

UNIT 2: God's Creating Work

Section 14: **Anthropology: A Biblical View of the Sexes**

- See also Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

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Theological Works:

Grudem's Systematic Theology
MacArthur's Different By Design
Piper's What's the Difference?

INTRODUCTION:

As we bring our discussion of Anthropology to a close, we felt it important to address "A Biblical Approach to Manhood and Womanhood." That this has not traditionally been handled as a particular point in systematic theological discussions is manifest in its absence from many a systematic theology textbook. Of the sources we have consulted for our study, only Wayne Grudem saw fit to handle the topic with a separate chapter. All treat the subject at least in passing by affirming the fact that both men and women are created in "the image of God." But beyond this, not much is explicitly stated.

The absence of this discussion merely serves to highlight the relatively recent pervasive attack of the roles of men and women. Largely due to the "feminist agenda" the biblical definitions of manhood and womanhood are largely being ignored and neglected. With less emphasis being placed upon sound doctrine and exegetically accurate expository preaching, cultural norms are playing a larger part in the establishment of belief and practice in society, church, and the family. Society's aim to promote an "egalitarian" view of the sexes has resulted in a loss of understanding of the distinctive qualities and characteristics that God has created the genders with. Political incorrectness has become the greatest "sin" of our day and age, and anyone who asserts a "complementarian" view of manhood and womanhood is sure to elicit the condemnation of our world. But, nonetheless, the church as a "pillar and support of the truth" exists to make clear proclamation of God's design. There is a tremendous need for us as God's people to live in accordance with God's Word in this particular area, especially in our day and age. We must not be "conformed" to the culture we live in, and meanwhile we are not to be merely "reactionary" to cultural norms either... We must cultivate a biblical perspective of masculinity and femininity. This has implications on our relationships with people in general, and God's institutions of the church and family in particular. God's Word has not left us in the dark... we have specific instructions to follow. When we obey God in these directives, we find a liberating joy in submission to His design!

Q1: Are Men and Women Equal?

Q2: Are Men and Women the Same?

Q3: How does a Biblical View of Manhood and Womanhood impact our understanding of appropriate behavior and roles of men and women in relationship with each other?

I. God's Design Seen in Creation

A. *The Equality of Male and Female*

1. The equality of male and female is seen in God's creation of the human race.
2. Both male & female are invested with dignity for they were made in the image of God.
 - a. **Gen 1:27** "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."
 - b. **Gen 5:1-2** "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. ² He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created."

3. God did not create an isolated individual, but made humanity in such a way that relationships would be cultivated and enjoyed.
 - a. In this age, the fullest expression of interpersonal unity happens within the context of marriage... a covenant where husband and wife become one flesh (**Gen 2:24**).
 - b. We read in **Matt 19:6** that “what God has joined together, let no man separate.”
4. **Grudem** points out that there is a sense in which God’s creation of male and female in the image of God reflects some degree of “plurality of persons in the Trinity.” – **Gen 1:26** “Let *us* make man in *our* image...”
 - a. “Just as there was fellowship and communication and sharing of glory among the members of the Trinity before the world was made (see John 17:5,24), so God made Adam and Eve in such a way that they would share love and communication and mutual giving of honor to one another in their interpersonal relationship.”
 - b. Grudem continues by offering some objections:
 - (1) The representation is not complete, for if God is three persons in one, Adam and Eve are merely two persons in one... why didn’t God create three persons??
ANSWER: The analogy is not exact, and a couple things can be mentioned: (1) God possesses far greater plurality and far greater unity than we ourselves, as creatures can possess. This is merely a reminder of the surpassing Excellency of God! (2) There is a degree of interpersonal unity yet diversity reflected in the relationships of a family having husband, wife, and child... (again, obviously not perfectly), but another picture of unity and diversity!
 - (2) Jesus was unmarried. ANSWER: Jesus was unique – He is both God and Man. “Rather than being married to any one individual human being, he has taken the entire church as his bride (Eph 5:23-32) and enjoys with each member of his church a spiritual and emotional unity that will last for eternity.”
 - (3) Paul seemed to remain single or as a widower and advocate singleness.
ANSWER: Paul never says it is wrong to marry (he actually condemns those who forbid marriage), and as a matter of fact speaks of it as something good which can be given up for the sake of the Kingdom of God. “In this way Paul gives up one way in which he might reflect likeness to God (marriage) in order to further other ways in which he might reflect likeness to God and further God’s purposes in the world (namely, in his work for the church)... Building the church and increasing its unity and purity also promote the reflection of God’s character in the world.”

B. The Difference in Roles of Male and Female

1. While men and women are equal in value and importance before God, there are abiding differences between men and women which ought to be reflected in their relationships with each other. (they are not interchangeable cogs).
 - a. Men and Women are Different by Design!
 - b. But **Piper** explains, “The tendency today is to stress the equality of men and women by minimizing the unique significance of our maleness or femaleness. But this depreciation of male and female personhood is a great loss. It is taking a tremendous toll on generations of young men and women who do not know what it means to be a man or a woman. 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... We are adrift in a sea of confusion over sexual roles. And life is not the better for it.”

