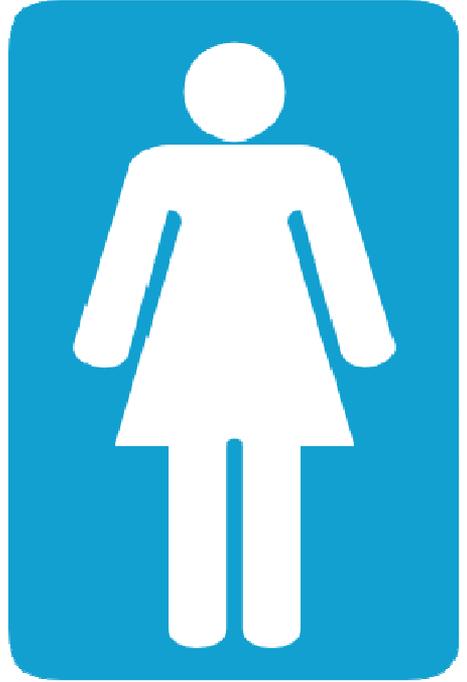
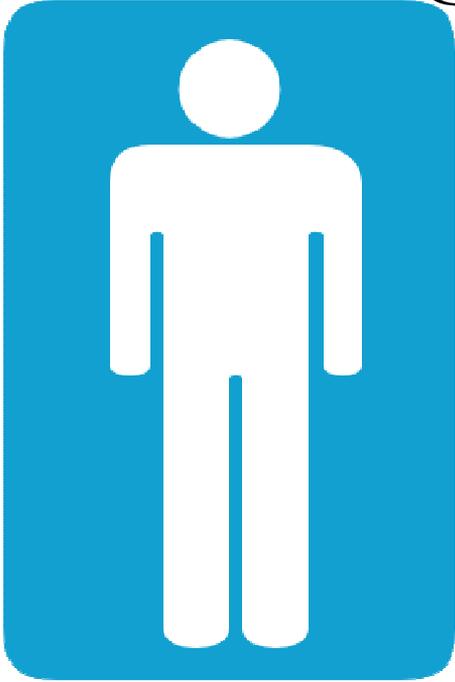


straight talk



on
gender

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Introduction

Welcome to this new small group series called, *Straight Talk on Gender*. I'm glad you're here.

And I'm grateful for you. Ever since Louie became our lead pastor over thirty-five years ago, small groups have been a vital part of our church. Creating safe places where people can grow into whole-hearted followers of Jesus requires devoted people like you. I thank God for all the ways he's using you to help our church family love God and others.

At our last small groups event we talked about gender. How do we define masculinity and femininity? Are there significant differences beyond anatomy? I know a man who had a sex change. If you talked with him you'd never realize he was a man. Did surgery make him into a woman? No. He is and always will be a man. But how do we know that? What does the Bible have to say about all this?

Understanding what it means to be a man and woman in our day is important. Our culture is in crisis. Television and other forms of media bombard us with illicit sex, wanting us to believe the lie that that's where life is found. Our culture is trying to redefine marriage and family, seeking to normalize the adoption of children into same-sex households.

Moreover, it's been said that in this generation we're seeing the "demise of guys," the failure of boys to advance into manhood. Boyhood is extending into the late twenties. Why? The average teenager watches fifty pornographic video clips a week. Pornography is the fastest growing industry of our time. Young men are seeking their sexual intimacy in the secrecy of their bedrooms through pictures and videos where there's zero risk of failure or rejection. Furthermore, the average video game user is thirty-five years old. Guys seek impact by gaming where there's no risk of experiencing real pain. Experiencing and learning to navigate through rejection, failure and pain is required for maturity. By the age of twenty-one the average male will have played ten thousand video games. Consequently, we are seeing a steady increase in male social immaturity and awkwardness, in both the physical and social realms. Young men don't know how to relate in the real world. Consequently, guys are not pursuing girls; they remain in a state of prolonged adolescence, fearful of initiating relationships where there are real risks - failure or rejection. And many young women are becoming aggressive. In their frustration over the passivity of men, they either become the pursuer, often by offering sex, or they give up hope of ever having a marriage and family and live, instead, for their careers.

