

BIBLICAL MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD

ROLES IN RELATIONSHIP

Genesis 2: 15-31

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE: Tell the story of Cinderella, emphasizing her exaltation at the end of the story. She is like Jesus in that she lived in humiliation but was then exalted to the highest station in the land by marrying the Prince. The catechism question is: How is Christ exalted? He is exalted by his rising from the dead on the third day, his going into heaven, his sitting at the right hand of the Father and his coming to judge the world at the last day.

INTRODUCTION

In our current series we are seeking to answer the questions, "What does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a woman? What difference does it make?" In our quest to find answers to these questions we have turned first to the history of God's creating man recorded in Genesis 1-3. We discovered last week from Genesis 1 that God created man, male and female, to be like him and to represent him and therefore:

- Every human individual, male and female, is made in God's image
- God's image can only be fully seen in the partnership of men and women
- God's blessing is given to both men and women and requires both male and female participation.

We ended our discussion by noting that while both men and women are equally necessary and gifted for accomplishing God's purpose, we are not told how each is to fulfill his or her role in that purpose. We are told that God intended for man to be male and female but we are not told what male and female entails.

When we turn to Genesis 2 we are given a more detailed look at the creation of human beings and in particular we are given a description of the relationship between man and woman. Genesis 2: 5 is a strange statement. We are told that what follows is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth in the day God created the earth and the heaven. Now, I thought we just finished reading about the creation of the heavens and earth in chapter 1? What is going on here?

Have you ever seen a map of a large area, like the state of WI and then it will have a highlighted square in the map labeled "enlarged area"? Then there will be a more detailed map of that highlighted area off to the side of the large map. It helps you to fix the detailed map in the bigger context. That is exactly how Genesis 2 relates to Genesis 1. In Genesis 1 we have the very orderly description of the creation of the entire universe. In Genesis 2 we have the description of the creation of man and woman. It is a more detailed look at Genesis 1: 26-28. As a result, Gen. 2 is not careful about the sequences of creation. Genesis 2 is concerned with the nature of the relationship between God and man, man and the rest of creation and man and woman. It summarizes most of what chapter 1 details and is very detailed in its description of God's creation of man and woman. Chapter 1 gives us the creation of man as proposition, chapter 2 as story.

But why did God, through Moses, think it necessary to give us the details contained in chapter 2? The simple answer is that there are things we need to know about being made in God's image, male and female than just what is said in chapter 1. In chapter 1, we are told that man must be both male and female in order to accomplish our purpose. But we are not told why. How do men and women make a distinctive contribution to our purpose of being like God and acting for God in order to glorify God? But a second reason for the detailed story is that Genesis 2 is only half of a larger story. Genesis 2 & 3 form a whole unit of thought. It is the story of not only who we are as man and woman but also of how we got into this mess. There are actually 7 scenes in Genesis 2 & 3 and

they show how the perfect creation of God was destroyed by man. Next week we will look at the consequences of sin in the relationship of men and women, as recorded in Genesis 3. But today we are going to talk about just the second scene in order to see how men and women contribute differently to their purpose of being like God and acting like God for the glory of God.

The fact that men and women are different from each other is patently obvious. Dave Barry, the humorist regularly highlights the differences he observes between men and women. He said in one of his columns, “The primary difference between men and women is that women can see extremely small quantities of dirt...somewhere during the growth process; a hormonal secretion takes place in women that allows them to see dirt that men cannot see, dirt at the level of molecules, whereas men don’t generally notice it until it forms clumps large enough to support agriculture.”

There is a growing body of scientific research pointing out the significant physiological, psychological and behavioral differences between men and women. Anne Moir and David Jessel in their book “Brain Sex” chronicle some of the differences that science has discovered. These observable, objective differences lead Moir and Jessel to conclude: “Men are different from women. They are equal in their common membership of the same species, humankind. But to maintain that they are the same in aptitude, skill or behavior is to build a society on a biological and scientific lie.”

