

BIBLICAL MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD III

ROLES IN RELATIONSHIP

Genesis 2: 15-26

Be sure to discuss the catechism question for this week.

INTRODUCTION

In your opinion, how are men and women different from each other? Are the differences only physical/biological and related to reproduction or is there more to maleness and femaleness? Why do you think this?

“Confusion over the meaning of sexual personhood today is epidemic. The consequence of this confusion is not a free and happy harmony among gender-free persons relating on the basis of abstract competencies. The consequence rather is more divorce, more homosexuality, more sexual abuse, more promiscuity, more social awkwardness, and more emotional distress and suicide that come with the loss of God-given identity.... Little help is being given to a son’s question, “Dad, what does it mean to be a man and not a woman?” Or a daughter’s question, “Mom, what does it mean to be a woman and not a man?” A lot of energy is being expended today minimizing the distinctions of manhood and womanhood. But we do not hear very often what manhood and womanhood should incline us to do. We are adrift in a sea of confusion over sexual roles. And life is not the better for it.” John Piper, “What’s the Difference?”

Would you agree or disagree with Piper’s observation? Why or why not?

We saw in our study of Genesis 1 that in order for man to fulfill his purpose of being like God and representing God for his glory he had to be made male and female. The emphasis in Genesis 1 is on the equality of male and female. Men and women are both necessary and valuable to God and his purposes. But they are not the same. Genesis 1 hints at the distinction by calling the human race, “man”, but Genesis 2 gives us a clearer picture as to what is the difference between masculinity and femininity.

STUDY

Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” It then goes on to record the creation of the universe. Genesis 2:4 says, “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.” How are chapters 1 & 2 similar and how are they different?

They are similar in that God is in charge of creation. They are similar in that man is created male and female. But after that they are very different in how they present the story of creation. Chapter 1 is very ordered in its presentation. There are 7 “days” of creation and each day follows a very similar pattern. Chapter 2 is more like a story and there is no pattern followed. In fact there is no reference to days in the story at all. Chapter 1 records the creation of the entire universe whereas chapter 2 only talks about plants and animals and man and woman. Chapter 2 talks about the Garden of Eden in very specific ways whereas chapter 1 never mentions it. There is a lot of detail given to the creation of man and woman in chapter 2 that is entirely missing from chapter 1. Man works and speaks in chapter 2 whereas he is entirely passive in chapter 1. Chapter 2 has so much more detail about a small part of creation whereas chapter 1 describes the entire creation in more general terms. Genesis 1 seems to imply that male and female were created at the same time and God spoke to them simultaneously. However, Genesis 2 emphasizes that man was created first and God spoke to him and put him to work in the garden apart from the woman.

When you compare these chapters how would you summarize the focus or aim of each chapter?

Chapter 1 aims to show that God has created the entire universe. Nothing exists except by the word of his command. It also aims to show that man is the pinnacle of creation. God is presented as the all powerful, sovereign ruler of the universe. All things obey the word of his command and are therefore, good and very good. Man is uniquely created to be like God and to represent God in managing the creation, all to his glory. Chapter 2 aims to show the nature of the relationship between God and man, man and creation and man and woman. Genesis 2 wants to emphasize the centrality of God’s relationship with man as the focus of the created order. Man is in charge of creation and responsible to God for how he lives in God’s world.

unwilling or unable to provide for us and so we need something or someone other than God in order to be happy and satisfied. All sin brings upon us the curse of death. Sin cuts us off from life, God himself.

Man is made for the purpose of worshipping, serving and obeying God

Based on how Genesis 1: 26-29 is stated how would you expect the creation and instruction of man and woman to take place? How does the description of man's creation in 2: 4-17 seem to contradict this expectation?

It would appear that man and woman were created at the same time, in the same way. It would appear that God spoke to both of them at the same time. Yet we find in chapter 2 that God made the man apart from the woman, put him to work in the garden and spoke to him without the woman being present. In fact, there is no mention of the woman for the first 17 verses of the chapter. Now, if men and women were equal without distinction, we would not expect this. So, at the end of v. 17, if we're paying attention, we're supposed to be asking the question, where is the woman and why is she not involved in any of the activity up to this point?

What is surprising about v. 18?

God says that man living in the Garden of Eden in perfect fellowship with himself is not good. In Genesis 1 we were told five times when God saw what he made, "it was good". At the end of Genesis 1 we were told that when God saw all that he had made it was "very good". So how can it be, that in the creation of man something is not good?