While men are retreating from marriage in vast numbers women should also ask themselves what role they've played to bring about this cultural phenomenon. Suzan Venker author of three books on the American family and its intersection with pop culture, has spent thirteen years examining social agendas as they pertain to sex, parenting, and gender roles. Venker writes:

I've spoken with hundreds, if not thousands, of men and women. And in doing so, I've accidentally stumbled upon a subculture of men who've told me, in no uncertain terms, that they're never getting married. When I ask them why, the answer is always the same.

Women aren't women anymore.

In a nutshell, women are angry. They're also defensive, though often unknowingly. That's because they've been raised to think of men as the enemy...It is precisely this dynamic – women good/men bad – that has destroyed the relationship between the sexes. Yet somehow, men are still to blame when love goes awry. Heck, men have been to blame since feminists first took to the streets in the 1970s.

Contrary to what feminists like Hanna Rosin, author of The End of Men, say, the so-called rise of women has not threatened men. It has pissed them off...Men want to love women, not compete with them. They want to provide for and protect their families – it's in their DNA. But modern women won't let them."

What can we do? The battle of the sexes rages. What's at the root of the problem? Our culture is losing a vision for what it means to be male and female.

Imagine you were given a machine you never saw before and you didn't understand its purpose or how it worked. What would you do? You'd either come up with your own ideas or you'd consult the one who designed it. You'd go to the owner's manual for help.

We are far more than machines. We're marvelously created in the image of God and in so creating us God made us male and female. Our Father created our gender with a specific design in mind. We can't live out that design if we don't understand it or if we allow our culture to define it. So in this series we begin by exploring God's original design for masculinity and femininity in Section One—God's Original Design. There are two sessions in this section: one for understanding masculinity and one for understanding femininity.

In Section Two—Marred Design—we'll examine the effects the fall has had on gender. Again, there are two sessions to discuss one gender in each session.

And in Section Three—Restored Design—we'll take two sessions to look at what it takes to become the men and women God intends us to be.

Your group can either set aside six consecutive group nights to go through the booklet or you can study one session at a time over a longer period of time. Whatever you choose to do, read through the session you're studying together with your entire group. At the end of the reading you'll find two questions for large group discussion. Don't take too much time on these questions. Allow time for men to get together in one room and women to get together in another room to separately discuss the questions at the end of each session.

This series will stimulate lively thought and discussion. Most of all, I believe God will use it to help all of us take our next steps toward becoming the men and women he intended us to be.

Pursuing God together!

Gary & Lisa



Part One
“God’s Original Design”



1 God's Original Design for Men



A masculine man is one who initiates with strength and tenderness in order to pass on life to others for the glory of God.

Men and women are equally created in the image of God:

“Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings (or man; Hebrew reads *adam*) in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground. So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.’” (Gen 1:26-27, NLT)

Being in God’s image means man is God’s vice-regent/representative on earth. Kings of the ancient Near East were expected to be devoted to the welfare of their subjects, especially the poorest and weakest members of society (Ps 72:12-14). Mankind (male and female) is commissioned to rule nature as benevolent kings and queens in a dependent, cooperative relationship with God, acting as his representatives over his creation. Because mankind is created in God’s image, his/her life is sacred. Any assault against a human being is an affront to the creator.

God rules heaven and earth. Similarly, he gives men and women authority to rule over the earth and to, “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” (Gen 1:28). Ruling God’s creation together and fruitfulness through a one man and one woman covenant marriage relationship are essential aspects of God’s purpose and design for male and female.

Of all the creatures God made, the Genesis narrative tells us that God only spoke to mankind. Being created in God’s image means men and women are similar to God in that they are personal beings who are relational (meant for community), rational (thinking), volitional (having a will and making choices), and emotional (feeling). Only mankind has the capacity to know and worship God who is the center of their life and purpose.