Similarly, Paul Jewett in his book, “Man as Male and Female” argues that maleness and femaleness are essential, not peripheral to our personhood, “Sexuality permeates one’s individual being to its very depth; it conditions every facet of one’s life as a person. As the self is always aware of itself as an ‘I’, so this ‘I’ is always aware of itself as himself or herself... At the human level there is no ‘I and thou’ per se, but only the ‘I’ who is male or female confronting the ‘thou’... who is either male or female.”

Do you understand what he is saying? He is not talking about sexual feelings. He is talking about who you are as a person. You are male or you are female, always and at all times. Everyone you relate to is either male or female. It is necessary then to understand what it means to be male and female. We live in a culture that has abandoned any hope of defining maleness and femaleness. In fact, the majority of our culture and many of you are offended simply by the proposal that maleness and femaleness can be defined. This has led John Piper to observe in his essay, “What’s the Difference?”

“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.”

So, this morning I want us to consider from Genesis 2 three things that God has told us about being male and female.

I. Man is made for the purpose of worshipping, serving and obeying God (vv. 5-17)

Whereas in Genesis 1 man is told to fill the earth, to subdue it and to rule over it, in 2:5-17 we get more details and insights as to what this means; how man relates to God in the fulfilling of his purpose. I just want to concentrate on vv. 15-17. If you want more details you can go to the website and read the sermon I preached in 1998 about the rest of the chapter. What does vv. 15-17 tell us about man’s purpose? This is another one of those instances in Genesis where remembering the original audience will help us to understand what God is saying. In v. 15, Moses uses three very specialized words when he describes God’s putting man in the Garden of Eden. The words “put,” “work” and “take care of” are all related to what the priests do in the tabernacle of the Lord. Man is to live his life in God’s presence in worship and service. We are to see the world we live in as belonging to God and to be used

for his purposes and glory. Just like the priests in the temple, we are stewards who work in his world according to his purposes.

Then in vv. 16-17 we have both a promise and a warning from God that closely parallels the numerous promises and warnings found throughout the Scriptures. Adam is commanded to trust God to provide for all of his needs and to trust his judgement to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Obedience to God is always an act of faith. This is true of all obedience. On many occasions my children have asked to go do something and after I have gathered information on what, where and with whom they are going to do this thing I have said no, they can't go. When they ask why, I'll tell them my reasons and end with saying it's because I love you and think this is best. Now, they don't always agree with my reasoning and sometimes don't think I'm loving them very well. They still want to do it and may actually protest that I'm not being fair or complain I never let them do anything or some such thing. At such times I have been known to say to them, "Look, you need to live by faith. God made me your father. I love you. I have your best interests at heart and am not merely doing this to make your life miserable. So, you need to cheerfully obey me by trusting God who made me your father."

This is exactly what God does with Adam and with us. He says, "Here is everything you will need for a happy life, I've provided it all for you. However, there is one tree I don't want you to eat from. It's called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Don't eat from it, because if you do you will most certainly die." So Adam must choose to trust God's judgement and love and do what he's commanded. All sin is a failure to trust in God's promises and a choice to trust the promises of sin. To eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was to assert human autonomy from divine revelation. In other words, to eat was to declare, "I know better than God." To eat from it was to say, "God doesn't know what he's talking about. The way to a fulfilling life doesn't lie in doing what he says but rather in doing what I think is best." So eating from this tree is an act of unbelief and rebellion. It is shaking your fist in God's face and saying, "I'll do it my way, because my way is better than your way." God is the only one who knows what is good and what the "good life" looks like. To not seek to live according to what he defines as good is to pursue death. God made us to live all of life in relation to him, trusting him for all, doing all our work as service to him, taking care of our part of the world for him, trusting his directions for living and so delighting in obedience to him. This is what we were made for.

These verses give us a fuller understanding of what it means to be like God and to act like God for the glory of God. But there is another thing this passage adds to our understanding of man. When you read Gen. 1: 26-28, it appears that the creation of man as male and female occurs all at once. It sounds like God makes man and woman at the same time and speaks to both of them simultaneously. However, what we discover from Genesis 2 is that the creation of male and female is sequential. God creates man first, places man in the garden to work it and then he commands the man. 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? That's what we're going to find out starting with v. 18.