What does God mean by saying the situation is not good? First consider why did God call creation "good" in chapter 1 (see Psalm 19:1-2, Psalm 33: 6-11, Isaiah 40: 25-26, Rom. 11: 36)? Second, consider what does it mean when God says what man needs for his situation to be good is a "helper"?

God calls creation good and very good because it submits to his will and accomplishes his purposes. The creation is good because the creation displays the greatness of God in its harmonious complexity. It

Read vv. 8-15 and Revelations 21: 1-4 & 22: 1-5. What similarities do you notice? What do these similarities tell us about life in Garden of Eden?

Just like the new Jerusalem is the place of God's residence in the new heavens and the new earth, so Eden is the place of God's residence in the first creation. God made Eden as the place where he would dwell with man. It is the place where man would be his people and he would be their God. Just as the river of life flowed out from the throne of God, so their was a river that flowed out from Eden and gave life to the rest of the earth. The source of blessing to the world is God himself, dwelling in the place he made on earth as his dwelling. Just as there was a tree of life in Eden, so their will be a tree of life in heaven. Note this major difference. In heaven there will be no tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Sin will no longer be a possibility in heaven, whereas it was in the first creation. Just as Adam was placed in the garden to work it and take care of it, so all God's people will dwell in the new Jerusalem serving him. The bottom line is that man was placed in the garden to live in fellowship with God, to enjoy the bounty of his life and to serve him in caring for creation as his representative.

What do vv. 16-17 tell us about the nature of God's relationship to man?

God wants man to live by faith. He has provided all that we need for life. Being like him and serving him in caring for his creation is what we were made for and what will make us happy. We need nothing more than him and what his life provides for us. So man was to live by faith, depending upon God for all things and trusting God's judgment that he did not need to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We also discover that God is just in these verses. If man refuses to live by faith and spurns God and his provision, then God will most certainly give man what he deserves, death. There is metaphor here. God is the life-giver and therefore death means to be cut off from the source of all life.

What do these verses tell us is true of all sin?

All sin is a failure of faith. We sin because we believe the promises of sin rather than the promises of God. We believe that God is either

is good because its diverse parts function together to fulfill the purposes for which God created. Man by himself, is not good because man without woman does not fulfill God's purpose for man. He does not reflect the image of God; he cannot fill the earth, subdue it, nor rule over it to the glory of God without woman. It is not good for man to be alone, not because of some bad psychological state in man or because God is not enough for man but because man cannot fulfill his purpose without woman. Man cannot bear the image of God; fill the earth and rule over it by himself. He needs a helper who is like him but different from him so that they together can fulfill God's purposes. God's saying man needs a helper reinforces this point. You only need a helper if you have a task to perform that you cannot do alone. The "badness" of man by himself is due to his inability to fulfill God's purposes while alone.

NOTE: You need to know, that most modern commentaries on this passage make man's aloneness to be not good because man is lonely without woman. The badness of the situation is due to a psychological or social need in man that is not being met by living in a perfect world, in perfect fellowship with God. God is then made out to be the perfect matchmaker when he fashions Eve. The text does not support this view as I have stated above.

What do the two words, "helper" and "suitable" tell us about the relationship between man and woman?

God views the man as bearing primary responsibility for accomplishing the purpose of being like God and representing God by caring for creation for his glory. The woman is there to render indispensable assistance. He cannot do this alone, he must have the help of woman. However, man is not the helper, woman is. This is confirmed by two things already stated in the text. First, by the fact that God created man first and put him to work in the garden and spoke to him apart from the woman. Second, God calls the human race, "man", not "woman" or some other more neutral term.

The word "suitable" means that Adam needs someone like him but different from him. He needs someone who corresponds to him, who complements him in order to fulfill God's purpose. Where he is strong, she is weak and where he is weak, she is strong. She is like man in that she is made in God's image. She is unlike man in her role in the work

of caring for creation. She is the helper. The word does not imply that she is less capable or important but rather that the man is the leader and she is the follower. He initiates, she responds. Her role in fulfilling their purpose is different from his role. He is responsible for the way in which they fulfill their God-ordained work, she is responsible for gladly submitting to his leadership and providing the help man needs to fulfill his responsibility. Ray Ortland in his commentary on this passage defines the difference between man and woman in this way, "In a partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction."

