

# Embracing Femininity

Building a Marriage--part 6

November 22, 2015

## **DAY 1: Gendered at conception**

*Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

1. Western culture is as confused about gender as it can be. This has created greater and greater confusion and needless heartache for more and more people.
  
2. In the creation of man and woman, God is clear. We are made in His image, which is far different than any other creature, and we are gendered. Gender is not just seen in our body parts or sexual parts. Every human being either has XX or XY chromosomes in coursing in every cell in their DNA. Additionally, our hearts are also gendered.
  
3. Putting together man as made in the image of God, and gendered, masculinity and femininity have something to do with:
  - a. How men and women relate in human community,
  - b. How they relate by the Spirit's power in ways that correspond to how the Father and Son relate in divine community.
  
- "When we know God well enough to value nothing greater than our opportunity to enjoy Him and reveal Him to others by the way we relate, we will then become more and more alive as masculine men and feminine women."*
  
4. Our gendered selves are most *alive, seen, and felt* when we relate in a way that:
  - a. Is other-centered.
  - b. Reflects something of the wonder of Jesus relates to us
  
5. A woman's inner beauty is most *alive, seen and felt* when she relates in a way that:
  - a. Is other-centered,
  - b. Reflects something of the wonder of Jesus to those around her.
  
6. What's most intriguing to you from today's devotional?

## Day 2: A woman's inner beauty

1 Peter 3:3-5 Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful.

1. Paul talks about two kinds of beauty. What are they?
  
2. Beauty has the effect of drawing someone to her. I am not referring to sex appeal, competence, or a winsome personality. As Peter says, there is a beauty that is *inward*, that finds expression outwardly, in relationship.
  
3. Outward beauty fades over time, but Peter says this inner beauty is "unfading."
  
4. He describes two important components of this inner beauty.
  - a. Gentle spirit. What do you think a "gentle spirit" is? Why is this something that radiates from a woman of inner beauty? Do you know someone like this?
  
  - b. A quiet spirit. Peter is not talking about a quiet *person*. He is talking about something in her heart that is "quiet." What do you think Peter is describing? What radiates from a woman of inner beauty? Do you know someone like this?
  
5. The opposites of these two qualities is seen these two verses:

*Proverbs 21:9 It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a contentious woman. <sup>19</sup> It is better to live in a desert land than with a contentious and fretful woman.*
  
6. How do these opposites of inner beauty highlight a *gentle* and *quiet spirit*?
  
7. A woman's inner beauty is most clearly a reflection of how Jesus invites us into relationship with Him, and the effects He desires to have on us.

*Matthew 11:28 Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."*
  
8. What strikes you most from today's devotional?

### DAY 3: Toward understanding the essence of femininity

Genesis 1:26-27 *Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us" .... So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male ("zakar") and **female** ("**neqebah**") he created them. (NLT)*

1. Next week we'll look at what is maleness.
2. When God said He made them male and *female*, the Hebrew word is "neqebah."
3. The word literally means "punctured or bored through." It refers to something that has been opened and can now be entered.
4. What do we learn about femininity? Is God wanting us to think of the way He designed a woman's body? In sex, the most physically intimate act, the woman presents her body, opened by God, capable of being entered by a man's body.
5. The meeting is productive (children) and pleasurable (deepening of the marriage relationship).
6. Is the physical shape of a woman's body a kind of parable, or picture, of the spiritual shape of a woman's soul. Could femininity have something to do with a woman who is *relationally* opened to receive?
7. What does this look like relationally? She is open to receive others who come to her.... She warmly and pleasurably surrounds those whom she receives. She invites movement toward her and embraces the movement she receives.
8. What does the opposite of femininity look like?  
*Genesis 3:16 To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your **desire** shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."*
9. The word "desire" means the desire to control. It is the opposite of open.
10. *"Relational* femininity is a way of relating that both invites life-giving connection from another and nourishes life-giving relating in another.
11. Here is another picture of a woman's inner beauty. What strikes you from today's study?

## DAY 4: Understanding submission

*Genesis 1:26* Then God said, "Let us make man in our image (*tselem*), after our likeness (*demut*)-

1. God is a thoroughly relational God.

a. The Trinity (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) give to one another and receive from one another, **always moving toward** the others to give and **always remaining open** to receive.

b. God Himself is our model of masculine loving movement and feminine loving responsiveness.

*Ephesians 5:21* ... submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

2. Both husbands and wives are called upon to submit to one another. (v. 21)

a. Husbands are called upon to submit to God's role as **servant-leader** in behalf of his wife. (We'll study this next week).

b. Wives are called upon to submit to God's role as **strong-helper** in behalf of her husband (v. 22).

*Genesis 2:20* 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** (*Ezer*) **fit** (*Kenegdo*) for him.

3. The Hebrew word for "helper" is "Ezer." This word is most used of God! The second son of Moses was named, "Eliezer," meaning, "God is my helper." It is the same root word, "ezer."

4. The Greek word is "boethos" which means "help provided by someone strong."

*Genesis 2:20* 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** (*Ezer*) **fit** (*Kenegdo*) for him.

5. When God made Eve, the strong-helper ("ezer") was "fit" ("kenegdo") for Adam.

a. This word means someone who corresponds to another, someone uniquely designed to come alongside another as a companion--neither behind as a follower nor beneath as an inferior.

b. Western culture has made "submission" one of the most denigrated terms, but biblically, both husbands and wives are considered equals in value and importance, but with different and corresponding relational roles. These roles accentuate the opposites' strengths.

## **DAY 5: An illustration of submission**

*1 Peter 3:1 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives—<sup>2</sup> when they see your respectful and pure conduct.<sup>3</sup> Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing—<sup>4</sup> but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.*

*<sup>5</sup> For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their husbands,<sup>6</sup> as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.*

1. Let's look at vv. 5-6.

a. "the holy women who hoped in God" - their ultimate well-being depended on God, not their husband, as well as their deepest affections was toward God, not their husband.

b. "submitting" is illustrated by Sarah.

c. "...calling him 'lord'" is a term of respect, not worship.

2. Peter begins this passage with the word, "likewise," in v. 1. He will also use "likewise" in the next verse (v. 7) when he talks about masculinity. The "likewise" refers back to the previous passage, where Christ submitted Himself to God in the lead up to the crucifixion, and the crucifixion itself.

What is the "likewise?" It is to reveal something of the Father's heart and holiness.

3. Ask God to help you discern what you can do and say that most clearly reveals something beautiful about God that your husband needs to see, with the prayer that God will use your submission to further His will in your husband's life. Don't be guided by what you most want your husband to do, or by what you most fear he might do, but rather by your openness to God to reveal what most represents the holy God of love.

4. Submission is communicated more by attitude than action.

"Gentle" spirit = "praus," used to describe a once-wild horse that had been tamed, and came to mean, "strength under control." What does that look like?

A woman with a gentle spirit:

- Relies on her inner strength to determine her actions, not her emotions that are triggered by how others treat her.
- Knows her husband has no power to destroy her beautiful soul, her feminine center.
- Does not live in mortal fear of her husband. Fear no longer requires her to protect her soul.
- Is free to honor a higher good, to respect her husband as a fellow image-bearer, and to invite him by her gentle attitude to be the man he was created to be.

5. What strikes you most from today's devotional?