How do men uniquely reveal God's image?

The first thing God reveals about himself is that he is in motion (Gen 1:1-2). The earth was formless and empty. Darkness covered the deep. God hovers, speaks and creates order and beauty from chaos. Seven times God said, "It was good" (once, "It was very good"). God enjoys his creation like a master craftsman steps back and enjoys the excellence of his work.

Genesis 2:15 says that after creating Adam, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Work is the first thing God gives Adam to do. Adam is designed to take initiative. And, similar to God, Adam is to rule and create order and beauty by working the garden.

Hardwired for work

The Hebrew word for "work" means "to cultivate the soil." The same word in Hebrew is used in priestly work (Num 3:7-8; 4:23-24). Work is both good and intrinsic to human life. Men are hardwired for work, to subdue, to accomplish something important.

Whatever "garden" a man works in (plumber, pastor, partner or parent), he's called by God to work it and cultivate it for the glory of God and the good of others.

Every man wants to know that who he is and what he does has an impact that's significant. Just as God savored his creative work by calling it "good," Adam also feels the thrill of making an impact through working the garden (vocational impact). Dr. Dan B. Allender once said that men like impact. Therefore, they love to build things, kill things and fix things.

Not all men like hunting or building furniture. Some like painting or drawing a picture, winning the chess game or playing a sport. And this isn't to say women don't like these things. Women enjoy making an impact through things like art, work or sports. They want to make a difference that is significant. But if put in a balance, this drive to engage with their world and make a significant impact defines a man more than it defines a woman (we'll get to femininity in the next section).

Men want to know they're powerful. They want to know they have what it takes to make a difference. One word that gets to the desire of a man's heart is *adequacy* because men were originally designed to move into their world with creative and courageous strength in order to work it for the glory of God.

Called to Keep

Adam was called to work the Garden of Eden and he was called to take care of it or keep it. The Hebrew word "keep" means "to guard" and "protect" what God has placed under his care. This word is sometimes used in the Old Testament of priests,

shepherds or government officials, especially for guarding the tabernacle from intruders (Num 1:53; 3:7-8). The Lord uses the word to describe himself: "He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps 121:3-4, ESV).

It is important to note that this charge to work and to keep was given to Adam before Eve was created. God created man first (Gen 2:7) and put him in the garden to work it and to guard it (2:15). The point? Adam was given this charge by God and therefore bears the primary responsibility for the welfare of the garden. John Piper has well said that, "Masculinity" therefore, "is a God-given trust for the good of all his creatures, not a right for men to exercise for their own self-exaltation or ego satisfaction."

All men, therefore, bear the primary responsibility for the welfare of their "garden" or household. A man is not being a man when he passively slumbers and sleeps in front of the TV or surfs the Internet while his household is in chaos. Similar to God, a man is to courageously and lovingly move into the chaos and darkness for the good of all.

A lady at our church talked about how her husband was growing. "I've prayed for so long," she said, "that he would step into our family and lead. So much weight is coming off my shoulders now that he is involved!" That's a man who's living out his God-given design.

God-dependent

"And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will certainly die.'" (Gen 2:16-17)

God's extravagant generosity is evident—"You are free to eat from any tree." But the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil rules out any notion of human moral autonomy. Mankind is designed to be in an intimate, God-dependent relationship of obedience. This relationship with God was intended to be the center of man's life and the source of his strength. Relationship is the center of life!

Men are hardwired for relationship

Adam experienced the thrill of loving God and making an impact as he worked and kept the garden. Though God had said his creation was very good, he saw something that was not good (a shocking statement in the text, showing emphasis/vital importance). "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'" (Gen 2:18).

God told Adam to name the animals (another form of creative movement/impact). By doing this, God made him aware of a latent longing within his heart that he had not been aware of (v. 19-20). As Adam named the animals, he came to realize nothing corresponded to his soul and body. Adam became aware of his alienation, loneliness. He longed for a mate. The help Adam desired was not just for assistance in his daily work or in the procreation of children, though these aspects are likely included, but for the mutual support of intimate companionship.

