



BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD (PART 1)

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” [Genesis 1:27](#)

“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.” [Psalm 139:14](#)

Throughout this course, we have seen that God has a purpose in everything He does, and a plan to outwork that purpose for His glory and our benefit. We have considered this in issues such as the way He calls us, gifts us and joins us together in fellowship. In these final two sessions, we will look at what the Bible teaches concerning the significance of God creating us male and female. In doing so, we will see what we have in common and where God, in His wisdom, has determined that our roles and responsibilities should differ.

There is always enormous pressure on the Church to conform to the pattern of the world, and scarcely any subject is as emotive and bitterly controversial today as gender distinction. However, the Bible is remarkably clear throughout on this subject. Once again, we are faced with the challenge to be faithful to the Word of God, not merely in theory, but also in practice (see [Romans 12:1-2](#)).

THE MODERN WORLD VIEW—AND ITS RESULTS

“You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘He did not make me’? Can the pot say of the potter, ‘He knows nothing’?” [Isaiah 29:16 \(NIV 1984\)](#)

The increasing movement in recent history to establish the equality of men and women has regrettably led to a tendency to seek to minimize the significance of being male or female. This belittling of God’s design is a terrible mistake, and has tragic consequences. It has taken a tremendous toll on generation after generation of individuals, who have lost all sense of the wonder and privilege of being created a man or a woman.

Confusion regarding sexuality today is at epidemic levels. The result of this confusion is not a happy harmony among gender-free people, but rather increase in divorce, sexual abuse, homosexuality, and promiscuity. The loss of a sense of God-given identity has also led not just to social awkwardness, but to emotional distress leading even to suicide.

Meanwhile, much of the Church, which is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, seeks to conform to the philosophy of the day by arguing against or simply ignoring the many passages of Scripture giving us doctrine and practice when it comes to God's wisdom and intention for men and women. So, let us consider this subject, starting at creation.

GOD'S ORIGINAL INTENTION

“Then 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 created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” [Genesis 1:26-27](#)

This scripture clearly identifies the *equality* of man and woman in creation, their *joint representation* of the image of God and the mandate for them to rule *together*; but it is in [Genesis 2](#) that we are given the specific details of their creation. First, God created the man, put him in the Garden, commissioned him to work it and take care of it, and commanded him not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ([Genesis 2:7-8, 15-17](#)). We are then told:

“Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’ Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’” [Genesis 2:18-23](#)

So, woman was specifically created, from the very essence of man, to complement him and help him outwork the purpose God had given him. Though they were to function together as one, it is important to remember that the mandate was first given to Adam. Male headship was an aspect of the “good” instituted by God at creation (see [Genesis 1:31](#)). However, the beautiful harmony was soon to be horrendously distorted.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL

Tragically, Adam and Eve sinned and thereby brought upon themselves terrible consequences, including this judgment on the woman:

“To the woman he [God] said, ‘I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.’” [Genesis 3:16 \(NIV 1984\)](#)

Increased pain in childbirth is obviously a bad thing, but why would a wife's “desire” for her husband constitute a curse? And why would his consequent “rule” over her be a curse, especially since male headship was already established and good? An understanding of the original Hebrew words is helpful here. The word translated “desire” comes from the Hebrew word *teshuqah*, and could be better translated “desire to conquer.”

It is the same word used later in [Genesis 4:7 \(NIV 1984\)](#), where God warns Cain that “**sin is crouching at your door; it desires [teshuqah] to have you, but you must master it.**” Similarly, the word translated for the husband’s “rule” comes from the Hebrew word *mashal*, and could be better translated “dominant/oppressive rule.” So began the saga of strife we have known through the centuries, referred to in recent times quite accurately as the “battle of the sexes.” But God was, of course, committed to His purpose, and would not ultimately leave us at enmity with Him or one another.

