women to make disciples. Jesus did die on a cross. He was buried, he rose from the dead. And when he rose from the dead, he looked at his disciples and he says, "Go, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to deserve all that I've commanded you."

You see Providence, man and women are to be a visible partners using every spiritual gift to accomplish the mission so that people can see the restorative love of Christ. So let me give you a few applications. First, let me encourage you to yield to God's word as the authority. This is true, and this has been the first application in all these sermons. The reason is because although I do believe that real experience, personal experience is real informative, it does not constitute authority and typically we give it authority. Ever since the fall, we've had a king problem where everyone's doing right in their own eyes, but this is God's world and he made us male and female. And so let me encourage us as a church family to continue to urge our boys to become godly men and to continue to encourage our girls to become godly women and let's not lose sight of biblical masculinity or femininity. For if we do, we will lose part of our lens by which we get to see God.

Second, let's protect gender but not worship it. God made us male and female. Critics of this narrow spectrum bring up intersex, which is a real thing where children are born with atypical sexual features. If this is you or your child, I want you to know that you and your child are important, you are precious, and you are not a pawn. God loves you. Many families, including my own, whose child was born with a challenge, whether it's down syndrome or whether it's a heart problem or in our case it was a spine problem or in some cases it's a gender problem or a sexual problem, have found tremendous comfort in John chapter nine where Jesus says that he has purposes for all of his permissions, but to say that babies with atypical features disprove two genders misses the fact that only because of the narrow gender spectrum are babies atypical features recognized at all.

For those of you who are struggling with gender dysphoria, I want to not only sympathize with your pain, I can't imagine, I can only... I can't imagine, it's got to be so hard, but I also want to fight for your joy and plead for your joy. You see, to view the other gender as your soul's hope actually commits the sin that we find in Romans one, where we're worshiping and serving the creature instead of the creator. Anytime that we take

something that God created and set it up as something as, “My hope is going to be found, if I can become this or I can get this,” it becomes what the Bible calls an idol. Jonah chapter two speaks of all of our idols. He says, “Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.” That doesn’t mean if you have an idol, God doesn’t love you anymore. It means that idols can’t deliver, gender cannot deliver, only Christ can deliver. And so if you chaff in a body that feels all wrong and you hear the invitation of our culture to transition, let me urge you to be patient.

The fall of sin upon our hearts causes brokenness to touch every one of us in a different way. Some feel distress in their body, others in their mind, others in their gender. And I know that God does not guarantee total relief in this life, but he gives us hope in the next. He says, “We groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies.” And until that point, we’re called to yield to him and give our energies not to our idolatries, but to his mission. I can tell you that one resource that has helped many people within our own congregation is a small group called Cross Current. It’s about to start up. And if you’d like information about that, you can go to pray.org/crosscurrent. Third, let me encourage us to provide truth and love. I mean, remember, they’re not incompatible. There’s actually no such thing as truth without love, and there’s no such thing as love that is not true.

Fixing the broken systems in our culture without fixing the source only creates more pain over time. Man’s greatest problem is guilt before God, and therefore we who know the gospel must be active in sharing the gospel. And as we do, we can extol the goodness of this plan that includes male and female, but then we can reinforce that by our love. We can welcome those struggling with gender dysphoria into our church. We can protect anyone from ridicule or scorn. We can show compassion and humility to all because as people trying to follow Jesus, we should be safe to all people, especially those seeking him. I have never seen anyone be more motivated to look at Christ as the potential for salvation by being mistreated, but I’ve seen many people who have been loved into an openness to at least give Christ a chance. To give the Bible, to give the Bible one read through because someone loved me so deeply.