God put Adam to sleep. Adam awoke and saw Eve, who had been created from his own rib. The Hebrew text is unmistakable. In stark contrast to the animals, Adam immediately experiences a deep, soul-stirring bond with Eve. With sheer delight he speaks poetry—“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man” (Gen 2:23).

Marriage changes a man’s priorities

For this reason [because ‘she is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh...for she was taken out of man’] “a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24).

Before marriage, a man’s highest loyalty, next to God, is to honor his parents. Now he is one flesh with his wife. The man must therefore leave his parents and, in effect, “stick” to his wife (bonded like glue). This phrase suggests both passion and permanence in marriage because, since creation, this relationship is meant to depict the type of relationship Christ and his church have together (Eph 5:31-32). He must have no higher priorities in his relationships.

Bodies image souls

Genesis 1:27 says, “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” The Hebrew words for male and female actually refer to the male and female genitals. The word for male – *zakar* “Be sharp” or “pointed.” The word for female- *nequbah* “bore,” “pierce” or “opening.”

God is not a gendered being but the text is saying that each gender reveals something unique about God. Together they reveal God more fully. The text also seems to be saying that the male and female bodies are built in such a way as to be a “picture” or a metaphor for the male and female souls. Just as a male or “the pointed one” is physically designed to be strong and erect in order to penetrate his wife to pour in life, a man’s soul is designed to be strong in order to lovingly pour in life to others through his good words and deeds. And metaphorically speaking, just as a woman opens herself to receive and nurture that life, a woman’s soul is designed to receive and nurture life and relationships whether or not she ever bears literal children (more will be said on that subject in the next session). Masculinity can, in part, be defined as having the power to pass on life to another.

God is strong and loving—“One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: ‘that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord, are loving’” (Ps 62:11-12, NIV 1984). Men most reveal the strength of God; women, the mercy/love of God. While both genders have strength and love, if put in a balance, men are more defined by strength and adequacy. Women must have strength but they are most defined by mercy and love. For example, throughout the Bible God reveals himself as a strong warrior who engages with life and fights for the salvation of his dearly loved people—“Who is this king of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle” (Ps 24:8). That’s masculinity. He’s a strong and courageous lover.

Adam’s poetic, soul-stirring response to Eve shows he was most alive as a man through his involvement with her (Gen 2:23). Men are hardwired for so much more than work. Like God, we are essentially relational beings. We want to know the soul-stirring joy of significantly impacting another person for the glory of God and for the good of those we influence, particularly our wives (relational impact). Next to knowing and loving God, nothing stirs a man more deeply than knowing his life impacts others for good. He most longs to hear someone say something like—“I walk closer to God because of your strong and loving involvement in my life.” This is the essence of *servant leadership*.

If you’re single, offering spiritual leadership that provides for and protects the women within the sphere of your influence allows you to enjoy such an impact. For example, would women in your ministry area say they know you look out for them, that you would stand up for and defend them if someone sought to hurt them? Would they say you lead them spiritually by word and example? Jesus never married yet he knew the soul-satisfying joy of passing on life to others. After speaking into the heart of the Samaritan woman, Jesus said to his disciples, “I have food to eat [inner nourishment/joy] that you know nothing about” (John 4:32). And Jesus’ beloved disciple John wrote, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth” (3 John 4).

Men are designed and called to be strong, servant leaders who are motivated by the love of God to cherish and protect their wives who long to feel delighted in, just as Eve felt Adam’s delight. Men need to serve others with a balance of strength and love. Sometimes they may need to lead with love; other situations may require they lead more with strength but such strength is always with love. If men are only strong, to use a sexual metaphor, they are rapists. If they are only “loving,” they are impotent. Authentic masculinity requires dependence on the Holy Spirit to be men who serve others with a proper balance of strength and love.

At core, masculinity means movement. It means pouring “life” into others. Good men, strong and loving men, take the initiative to move into life and relationships with strength and tenderness for the glory of God and the good of others.