RESTORING ORDER

“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” [Ephesians 3:10-11 \(NIV 1984\)](#)

God’s plan of restoration was, of course, put into effect through Christ’s saving work on the cross. This enabled us to be brought back into right relationship with God and one another. We have been redeemed and restored not just for our own benefit, but for a purpose—our original purpose. As His people, we are to reflect Him and outwork His rule. God has determined that the world should look to us, the Church, to see His glory and His wisdom, primarily in the area of how we relate to one another. Recognizing God-ordained order is an important part of this.

Some have argued that teaching on authority and submission is restrictive and even “enslaving.” In fact, the exact opposite is true. A proper understanding of godly submission is, in fact, the key to freedom and the ability to move in godly authority. This is a principle most powerfully seen in Christ Himself:

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” [Philippians 2:5-11 \(NIV 1984\)](#)

ROLES IN THE NEW COVENANT

New Testament teaching on the respective roles of men and women is rooted in this same liberating principle. Leadership and submission have nothing to do with superiority and inferiority. God’s design is a partnership of two spiritually equal people, within which the man bears the primary responsibility to lead in a God-glorifying way. Some, while acknowledging that this principle was evident at creation, suggest that all distinctions are to be disregarded as a result of the amazing covenant we now have in Christ. The following verse is often used to support this position:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” [Galatians 3:28 \(NIV 1984\)](#)

In fact, in this scripture, Paul is pointing out that our differences in race, status, and gender are no longer the basis of our value, and that our spiritual position is now the same. This does not mean that distinctions have ceased to exist, or that all have the same function within the body.

There are actually seven texts in the New Testament that specifically address issues of gender and roles. They are in [1 Corinthians 11](#), [1 Corinthians 14](#), [Ephesians 5](#), [Colossians 3](#), [1 Timothy 2](#), [Titus 2](#), and [1 Peter 3](#). We will look at a number of these passages in this and the following session, and will see that in many respects they run contrary to, and indeed confront, the philosophies of our day. Let us look first at a passage that speaks of God’s design for marriage.

A BEAUTIFUL RELATIONSHIP

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”
[Ephesians 5:22-33](#)

Although this is essentially addressing husbands and wives, it gives us a wonderful picture of Christ’s relationship with His Bride, the Church, and a tremendously valuable insight into God’s intention in male headship. The model of headship is our Lord, the Head of the Church, who gave Himself for us. The antithesis of Christ-like male headship is, in fact, male domination, the assertion of man’s will over woman’s will, without regard to her spiritual equality and value. That is the fruit of the fall.

This scripture shows us the wisdom and glory of God in marriage. In his relationship with his wife, a godly husband has the high calling of demonstrating the sacrificial and servant-hearted love Christ has for the Church. And, of course, it shows that a godly wife is to be a picture of how the Church is to respond to Christ. It is important to note that they both have a primary responsibility. The requirement for the husband to fulfill his obligation is not conditional on the wife fulfilling hers, or vice versa.

Moving on from this, let us consider what Scripture teaches regarding the outworking of creational order in the wider family of the church, focusing on the sometimes confusing and controversial issue of the role and function of women.

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Certain scriptures relating to women have led to much contention over the years. In recent times, they have often been ignored for appearing (or being interpreted as) demeaning or too restrictive of women, and contrary to what is considered “fair” in our society. Here are two examples:

“Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” [1 Timothy 2:11-14](#)

“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.” [1 Corinthians 14:29-35](#)

If we are committed to honoring Scripture, and if we only had these two passages, we would have to conclude that women should have no voice in the Church. However, one of the principles for the proper interpretation of the Bible (hermeneutics) is known as harmonization of Scripture. This is when we consider a passage in the light of the rest of Scripture, in order to find God's full counsel and thereby obtain greater clarity. It is striking to note that perhaps the most significant scripture we have in clarifying the right and responsibility of women to be heard in the Church is one that is also often rejected and dismissed.