God's solution to the "badness" of Adam's situation is that he is going to make a "helper, suitable for him." However, what does he do next? Why does he do it? (vv. 19-20)

God brings the animals to Adam so that he can give them names. So Adam studies each animal as God brings it to him and he names it. God does this for several reasons. First, this displays man's authority over the created world. It is evidence that man rules over the animals. Just like parents naming children shows parental authority, so Adam's naming the animals shows his authority over them. Second, it is important to note that God views this work as Adam's alone. He does not see any reason for the woman to participate in this work. Adam exercises his authority independent of the participation of the woman. Third, as verse 20 says, there was not suitable helper for Adam among the animals. Therefore, part of the reason for God's having Adam name the animals is to reveal to Adam that he needs a suitable helper to fulfill his purposes on earth. Animals could help him work but no animal could join him as an equal but different partner in the task of glorifying God by being like him and caring for creation.

NOTE: Many modern commentators portray Adam as seeing all the pairs of animals and then realizing that he is lonely and needs a partner also. They cast him like a single man walking down the streets of Paris as it is filled with amorous couples and feeling isolated and alone. Naming the animals shows him he needs a partner, a suitable helper, but it is not because of some need in himself but because he needs her to fulfill the purpose of glorifying God.

How does God create Eve? Why doesn't he just form her out of the dust of the ground like he did with Adam?

God puts Adam in a deep sleep, takes out one of his ribs and then fashions the woman from it. He does this for two reasons. First, the fact that he uses part of Adam to make Eve shows that she is just like him in her value and in bearing the image of God. Second, it maintains the emphasis on the nature of their relationship. She is taken from man. In a sense, man is the source of woman, at least as the secondary cause (God being the primary cause.). See 1 Cor. 11: 7-8 to see how Paul uses this exact argument.

What does God do after he fashions the woman (Compare v.19)?

He brings her to the man the same way he brought the animals to the man. He is accentuating the man's position of authority in the relationship.

How does Adam respond when he sees the woman? What does this tell us about how Adam views the woman and his relationship to her?

He bursts out into poetry. He rejoices in the fact that she is like him, "bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh". He is ecstatic to finally have someone who complements him and will work with him in the great purpose for which God made man. He is happy for an equal partner to assist him in the work. But he also names her in the same way that he gave names to each of the animals. Thus he displays his authority, his responsibility in the relationship. He doesn't ask the woman what she wants to be called.

Verses 24-25 are Moses' comment on the story he has just told. What is the reason that marriage exists?

Marriage exists because God's purpose for man to bear his image, fill the earth and rule over it cannot be fulfilled by man alone but can only take place through the partnership of two equal beings, man and woman, working together in distinct roles and fulfilling distinct functions. Marriage is the purest expression of this purpose though not the only expression of it.

What is marriage? What are God's requirements for marriage?

A man will leave his father and mother. Notice again the initiative of the man in leaving, not the woman. In other words the man, by marrying a woman, sets up another family that is independent of and separate from both of the families of origin. He is responsible for making sure that the woman has a safe, secure, and legal relationship to enter into as she leaves her parents home. In our culture this means, at the minimum, there is no marriage where there is no marriage license or ceremony. Second, the man cleaves to his wife. The word used here is the word for "sticking to like glue." It is the irrevocable pledge of the man to the woman he will never abandon her or do anything to cause her harm. He pledges himself to her as her defender and provider. He pledges his loyalty to her. She in turn, in response to his pledge, promises fidelity and faithfulness. Finally, marriage is consummated in the two becoming one flesh. Obviously, this is a reference to sexual union. But please notice the order, it is not accidental. Sexual union is only to be expressed between a man and a woman who have first fulfilled the cultural conditions of establishing a legal marriage and who have pledged themselves to each other for life. However, "one flesh" is not only about sex. It also points to the unity of purpose they now share to glorify the great and gracious God who made them one. Again, the primary purpose of marriage is not meeting the needs of each other. The purpose of marriage is not first the bearing of children. The purpose of marriage is to reflect the loving, leading and submitting that take place among the three persons of the Trinity. The purpose of marriage is to glorify God as the husband lovingly leads his wife and the wife respectfully submits to her husband as they work together to accomplish God's glorious purposes for them.

Based on this text and many others, John Piper defines masculinity like this: "At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for, and protect women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships." He defines femininity like this: "At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships."

How do you feel about this description of masculinity and femininity?