

Gender

The gods We Imagine--part 3

October 11, 2026

DAY 1: Gendered at conception

1. There are few things more confusing to the secular world than gender. Over the last forty years these are some of the effects of secular thought on gender:

- Minimizing gender differences; maximizing sameness
- Rise of feminism, disparaging masculinity,
- Rise of transgender, shading of womanhood
- Erasing gender differences
- Ignoring science—DNA, XX, XY
- Minimizing gender down to identity and sexuality

2. As to marriage, there are two predominant strains of thought with which we are bombarded:

- Masculinity is boyish at best, and toxic at worst.
- Because there is virtually no difference between male and female, your husband is supposed to be your best friend. He is supposed to know how you feel, know what you're thinking, know what you want to do, etc. It is assumed that he has the SAME RELATIONAL ANTENNAE as your girl best friend does.

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

3. In spite of what secular mankind thinks, 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 every cell in their DNA. Additionally, our **hearts are** also gendered.

4. Our gendered selves are most *alive, seen, and felt* when we relate in a way that:

- a. Is other-centered, and
- b. Reflects something of the wonder of how Jesus lived and relates to us.

"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." –Dr. Larry Crabb

5. What's most intriguing to you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Femininity that is alive

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 opposite of a gentle spirit and a quiet spirit is seen in this next verse.

Proverbs 21:19 It is better to live in a desert land than with a contentious and vexing woman.
6. These are the opposites of the inner beauty of a *gentle* and *quiet spirit*?

Contentious: Even when she agrees with you, it still feels like she is arguing with you

Vexing: No matter what you do and how hard you try it never seems quite good enough for her.
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: 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** ("**negebah**") he created them. (NLT)*

1. When God said He made them *female*, the Hebrew word is "**negebah**." The word literally means "punctured or bored through." It refers to something that has been opened and can now be entered.

2. A female that is most alive is a female **open to receive relational** movement for the purpose of deep relational connection and enjoyment.

3. What does this look like in relationships?

- a. She is open to receive others who come to her....
- b. She warmly and pleasurably surrounds those whom she receives.
- c. She invites movement toward her and embraces the movement she receives.
- d. There is "something" about her manner and attitude that draws you to her.

4. What does the opposite of femininity look like?

5. The opposite female is more turned in toward herself, relationally guarded, and is first geared toward her own relational needs, and only secondarily, others.

*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."*

6. The word "**desire**" means the desire to control. It is the opposite of open. Control and deep connection are mutually exclusive.

7. *Relational* femininity is a way of relating that both invites life-giving connection from another and nourishes life-giving relating in another.

8. Think of a woman that exhibits genuine, relational, gentle spirit, quiet spirit kind of relating. What is it like to be in relationship with her?

9. Think of a woman that is closed, guarded, ready to correct you. Is she vexing? Contentious? Is it easy to feel close to her? What is it like to be in relationship with her?

DAY 4: What is masculinity?

1. We are made in the image of God and gendered. Our gender isn't just about body parts. We have gendered hearts. This is true of us, whether or not we feel that way.

1 Kings 2:2 ... "Be strong and show yourself a man."

2. These were King David's deathbed words to his son Solomon who was about to become king. David equates manhood with a particular kind of strength.

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

3. The Hebrew word for "male" is "**zakar**," which means to leave a mark or make an impact.

The word was used of an assistant whose job was to remind the king of what was important. The word came to mean, someone who **remembers** what's important and then **moves** to do something important.

4. The Greek word used for "man" in the Greek translation of Genesis 1:27 is "arsen," which means to **lift** or **carry**. It came to mean someone who **moves strongly to make a difference**.

5. Putting our verses together melds into something like this: A man remembers he bears God's image and is called to move with strength toward people and responsibilities to make an impact.

Reflecting how God relates to people

6. The great picture of feminine relating is reflecting the *invitational* love of Jesus (Matt. 11:28).

7. Masculinity is also a reflection of how God relates to us. In other words, we have the opportunity to give people an "audio-visual" of how God thinks about them, cares about them, and is moving toward them. Masculinity reflects God's *incarnational* and *sacrificial* love.

*Exodus 2:23 During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. ²⁴ God **heard** their groaning and he **remembered** his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. ²⁵ So God **looked on** the Israelites and was **concerned** about them. (He knew it was **time to act**).*

8. Real masculinity is not passive. A masculine man:

a. *Hears* the cry of others:

b. *Remembers* the God he is called to reveal.

c. *Looks* into another's distress and is moved, either emotionally or volitionally to care.

d. *Moves* into another's need in order to reveal God's holy heart of love.

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: What derails our masculinity? Fear.

1. After Adam and Eve's sin, the world changes dramatically. Theologians call this, "the Fall." These verses from Genesis depict the new world every man must face.

Genesis 3:17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

2. Have you ever weeded a garden or a lawn? If so, how long did it take for the weeds to "grow back?" What did you have to do *again*? And again? And again? And again? You get the idea...

3. Genesis 3 is not just bad news for farmers. Every man is going to experience frustration, and a sense of both failure and futility.

4. The internal question running through the masculine heart will become: "Do I have what it takes to move toward my relationships and responsibilities with love and courage?" Over time, that question enlarges to, "Does my life really matter to anyone?"

5. After experiencing frustration, failure, and futility a man is tempted in several directions:

a. "Does my life make any difference? What's the use?"

b. "I'm tired of feeling like a failure. I'll do something that will make me feel better, even if it's wrong."

6. When I search through my doubt and face the fear that my failure to move like a man, something unexpected happens. I discover my center as a Christian man. I discover my desire (hidden in the heart) to move toward others the way God moved toward me!

7. The opportunity to know God, whether when things are going well or not, enables me to move into other people's lives the way God has moved into mine. Jesus calls that *life*.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?