- c. Men and women are “interdependent” (depending upon one another) – both are given gifts to serve one another within society, the family, and the church.
 - d. The Lord has given instructions regarding the exercise of those gifts within the family and the church in particular...
2. **Gen 2:18-23** Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." 19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."
- a. Male and female were created to function in a complementary way...
 - b. Eve was fashioned from a rib from Adam’s side, and created as a “helper suitable for Adam.” So Eve was created for the express purpose of helping Adam fulfill the tasks God set before him – “to fill the earth and subdue it, to exercise dominion over it...”
 - c. God established this principle of male authority and female submission for the purpose of order and complementation, not on the basis of innate superiority of males! A church might have gifted women, but those women must be obedient to God’s order and design by submitting to male leadership.
3. Some (especially in recent days) have attempted to explain that these “role distinctions” are only introduced due to sin, but Genesis furnishes us with understanding of God’s intention for Adam and Eve’s roles from the very beginning (pre-Fall).
- a. Adam was created first – This suggests leadership role (just as firstborn had this place of authority)... (basis for I Tim 2:13)
 - b. Eve was created as a helper for Adam – God made Eve for Adam, not Adam for Eve... (basis for I Cor 11:9). To be in the role of helper does not mean you are “inferior” but just that you subordinate your desires to another’s in order to assist them in fulfilling a goal or task the other is in pursuit of.
 - c. Adam named Eve – The right to give a name implies authority. Adam demonstrates this right before and after the fall – when Adam names his wife “woman” and then “Eve.”
 - d. God named the Human Race “Man” – the naming of the human race with a term that also referred to Adam in particular (man in distinction from woman) suggests that a leadership role belongs to the man. Similar to our custom of a woman taking the last name of the man she marries (signifies headship in the family).

4. The best analogy with which to explain and defend the equality and difference that exists between men and women is that of the Trinity.
 - a. **Grudem**, “Between the members of the Trinity there has been equality in importance, personhood, and deity throughout all eternity. But there have also been differences in roles between the members of the Trinity... In creation, the Father speaks and initiates, but the work of creation is carried out through the Son and sustained by the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit (Gen 1:1-2, John 1:1-3, I Cor 8:6, Heb 1:2). In redemption, the Father sends the Son into the world, and the Son comes and is obedient to the Father and dies to pay for our sins (Luke 22:42, Phil 2:6-8). After the Son has ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit comes to equip and empower the church (Jn 16:7, Acts 1:8, 2:1-36).”
 - b. So it is important for us to uphold “one God” and simultaneous “three Persons” who exist eternally as God, each member of the Trinity serving in a distinct role, performing a specific function.
 - c. **1 Cor 11:3** “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.”
 - (1) **Summarized:** Man head of Woman... God head of Christ
 - (2) Headship does not reflect disproportionate value or importance. If that was so in the case of male and female, then it would carry implications for God and Christ. Though God the Son and God the Father are equal in deity, the Son functions in submission to the Father... similarly a wife is called to submit to her husband (**Eph 5:22**).

II. The Entrance of Temptation & Sin

A. Satan’s Tactics

1. Adam was given one very specific prohibition – “not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” We do not read of how this information came to Eve, but can naturally assume that Adam told her God’s command.
2. It is interesting to notice Satan’s plan of attack – to approach the woman with questions regarding God’s word. He induces Eve to look upon the fruit, notice its utility, its beauty, and its promised effects and leads her in disobeying the Lord. She then gives to her husband who was with her and he eats as well.
3. Satan’s strategy involves a “role reversal” with the Eve leading, and Adam following.

B. Sin’s Consequences

1. Note that when God came to level punishment upon Adam and Eve for their action, He seeks to question Adam first (even though Eve sinned first – **Gen 3:1ff**).
2. Again, when the NT speaks of the consequences of sin, our state of guilt is linked back to Adam (even though Eve sinned first). Adam represented the entire human race as its head (a role not granted Eve), and therefore when Adam sinned, we all sinned.
3. **Grudem**, “The punishments that were meted out did not introduce new roles or functions, but simply introduced pain and distortion into the functions they previously had.”
 - a. **Genesis 3:16-19** To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you." ¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, "Because you have

listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.

- b. It's obvious to see that woman was punished with increased pain in childbirth and man would find increased difficulty in "subduing the earth" – but right in the middle of these consequences is a couple phrases relating directly to the relationships between the genders. – there is not conflict/pain in the previously harmonious relationship between Adam and Eve (we even see this in Adam's attempt to "blame Eve and God" for his sin). [Vertical & Horizontal consequences]
- c. "Your desire will be for your husband" – indicates a wrongful desire on woman's part to usurp the authority of her husband. (see **Gen 4:7**)
- d. "He shall rule over you" – has a nuance of dictator-like, unsympathetic, forceful rule where harshness rather than kindness reigns supreme.
- e. So the Fall brought with it a distortion of the loving leadership of Adam and the willing submission of Eve.