Man is made for the purpose of worshipping, serving and obeying God (vv. 5-17)

Man cannot do this if he is only male—he needs a helper who is like him (vv. 18-23)

Verse 18 is very startling in light of what has been said up to this point in Gen. 1-2. Five times in chapter 1 we were told that the creation of God was good and then in v. 31 we were told the whole of it was very good. But now God sees the man, by himself in the garden and says this state of affairs is not good. "It is not good for the man to be alone," God says. The question we have to answer is why not? Man has everything he might need it would seem. He is living in perfect fellowship with God and has received all the resources necessary for a happy life. Yet, his being alone in the garden is called by God, not good.

This passage is referred to in almost every Christian book on marriage and in every sermon preached on marriage. The basic idea that you have heard is that men need women and women need men. We are incomplete, not whole and lonely without someone like us and yet different from us. The emphasis is on the psychological and

sociological need of man for woman and of woman for man. It is not good for man to be alone because man feels bad being alone. Usually this is followed with a cute retelling of Adam's naming the animals and seeing that animal's come in pairs he realizes he doesn't have a partner and so is lonely at the end of the naming of the animals. Adam, when he sees all the animal pairs, is like the single person walking down the streets of Paris when it is filled with amorous couples, feeling isolated and lonely. While part of Adam's being alone is not good because he is not in relationship with another one like him, it is not because he is lonely. Men and women don't need each other because of some psychological or social need. Man in perfect relation to God and living in a perfect world does not need woman because of some need in him. Adam can truly be happy in God alone. To understand why it's not good for man to be alone we must ask why was creation always good in chapter 1?

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 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.

I think this is confirmed when we consider what God says after he says it's not good for man to be alone. He says he will make a "helper suitable for him." The word "helper" immediately informs us that Adam has a task or function to perform that he cannot do without woman. It's just like a couple of weeks ago when I was fixing a lattice fence at our house and I needed one of my children to hold the frame so I could run the drill to put together the corners. I needed a helper to do a particular task. I could not fix the fence without a helper. Now, the "task" we perform is far more complex and is not simply doing something but also being something. We are God's image and we serve in God's garden, we aren't just doing a job.

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. The term helper means that the man is in charge of the project and that the woman is there to assist him. 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.

I think Ray Ortland in his commentary on this passage is right when he 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." We are going to spend a lot of time in the coming weeks talking about what that means in the wide diversity of relationships that we have as men and women. But for right now, I want you to see that this is indeed, what this passage is saying by seeing what happens next. Notice that God knows that Adam needs a helper that is like him, but Adam doesn't know it yet. So, God sets Adam to the task of naming the animals so that Adam will realize his need. Note, God brings the animals to Adam and then he names each one. In this exercise, Adam studies each species as it comes before him and then assigns it a name in keeping with its characteristics and function. The naming of the animals signifies Adam's authority over the animals. At the end of the process, what does Adam discover? He is different from every other living creature. There is no creature like him that can be his equal partner and assist him in the great task of reflecting the image of God and caring for God's creation so that God is glorified. He isn't lonely, he realizes no animal corresponds to him and no animal can assist him to fulfill God's purposes for him.

God then, after enabling Adam to see his need, puts him into a deep sleep, takes out one of his ribs and fashions a woman for the man. In the same way that God brought the animals to Adam so he could name them, he brings the woman to the man. Then Adam exclaims, "Now, finally here is a person who is like me. She is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. I will name her woman because she was taken from man." In the naming of the woman,

Adam highlights her equality with him. She is just like him, in the image of God, because she was taken from him. She, like he, is superior to the animals. However, he exercises his right of leadership by naming her. I know that many of you are having a hard time with what I am saying. I have talked with scores of women over the years about these issues and most of the time I have discovered that most Christian women are struggling with this idea of leadership and submission because they make wrong assumptions. Men are not leaders in their relationship with women because of competency or value but simply because God appointed them so. This is about male leadership, not male domination or superiority.