Fourth, let me encourage you to see men and women as mission critical. If you have trusted Christ, I want you to know that you have received a spiritual gift and that spiritual gift is supposed to be used to serve his church and to make disciples. It’s interesting when you read through the gospels, Jesus’ disciples were men, but it was women who met his needs following him all around Galilee, anointed him with oil, stood under his cross, saw his burial, saw his resurrection, or at least his resurrected body, and proclaimed that Jesus is alive. In the Book of Acts, we certainly see men like Peter and Paul active in ministry, as we also see Phoebe, Euodia, Syntyche, and Priscilla, Godly women, who is absolutely indispensable to the mission. When gifts are left unused or restricted, the church simply cannot flourish. And yet, we’re bound when we open up the Bible to say, “Okay, there are certainly some places in the Bible, there’s some verses in the Bible that offer a pretty interesting restriction.” Let me give you the one that gives the most heartburn.

Let me just start there because... and finish there by the way, but let's start there, okay? First Timothy two, here's one for you, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over man, rather she is to remain quiet for Adam was formed first and then Eve." So what do we do with that? What do we do with that? In a world viewed from scripture that says that both men and women are indispensable and both essential and that God gives women the gifts of teaching and leadership, what do we do with that? Well, let me just try to work you through just a few points. First, notice that this instruction is anchored to creation, not culture, which means that it applies to all churches. Whatever it means. It applies to all churches, at all, times in all cultures. Second, we need to pay attention that within the Old and New Testament we find women teaching and leading, and doing so also at times with mixed groups, meaning groups of men and women.

Miriam did so in Exodus 15. Deborah does so in Judges four. Women joined in prophesying in Acts two and Acts 21, and Paul told all believers to teach one another and admonish one another, and he gave no difference to a man and a woman in the third chapter of Colossians. And so Paul must be restricting a certain kind of teaching, not all teaching. Third, the combination of the words teaching and exercise authority seem to indicate that the kind of teaching that he has in mind is the kind that bears the authority of the church by establishing its doctrinal standard and holding everybody in the church accountable. And that said, the very next section, what you find is that this kind of teaching is entrusted to people who have an office called elder or pastor.

The fourth thing refers to this word quiet. I know this is an irritant. She is to remain quiet. It doesn't mean she's not supposed to sing or speak or admonish or teach, what it really means, I believe, First Timothy chapter two verse two gives us evidence when he talks about living a quiet life and is talking about contentment. In other words, I believe what it's saying is this. I think he's urging women to be content with God's decision regarding the office of Elder, where the very next set of verses speak about the qualifications of the office, all with masculine pronouns and things that only a man can do, like being a husband of one wife. As such, at Providence, we reserve the office of elder and pastor to men.

I know Christians disagree on this. Some of you maybe disagree with me on this or as a church family. So charity must prevail, but what must not be lost is this, is that God gives spiritual gifts, all of them, that include teaching, leadership, exhortation, proclaiming, and administration to men and women, and every spiritual gift needs a place in the church for the church to flourish at full capacity. And let me close with inviting you and pleading with you to put your faith in Christ. I know that some of you are confused right now about something. There's been a whole lot of landmines that have captured your attention and brought you other places, but I can tell you this, you do not need to hear anything more than you need this.

You have a sin problem, and Jesus is the only savior who can deal with that problem. And when you put your faith and trust in him, he not only forgives you of your sin problem, he also gives you a spirit that enables you to love in fresh and restorative ways that brings flourishing even to relationships with people that you don't

always agree with. It's about love, and it's about Christ, and so look to him. Let me pray.

Father in heaven, we bow before you. And I pray for those in the room who the pinch within their spirit right now of what they've heard and what they feel, people in their own life. I pray for those in the room who feel and sense and experience the discomfort of gender dysphoria. I pray, God, for your grace in their life. I pray for those in their room who are in a marriage where submission is very difficult. I pray, Father, for those who are here whose spiritual gifts seem to be restricted in a way to where they simply cannot flourish. And God in all of these ways of things that we try to understand, but we struggle to understand, we ask that you would help us to fix our eyes on what is most important. And in doing so that you would give restoration and instruction to these areas in our life. And so we sing to you now of our desire and our real need of you, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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