III. The Effect of Redemption

A. Restoration of God's Design

1. God's work in redemption undoes the painful effects of the curse... Ultimately we have been freed from the "wages of sin" – Death. But we are also being presently freed from the power of sin – living in obedience to God by His grace.
2. God now brings about a new empowerment for living in accordance with His design.
3. There is genuine joy found in living in accordance with God's design!
4. **Galatians 3:27-28** For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

B. New Testament Exhortations

1. **Grudem** says it SO WELL when he explains, "If it were a sinful pattern for wives to be subject to their husbands' authority, Peter and Paul would not have commanded it to be maintained in Christian marriages! They do say, for example, 'Encourage thorns to grow in your garden,' or 'Make childbirth as painful as possible.'"
2. "New Testament commands concerning marriage do not perpetuate any elements of the curse or any sinful behavior patterns; they rather reaffirm the order and distinction of roles that were there from the beginning of God's good creation."
3. **Piper**, "Our understanding is that the Bible reveals the nature of masculinity and femininity by describing diverse responsibilities for man and woman while rooting these differing responsibilities in creation, not convention."
4. **Several texts root the differences in roles in the sheer act of creation:**
 - a. **Ephesians 5:21-33**
 - (1) See **v31-32** "the two shall become one flesh" – Genesis narrative!
 - (2) Some have argued that the "submit to one another" command that begins this section suggests that marriage is a relationship of "mutual submission."

- (3) But this fails to see the argument of this section of Ephesians. They are right to see it as an overarching statement, but it stands at the head of describing multiple situations of relationships. The command to “submit to one another” is the overarching command for wives behavior towards husbands, children towards parents, and slaves towards masters. In other words, Christians are to submit to others who are in positions of authority over them. To call husbands to submit to wives reciprocally would also lead us to call parents to submit to children and masters to submit to slaves.
 - (4) The word “submit/be subject to” always implies a relationship of submission to authority (Never is the command to submit reversed): citizens to government (Rom 13:1,5, Titus 3:1, I Pet 2:13), universe to Christ (I Cor 15:27, Eph 1:22), wives to husbands (Col 3:18, Titus 2:5, I Pet 3:5, Eph 5:22,24), church to Christ (Eph 5:24), servants to masters (Titus 2:9, I Pet 2:18), Christians to God (Heb 12:9, Ja 4:7).
- b. **I Tim 2:9-15**
- (1) **v13-14** “For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. ¹⁴ *And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*
 - (2) Paul’s prohibition against women teaching and exercising authority over men is rooted in the creation order – Adam was created first, and then Eve.
- c. **I Cor 11:1-16**
- (1) **V8-9** For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; ⁹ for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. **V14** Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,
 - (2) Paul’s instruction for differentiated dress/hair in the corporate assembly is rooted in the nature and purpose of God’s creative work.
 - (3) *Women are to be submissive to men because:*
 - Demonstrates the relationship between Christ and God (**v3**)
 - Sensitivity to their society (**v4-6**)
 - Order and Purpose of their creation (**v7-9,11-12**)
 - Consideration of the angels (**v10**)
 - Observable truths of natural physiology (**v13-15**)

IV. A Biblical Perspective on the Sexes

A. *The Danver’s Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*

1. In December, 1987, the newly-formed Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood met in Danvers, Massachusetts, to compose the Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. Prior to the listing of the actual affirmations that comprise the Danvers Statement, we have included a section detailing contemporary developments that serve as the rationale for these affirmations. We offer this statement to the evangelical world, knowing that it will stimulate healthy discussion, hoping that it will gain widespread assent.
2. **Rationale**
We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:
 - (1) The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
 - (2) the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;

- (3) the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
- (4) the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
- (5) the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
- (6) the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
- (7) the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
- (8) the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
- (9) the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
- (10) and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

3. Affirmations

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

- (1) Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
- (2) Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).
- (3) Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
- (4) The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).
 - o In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
 - o In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
- (5) The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
- (6) Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
 - o In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).
 - o In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
- (7) In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).
- (8) In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather,

Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.

- (9) With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).
- (10) We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

B. The Heart of Biblical Manhood

- **Piper's Definition:** "At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways to appropriate to a man's differing relationships."

C. The Heart of Biblical Womanhood

- **Piper's Definition:** "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."

D. Avoiding Pitfalls:

1. Men and Women can both fall into error through wrongful behavior.
2. MEN:
 - a. Error of Tyranny – a man can rule his household in a dictatorial, uncaring way.
 - b. Error of Passivity – a man can fail to take initiative in the family.
3. WOMEN:
 - a. Error of Aggressiveness – a woman can attempt to domineer or usurp the authority of her husband.
 - b. Error of Laziness – a woman can become entirely passive, failing to contribute anything to the decision making process, failing to help her husband achieve goals.
4. **Grudem**, "Husbands should aim for loving, considerate, thoughtful leadership in their families. Wives should aim for active, intelligent, joyful submission to their husbands' authority."
5. **Elisabeth Elliot** explains what is at the heart of this discussion, "true liberation comes with humble submission to God's original design."