The summer after I graduated from college I went on a short-term missions project with Campus Crusade for Christ. 40 students and 20 full staff members from around the nation came to WI Dells. All the students got day jobs but we spent the evenings and weekends in training sessions and then in sharing the gospel in the community, under the leadership of the staff. At the end of six weeks, all the staff left and various students were assigned to the leadership positions that they had been filling. I was appointed the director of the entire project. I felt very inadequate for the job. I also felt very weird being put in authority over all the other students who had been my peers for six weeks. I'll never forget what the Campus Crusade staff director told me just before he left. I had been expressing to him my uncertainty and who did I think I was to be in charge of all these people now? He told me that my authority didn't come from whom I was but from the position I had been given. I needed to lead because that was my job. If I didn't lead, then God's work would not get done. In the same way, if the other students didn't follow, God's work would not get done. I didn't have the right to lead because of who I was but because of my appointment. Being the leader didn't mean I did everything or had all the answers. It meant that I was responsible to make sure that all of us contributed to the fulfilling of our purpose in a unified manner.

It is much the same with men and women. The ways in which men and women relate to one another differ according to the various relationships that we have. But in all of our inter-relating God has ordained that in a partnership of spiritually equal persons the man has primary responsibility to lead the relationship in a God-honoring direction. I will be getting into specific applications of this principle in the weeks to come but let me encourage you to consider the variety of male-female relationships you are in and think about what it would mean for the male to lead the relationship in a God-glorifying direction and for the woman to "help" him in that process.

I want to encourage every person 16 and older in here to read John Piper's essay, "What's the Difference?" and then to talk with others about it. This is the best, concise description of what the Scriptures teach.

Man is made for the purpose of worshipping, serving and obeying God (vv. 5-17)

Man cannot do this if he is only male—he needs a helper who is like him (vv. 18-23)

Marriage exists for displaying the greatness of God (vv. 24-25)

Verses 25-26 are Moses comments on what he has just recorded. He begins by saying, "for this reason." What reason is he referring to? Because the woman is perfectly suited for man, to be his helper in the great purpose of displaying the greatness of God, he will leave his father. Marriage is the ultimate expression of male-female partnership in the task of glorifying God. It is not the only way this glory is expressed but it is the highest as it is the most intimate. There are innumerable ways that men and women function together to display God's greatness but marriage is the definitive way. Here in this verse is the reason God is so insistent that we honor and protect marriage. Marriage is not primarily worthy of honor because of how important it is to the health and well being of humans and human society. It ought to be honored by all because it is the chief expression of the image of God in the world. When we deface marriage by our sin we are defacing the image of God in its fullness.

Notice what constitutes a marriage in this verse. 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.

The final sentence in this narrative is not a statement that the husband and wife now live together in a state of psychological vulnerability. Most modern commentators turn this into some kind of endorsement of an ideal relationship where there are no secrets and no fears but all is openly shared between one another. This is not what the text is talking about. It is simply a poetic description of the fact that there was no sin in their relationship. They had no need to be ashamed in the sense of being guilty of sin against God. They were perfectly fulfilling God’s purposes and were loved by Him. They were not under his condemnation nor were they in any way offensive to each other. They perfectly loved God and each other in the pursuit of his glory.

As I mentioned, in the coming weeks we are going to be discussing the ways our maleness and femaleness are expressed in the various relationships we have. I want to be sure though that you understand that the difference is not just about roles and duties. It is about the ways in which men and women relate to each other in the various settings of life. Masculinity and femininity are not peripheral to our identity but central and therefore God will be glorified in our relationships as we learn to live in light of who we truly are. This is my ambition in the coming weeks. I want to set forward a vision of masculinity and femininity that is rooted in the nature of God and his purposes for us that will set us free to love him and one another with greater joy and effectiveness for his glory.

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MOMENT OF SILENCE

BENEDICTION

Now to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.