Discuss...

1

Questions for this session | God's Original Design for Men

Large Group Discussion

1. What is most helpful and clarifying to you from this chapter on masculinity?
2. In what ways might the ideas presented in this chapter challenge your thinking about masculinity?

For Men Only

1. What emotions and/or thoughts stir in you as you read that men are designed to provide servant leadership for the glory of God and the good of others?
2. In what ways should a man's relationship with God impact his sense of adequacy, enabling him to take the initiative to humbly lead and serve his household and other people within his sphere of influence? In what ways are you currently providing this kind of leadership for your wife, children and/or others? In what ways might they long for more of this kind of leadership from you?
3. Name some different ways a man can initiate servant leadership? For example, could praying for and/or genuinely listening to his wife's struggles be a form of initiative? Name one way you have initiated servant leadership lately?
4. How and why is the support of godly men important to helping men be the best they can be? Are you currently involved with other men for this purpose? Please explain.

For Women Only

1. Where have you experienced the godly leadership of men? How has this impacted your life?
2. Where do you long for more godly leadership from men around you? How would this kind of strength and tender involvement be a blessing in your life?
3. How do you pray for the men in your life?

2 God's Original Design for Women

A feminine woman is one who has an inner softness and confidence that invites, nurtures and grows relationships for the glory of God.

Introduction

The first thing the Bible tells us about women is that they are created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Like Adam, Eve is God's vice-regent/representative on earth.

Because both women and men are created in God's image, it is clear they are of equal value. It also means men and women are similar to God in that they are personal beings who are relational (meant for community), rational (thinking), volitional (having a will and making choices) and emotional (feeling). Out of all the creatures he made, God spoke only to Adam and Eve in the creation narrative (Gen 1:28-29). Only mankind has the capacity to speak with, personally know and worship God who is the center of their life and purpose for living.

Together, men and women reflect a clearer picture of their creator than either can alone. God uses both male and female imagery when he speaks about himself to his people as "the Rock who fathered you" and the "God who gave you birth" (Deut 32:18). In Isaiah 66:12-13 God pictures himself as a nursing mother with a child on her knees as he talks about comforting his people and causing them to flourish. Then later in the same chapter he speaks of himself as a warrior coming with a sword to execute judgment upon his foes.

Both men and women reflect something about God that no other creature can reflect. In many ways, men and women are similar, but they are different in some important ways. Those differences reflect something unique about the God who created them. In the last session we saw how men uniquely reveal God's image; in this session we will observe how women uniquely reveal God's image.

Women reflect the nurturing life-giver

While men more reflect the strong yet loving provider-protector side of God, women primarily reflect the warm, nurturing and compassionate side of God. These differences, of course, are not all-or-nothing. Men are to be compassionate and women must have strength in order to be godly. As we said in the last session, *strength* that is rooted in love most characterizes a man. But the Hebrew word for *compassion* is derived from the word for *womb*. The bodies of women are made to

compassionately receive, nurture and give life in a way that men cannot. Women alone have a womb that is uniquely suited to warmly nurture and bring forth the fruit of relationship, of new life. *Even if a woman never bears children, her female soul is (figuratively speaking) designed to invite and nurture relationships.* Femininity is characterized by softness. A woman is a godly woman when she relates to others with a balance of softness and confidence. Her confidence is rooted in her security in God. Knowing she is loved enables her to remain warmly open toward others, vulnerably inviting them to taste and experience God's goodness through her, regardless of their response (1 Pet 3:1-6).

Women are built for relationship

The Bible tells us Eve was created for Adam. Remember, the only thing God said was "not good" about his creation was the fact that Adam was alone. In order to be complete, Adam needed a relationship with someone he could give to and receive from. Eve was the solution to the problem. Adam was designed for impact and here was a person taken from his own rib that could uniquely receive and respond to his strong and tender involvement in a way no other creature could. Further, Eve was designed to desire, receive and appreciate Adam's relational impact (provision, protection, cherishing and nourishing). Together they were designed to be fruitful and multiply by creating, nurturing and passing on life to others.

