

Human Sexuality, Gender, and the Gospel

Forestgate Presbyterian Church

Lesson 3: God's Design for Men and Women

Goal for this class: to replace cultural misunderstandings of male-ness and female-ness by surveying the positive biblical vision

1. Resources?

2. Recall from last week

a. Culture *never* sets the moral agenda for God's people

1 Pet 4:3–5

For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. 4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

- A look at the culture's agenda in the past week
 - o Supreme Court Nomination hearings: What is a woman?
 - o U of Penn male swimmer wins female championship.

b. Humans were created to be image-bearers of God

Gen 1:26–27

God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

- We are all equally and ontologically (as to our essence) *image-bearers*
- This past week's controversy begs the question: What does it *mean* to be a woman?
 - o Is it just biology? Are we referring to a shared experience? Or, is there something more fundamental? Are there roles given to women that transcend time and culture? Is there a spiritual dimension to womanhood? Is there a difference between mothering and fathering?

3. Manhood

a. Cultural misunderstandings: what are the stereotypes of male-ness?

b. What is the problem with *over-defining* male-ness?

c. Biblical examples that critique the cultural tropes

Mephibosheth (“dead dog”)	→	“ate at David’s table”
David, the man of war	→	wrote poetry and made music
Paul	→	unimpressive, strength in weakness
Elkanah	→	tender love for his barren wife
Zechariah (father of JBap)	→	praying regularly for his barren wife
Ethiopian eunuch	→	political official, heir to God’s kingdom

Implication: the essence of male-ness cannot be defined from externals

1 Sam 16:7

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on [Saul’s] appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

d. Biblical manhood – some helpful definitions:

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.

- Eph 5:22, Titus 2:5, 1 Pet 3:1,5 exhort wives to be subject to “your own” husbands.

Male-ness is marked by a benevolent stewardship of creation, family, & church.

- Cultivating virtue and wholeness via formal and informal leadership
- Instinct towards protecting others (even if physically unable)
- Sacrificial self-giving to see others (and self) conformed to Christ

4. Womanhood

a. Cultural misunderstandings: what are the stereotypes of female-ness?

b. **First person of the Godhead primarily revealed as *Father***, but there are a handful of female metaphors applied to God: Isa 42:14; 49:15; 66:13; Hos 13:8; Luke 13:34–35

- These examples deal with nurture and comfort
- **Implication:** while all humans image God by reflecting his communicable attributes, there are aspects of God that are beautifully reflected in female-ness

c. Survey of women in Scripture

<i>Incompleteness of creation without women</i>	Gen 2:18, 23 —Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” ... Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”
<i>Supported Jesus and the apostles financially</i>	Luke 8:3 —Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.
<i>Called upon to prophecy (though normatively this is an office limited to males)</i>	Exod 15:20–21 — Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang to them... 2 Kgs 22:14 —So Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah...and they talked with her. Isa 8:3 (Isaiah’s wife); Luke 2:36 (Anna the prophetess)
<i>Used by God to declare truth</i>	1 Samuel 2 —Hannah’s song 1 Samuel 25 —Abigail’s speech to David Luke 1:46–55 —Mary’s <i>Magnificat</i>
<i>Used by God to instruct others</i>	Judg 4:4–5 —Deborah as “judge” over Israel Prov 1:8 —forsake not your mother’s teaching” Proverbs 31 —“an oracle that his mother taught him” Acts 18:26 —Priscilla and Aquila instructing Apollos 2 Tim 1:5 —Timothy’s grandmother and mother who instructed him
<i>Worthy of respect/trust</i>	Prov 31:10 (“The heart of her husband trusts in her”) Paul’s litany of praise for all his female co-workers (next week)
<i>Praised for beauty, but that is not the only source of dignity</i>	Gen 24:16 —Rebekah; Esth 2:7 —Esther; Ruth 3:3 —Ruth (compare...) Mark 5:25ff —Woman with bleeding
<i>Commended as image-bearers in every life stage (not just marriage)</i>	Married (Mary, Priscilla, etc.) Unmarried (Martha, Lydia, Mary Magdalene) Widowed (Naomi, Ruth, Hellenist women in Acts 6, Anna) Divorced (Woman at the well; Matthew 5, 19)

d. Biblical womanhood – some helpful definitions:

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.

Female-ness is marked by nurturing of creation, family, & church

- Instinct towards nurturing/comforting others in all aspects of life
- Cultivating respect for and providing wisdom to godly male (formal and informal) leadership