SPEAKING WITH AUTHORITY

“I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you. Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head. In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.” 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 (NIV 1984)

We will not focus at this point on the actual practice Paul is addressing here, but we can see that this scripture gives clear instruction on women praying out and prophesying in church meetings. This, therefore, allows us (even requires us) to search for a meaning beyond the obvious when Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14 that women are to “remain silent.” In fact, it is reasonable to consider Paul's comment in 1 Corinthians 14 to be within the context of the judging of prophecy, as this is the issue directly preceding it. The judging of prophecy would carry a measure of governmental authority. This, we believe, is the crux of the issue, and leads us on to another important subject.

TEACHING AND GOVERNMENT IN THE CHURCH

“I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man...” 1 Timothy 2:12

Having concluded that a woman can contribute vocally in meetings, what about teaching? Looking more closely at the direction Paul brings in 1 Timothy 2, it is interesting to note that in the Greek, the word *teach* is in what is called the present active infinitive tense. It could be translated “to teach and continue to teach,” or “be continually teaching.” We believe this could be why it is used in conjunction with the other part of the prohibition, “or to exercise authority over a man,” as any person who is continually teaching into a situation will, intentionally or otherwise, become the authority in that situation.

“SO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED HIM; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM.”

Genesis 1:27



Furthermore, there are different types of teaching. Some teaching is governmental in nature, such as the establishing of doctrine and practice, whereas other teaching merely expounds upon what has already been established. It is clear that Paul's concern is that women should not assume a function that is governmentally authoritative in the church. That would be contrary to God's order in creation.

However, his instruction and intent does not, in our view, prohibit a woman from other types of teaching. She may share what God is showing her in the Word, and occasionally speak on what is already established doctrine and practice. Scripture specifically affirms the teaching role of women in certain circumstances. For example, Paul instructed Titus as follows:

“Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.”

Titus 2:3-5

We also see in [Acts 18:26](#), Aquila *and* his wife, Priscilla, explained “the way of God more accurately” to Apollos, one of the prominent teachers in the early Church.

PRACTICING SOUND DOCTRINE

“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” 1 Timothy 4:16 (NIV 1984)

Our conviction is that the balance of Scripture teaches that governmental authority should rest with men. Only in the most extreme and unusual circumstances would we see a potential justification for women functioning in this way.

This is not to say that women do not carry *spiritual* authority. In fact, all believers have been given this, and in many ways, spiritual authority is a far greater kingdom dynamic than governmental authority. By governmental authority, we are referring to the commission given to those who lead and direct the affairs of the church. Specifically, this would apply to apostles and elders, whose ministries intrinsically carry government within their spheres. Governmental authority may also be carried by those authorized by an apostle, as seen in the ministries of both Timothy and Titus.

Prophets and evangelists can, and usually do, function *without* carrying government to the local church; therefore, these ministries would be as open to women as they are to men. Similarly, shepherds and teachers do not intrinsically carry government but are frequently commissioned by the apostle to do so. In our view, this type of commissioning would be inappropriate for women. However, women could be recognized in these roles, to the extent that they function solely towards other women.

CONCERNING 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

As we draw to the close of this session, we must return to the doctrinal issue and practice specifically addressed by the apostle Paul in [1 Corinthians 11:2-16](#). Paul was so gripped with the importance of recognizing creational order that he brought an apostolic command regarding complementary practices intended to keep these truths visually before the Church. These were the practices of men removing any headcovering when praying out and prophesying, and women covering their heads when doing so.

This passage of scripture has been ignored or rejected by a huge part of the modern Western Church, but it is clear to us that Paul is establishing a practice based on a doctrine, by which we mean the full biblical teaching on a given topic, intended for application in life. Because of this, we are going to devote our final session to a thorough examination of this text, as we seek to be faithful to the biblical practice.

HOLDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

“I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you.”
1 Corinthians 11:2 (NIV 1984)

We are very aware that the teachings in this lesson are challenging and provocative, and that they fly in the face of the spirit of our age. However, we believe they are restored truths that God is bringing to us with power and life. We encourage you to face the Word of God with an open heart and a determination to let nothing hinder you from obeying it.

RECOMMENDED READING

1. *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* by John Piper and Wayne Grudem
2. *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Andreas J. Köstenberger