Woman is designed for relational connectedness and interdependence. Women often develop their identity by being connected to relationships such as family and friendships. The level of satisfaction in a woman's life is directly related to her ability to form and maintain meaningful relationships.

Women are designed to be co-rulers of the earth

Woman is designed to be man's partner in the creation mandate given in Genesis 1:28. Together men and women are to rule and subdue the earth.

Woman was created as man's *ezer kenegdo*. *Ezer* is the Hebrew word for "help." *Kenegdo* is Hebrew for "alongside" or "counterpart" or, most literally, "like opposite him." The same word is used 20 times in the Old Testament, most often in reference to God as the helper for one who is in desperate need (Exod 18:4; Deut 33:29; Ps 10:14; 27:9; 118:7; Isa 41:1; Hos 13:9). While *ezer* is almost always used to describe God, it is also used to describe military help, such as reinforcements, without which the battle would be lost. Male and female are "like opposite" to one another. They are like two pieces of a puzzle that fit together. They are not exactly alike nor are they randomly different. They are *designed* to create a complete whole as they fit together. Woman is God's gift to man to fill a desperate need. Adam could not accomplish his purpose in life without woman. This of course involves the "be fruitful and multiply" mandate, but it extends to God's call for Adam and Eve to subdue and rule the earth together.

Along with Adam, woman is given responsibility, authority and capability as a co-ruler and steward of the earth. Alongside man, woman is able and gifted to help develop and care for all creation. Women are equally called to contribute to science, art, literature, education, agriculture, business, medicine and all other parts of creation. Nothing on earth is as good as it could be without the input and contribution of femininity. Over the course of history, men (*generally speaking*) have often been the adventurers, explorers, conquerors and warriors—revealing their masculine design—while women have contributed by bringing civilization wisdom, beauty and compassion that supports, nurtures and grows life and relationships.

The dance of the Trinity—headship and submission

The following section is adapted from chapter 6 in *The Meaning of Marriage* by Timothy and Kathy Keller

In Philippians 2:5-11, we have one of the earliest hymns to Jesus sung by the church. It celebrates Jesus' equality with God, who, at the same time, emptied himself of his glory and took on the role of a servant. Jesus took on the most submissive role possible. He became a servant who died in his master's service. Jesus did this willingly, gladly, for his father. Jesus did not view this as an assault on his dignity or his divinity. This was Jesus' role in the great dance of the Trinity. The Son defers to his Father, taking the subordinate role. The Father accepts the gift, but then exalts the Son to the highest place. Each person wants to please the other; each wants to honor and exalt the other. We are differently gendered to reflect the selfless life we see in the Trinity. Male and female are designed to reflect the dance through loving, self-sacrificing authority and loving, courageous submission. As the Son takes the subordinate role he shows not his weakness but his greatness. This is why Paul says since creation, marriage is a great mystery that mirrors Christ and the church.

Men are called to be servant-leaders. In our culture, we think leadership means being on top or getting the perks. But in the dance of the Trinity, the greatest one is the most self-effacing, most sacrificial, most devoted to the good of the other. Jesus redefined—or, more truly, defined properly—headship and authority, thus taking the sting or sense of “power” out of it as we tend to wrongly view it:

Do you understand what I have done for you?...You call me “Teacher” and “Lord” and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master.

—John 13:12-16

Any use of power can only be done in service to others, not to please oneself. Jesus said he did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life for us.

So here's the point—both women and men get to “play the Jesus role” in marriage—Jesus in his sacrificial authority and Jesus in his sacrificial submission. By accepting and relating within our gender identities and roles, we demonstrate concepts that are so countercultural and counterintuitive that they can be offensive unless they are lived out by men and women who deeply know and depend upon God for their identity.

Some women might react to the idea of male headship. Why is the husband the head? Honestly, we don't know. Why was Jesus the one who submitted and served (Phil 2:4ff)? Why wasn't it the Father? We don't know. But we do know this—Jesus' role of submission was a sign of his greatness, not his weakness.

