

What does the Bible Say about Gender?

Our Biblical Worldview—part 7

October 18, 2020

DAY 1: What does it mean to be gendered?

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

1. Two great and universal truths are derived from his passage about gender.

a. We have equal value before God.

Both genders are made in the image of God and thereby are granted, and inherently have, great and equal value with one another. (This truth should settle forever any issues of whether the bible is misogynistic and paternalistic. All verses that one *assumes* are paternalistic and misogynistic must take into account this riveting and universal truth).

b. We have a very different make-up.

Our gender corresponds one to another, and this is by design. The obvious difference in this passage is the creating of children, but as we'll see, gender goes far beyond the sexual and physiological realms. In the same way that our human nature is made in the image of God, which is unchangeable, so our gender is also woven into the very fabric of our human nature. *We are* male or female.

2. In our day there is growing confusion about gender. There is a secular movement of thinking that seeks to minimize or obliterate any differences between genders. In this secular way of thinking, gender is something that one feels or identifies as.

3. This is like leaving a great sailing ship on the high seas without sails and a rudder. It will be carried along wherever the current wishes, adrift on the open seas. The unintended consequences of this thinking is to create greater confusion for young people who struggle with their gender and confusing feelings of their identity.

4. Where we will see and feel our gender the most? Our uniquely gendered style of relating will be most clearly visible and felt by others through the way we interact with others when it reflects something wonderful about the relational nature of our God.

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

DAY 2: What our fallen world teaches us about the female gender.

1. After the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, the effects that followed on our world were significant. We no longer lived in an idyllic world. The perfect world became the fallen world. The world in which we live contains fallen earthly nature and fallen human nature. The fallen earthly nature includes things like hurricanes, tsunamis and disease. The fallen human nature includes a sin nature working inside of every human being.

2. We learn some crucial factors about gender following Adam and Eve's sin. Though all men and women live in the same fallen world, the fallen world affects men and women differently.

God tells women they will all experience their deepest pain in *relationships*.

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."

3. The first part of this verse sounds like God is only talking about the pain of giving birth to children, said two different ways.

4. But the Hebrew verbiage tells us one kind of pain. The other phrase illustrates that pain!

5. There are times when parenting your children (at any age) will break your heart. Sometimes, the emotional and relational pain you will feel will remind you of this truth: You gave someone life at great and extended pains to yourself.

6. The second kind of pain is with regards to your husband.

"Your desire shall be for your husband..." sounds like a lovely thing, but the Hebrew word used here, "desire" means the "desire to control." Every woman will find within her a strong urge to "get him to do what he ought to do." The last phrase of verse sixteen simply means that her efforts to "get him to do what he ought to do" won't work. In fact, they will backfire.

7. Every woman will experience two kinds of deepest pain:

a. Relational. "My deepest pain is relational."

b. Loss of control. "I cannot get my world to cooperate with what I want done."

8. Both of these pains are true for *every* woman whether or not she is married or has children.

9. Why is this important? The fallen world is meant to drive every woman to God, to find in Him that which her soul most longs, the unfathomable riches of the pure love of God for her. Thus...

(1) Instead of manipulating relationships to avoid pain, she can give out of the abundance of God's love to those relationships in spite of relational pain.

(2) Instead of manipulating her world to fill her soul, she enters her world, fallen as it is, to give of her inner beauty of an image-bearing woman to add beauty to her relationships.

10. What strikes you about today's devotional?

DAY 3: What our fallen world teaches us about the masculine gender.

1. The effects of the fall of man have great and profound effects on the fallen world in which men find themselves. It is also reflected in the masculine fallen human nature.

Genesis 3:17 And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

Genesis 3:18 ... thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

2. This is not just bad news for farmers and gardeners.

3. God is telling Adam and every male that lives that the world will be working against him. He can expect problems, difficulties, the repetition of dilemmas that continue to evade solutions, etc.

4. If you've tended to a garden you know what this means. No matter how many times you weed a garden, weeds keep growing. No matter how many times you spray for bugs, bugs keep eating your plants. No matter how much you spray for disease, you will always fight plant disease.