Since both the headship role of a husband and the submission role of a wife are *servant* roles, you can always begin to serve without waiting for permission.

Concluding thoughts on headship and submission

God commissioned Adam to “keep” or guard the garden prior to creating Eve. In so doing, Adam was given headship of the garden. This is clear from the text when woman was made from man and was brought to Adam as his helper. Also, God had Adam name her, and Adam called her *ishshah*, “woman,” because she “came out of man,” *ish*. Thus Adam's exclamation, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh! She shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man” (Gen 2:23).

In keeping with Adam's headship, God didn't explain to the woman who she was in relation to the man. God allowed Adam to define her by naming her. He names her a second time in Genesis 3:20, capturing her unique identity as a woman—“Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become *the mother of all the living*.”

Adam's headship is further seen in that God didn't choose to create both Adam and Eve from the ground. Nor did God choose to create woman first and then create man from her. Scripture is clear—while both male and female are created in the image of God and both are equal in dignity and value, the woman was created from man and for man. Adam is the physical source of Eve. And she is created for the purpose of ruling together with Adam and to be fruitful through their marriage relationship/covenant: “*For this reason* [because woman was taken out of man] a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). “One flesh” means bonded together like with glue. They become one flesh just as any natural born relative is of the same flesh. In God's original design, marriage is meant to be a one man and one woman relationship. The husband is to be a servant-leader, working and keeping his household through a

strong and tender involvement. The wife invites and supports his involvement with a softness and confidence that comes from an inner beauty and security that is rooted in knowing God.

Designed to trust

Eve was brought into a world of relational safety and security because she knew God and fully trusted Adam. She could be and give all she was and all she had without fear of rejection or loneliness. Genesis 2:25 says the man and his wife were both naked and felt no shame. There was no need for self-protection, hiding or manipulation.

Eve could live fully “open,” trusting and vulnerable sexually and personally to Adam’s leadership and protective love as he was the guardian of the garden. She was a woman at rest in her soul and able to give to her world because of her relationship with God. She was the woman described in Proverbs 31. She was secure, expressed by her softness, confidence, competence and giftedness. She was clothed with strength and dignity, which speaks of an inner security and beauty that enables her to live without fear—“She laughs with no fear of the future” (Prvb 31:25, NLT).



Discuss...

2

Questions for this session | God's Original Design for Women

Large Group Discussion

1. What is most helpful and clarifying to you from this chapter on femininity?
2. In what ways might the ideas presented in this chapter challenge your thinking about femininity?

For Men Only

1. In what ways has your wife and/or godly women been a “helper” to you?
2. What gifts and talents do you see your wife and/or other women exercise as co rulers and subduers of the earth? How can or do you encourage women to embrace their gifts and talents?
3. How does the godly and ungodly exercise of our headship directly impact/influence the way a woman exercises her submission? Give examples. Do you think your beliefs about headship encourage softness and confidence in women or hardness and fear?

For Women Only

1. How do you respond to the idea that you were designed to invite and nurture relationships? How do you see yourself doing that?
2. In what ways do you serve as a co-ruler and subduer alongside men? What gifts, talents and abilities have been given to you to help subdue and rule?
3. How do you respond to the role of submission as it is described in this chapter?

Part Two
“The Marred Design”



3 The Fall

Masculinity: Marred Design

Introduction

We have an enemy. Satan *deceived* Eve into doubting God was good. That's the root of all sin—the suspicion that God isn't good.

Adam, however, *chose* to abandon his post by listening to his wife. He ignored the mandate and warning God had given him prior to Eve's creation (Gen 2:15-17). Had Adam led with strength and protective love, he would have said something like, "Get out of here, serpent! God told us not to eat from this tree." Or, after Eve ate the fruit, "Let's go to God. We can trust him to help us."

In listening to his wife (following her lead), he disobeyed God and sinned by abandoning his headship and leadership. He failed to guard and protect what had been entrusted to him.