5. The effect on a man in living in this kind of world are three. A sense of:

a. Frustration: "Why can't I fix this?"

b. Failure: "Am I ever going to get this right?"

c. Futility. "Why not just give up?"

6. Our redeemer God goes to work! God uses the fallen world to frustrate men's attempts to fill their soul through their work, their efforts, their achievements and successes. None of those things can fill the masculine soul. (This is the point of the book of Ecclesiastes!)

7. In fact, the pursuit of those things as our highest priority will eventually have devastating effects on those around us, those we love and eventually on ourselves.

8. Whereas a woman's deepest wound are relational...

A man's deepest wounds are related to *failure*.

9. What is your biggest take away from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Gender differences are most seen in relationship. Feminine beauty.

1. What does femininity mean? How is it seen? It begins inside a woman, in her soul, and shines brightest in other-centered relationships. The bible describes this as a woman's inner beauty.

*1 Peter 3:3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. ⁴ Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a **gentle** and **quiet spirit**, which is of great worth in God's sight.*

2. To understand the two qualities of a gentle spirit and a quiet spirit we must first notice that Peter is NOT talking about a woman who is "gentle and quiet" in the sense of not saying much, or talking softly. Notice that Peter is talking about two different kinds of "*spirits*" or **attitudes** that are alive in the feminine heart when she is relating in an other-centered way.

3. "**Gentle**" spirit = "praus," used to describe a stallion that had been tamed, and came to mean, "Strength under control." Peter describes this quality has having the power of inner beauty.

What does that look like? Here are some examples of a "gentle spirit," strength under control.

- She is not triggered by how others treat her. She does not react emotionally when tempted to do so. Instead she relies on her inner strength to determine her responses, words, attitudes and actions. She doesn't give someone who crosses her "a piece of her mind."
- She is emotionally secure. She has a conviction that no one, including her husband has the power to destroy her beautiful soul, her feminine center.
- She does not live in relational fear, especially with her husband. Fear no longer requires her to protect her soul by putting herself "first" before someone else.
- She has the inner beauty to relate to people and her husband "where they are." She will honor a higher good than her own well-being, to respect her husband as a fellow image-bearer, and invites him by her gentle attitude to be the man he was created to be.

4. What strikes you about a "gentle spirit?"

5. "**Quiet**" *spirit* = The Greek word means "calm in a crisis." What does that look like? Here are some examples of "calm in a crisis."

- She has no controlling urge to "get even" or blast away at someone.
- Because she is anchored in God, she is free to trust God with the worst things in life.
- She has a ruling passion to **invite the best from** others by offering her best to others, even when difficulties appear to be at a crisis level!

6. What strikes you about a "quiet spirit?"

7. What is your biggest take away from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Gender differences are most seen in relationship. Masculinity.

1. We gain insight into what it means to be masculine by taking truth from how God says a husband is to relate to his wife. (We also gain insight into the feminine soul).

1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

2. What do you think Peter means when he says that a wife is the “weaker vessel”?

3. “*Weaker*” does not mean weaker physically, rationally, volitionally, spiritually or sexually. We gain some understanding as to what Peter means by how husbands are to relate to the woman—“in an **understanding** way” and by **showing honor**. “Weaker” describes something of the woman’s heart that is “easily chipped,” like a China tea cup. (The opposite of manhood is to be “a bull in a china shop!”)

4. “*Heirs with you of the grace of life*” means equality of gender. Both man and woman have equal value. This is another verse blowing a hole in the lie that the bible is paternalistic and misogynistic.

5. “*Live...in an understanding way...*”

The Greek word translated “understanding” has greater meaning to it than just our English word “understanding.” The Greek word means both “understanding” and “consideration.” Here are some ways that would more accurately translate that word.

- a. Take into consideration her nature, and relate to her in a way that reflects that understanding.
- b. Be considerate of her. Seek to understand her more than you already do.

6. “*Showing honor*”

Masculinity in relationship is showing honor to another. To show honor is to show a woman her value.

7. What strikes you about masculinity in relationship with others?

(For a fuller explanation about gender roles, see last week’s devotions on marriage).