Perhaps that was Satan's strategy. He went to Eve, Adam's helper, to get her to lead. Satan struck at Adam's headship. The fall of mankind came through gender role reversal.

Men must take responsibility

Nothing happened when Eve ate from the tree. It was "at that moment" when Adam ate the fruit that their eyes were opened. Only then did they experience shame because of their nakedness (Gen 3:6-7 NLT). The implication is that Adam is the responsible head of the garden/home. Moreover, God calls to Adam, not Eve, even though Eve ate first. God holds Adam primarily responsible for the crisis that occurred in the garden. Like Adam, all men must give the first account to God for the moral life of the household they work and keep. This doesn't mean women are not fully responsible for the choices they make. (We'll discuss that in the next session.)

Men struggle with inadequacy

Because of Adam's separation from God due to sin, Adam is left with an inner void and insecurity; a keenly felt sense of inadequacy. Fallen men are terrified of the shame of having their failures and inadequacies exposed and, therefore, of being found unacceptable. "I was *afraid* because I was *naked*; so I *hid*" (Gen 3:10).

If a man is honest with himself at the exact moment he feels most threatened, he will admit to feeling terror and self-doubt. At that point, rather than abandoning himself to Christ in humility and faith, and leaving explanations and guarantees behind, he is likely to ask a more self-absorbing question for which there is only one discouraging answer: "Do I have what it takes to handle whatever it is I find threatening?" He therefore lives in fear, desperately determined to avoid exposure of his inadequacy. He gives little thought to what it would mean to give of himself as a man.

Men generally live without a clear vision for what masculine movement into life—especially into relationships—would look like. They have lost the joy of dreaming. When you lose contact with Christ, you can no longer dream noble dreams.

—*The Silence of Adam*, Larry Crabb

Fallen men struggle with passivity and blame-shifting

Adam chose to be passive in the face of the Enemy's attack against his wife. All men, like Adam, tend to be passive when faced with what threatens them. And, like Adam, all men tend to avoid exposure of and responsibility for their failures by blame-shifting. Adam first blames God for his sin, and then blames his wife: "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it" (Gen 3:12). For men, blame-shifting comes as naturally as breathing—"Okay, okay. You're right, I shouldn't have screamed at her *but* do you realize how disrespectfully she spoke to me? If she would only..."

Weak men demand certainty

Fallen man is most comfortable in situations in which he knows exactly what to do, where his competence is not threatened. When things get confusing and scary (e.g., wife is upset), his insides tighten and he backs away. When life frustrates him with its maddening unpredictability (e.g., son is on drugs or misbehaving at school), anger starts to rise within him. And then, filled with fear that his inadequacy could be exposed, he forgets God and his sufficiency and looks out for himself. He goes south, scrambles and grasps to protect himself and make life work. He may dominate with harsh discipline, or his sexual passions may spin out of control as he seeks relief from the pain of shame over failure/inadequacy through pornography. Fallen man is often uninvolved with his wife and children when situations threaten his competence. The threatened man will stay in the sphere of management (fixing, doing, staying where he's competent) and refuse to enter the mystery of life (entering the murky, confusing, and uncertain waters of relationships). He might do this by watching TV, playing sports, staying in the workshop; by becoming a workaholic; or by seeking relief through pornography, alcohol, or other addictions. Men retreat to safe places. They stay in spheres of life where they know what to do, where they don't have to take risks.

When men don't know what to do they are tempted to fake it and hide. They become passive in the face of what threatens them or they get aggressive to prove something and to avoid exposure (don't ask for directions). Pride (a determination to survive without surrender to God) is at the root of all grasping behavior.

Instead of loving and protecting women, a man's core emptiness lusts for them. Weak men turn to women and/or work to grasp for a sense of validation, impact, and significance. And anything or anyone who blocks them from getting relief brings anger if not rage. Some form of lust and anger characterizes unmanly men.

Insecure men get tough or needy

This section is adapted from *Silence of Adam* by Larry Crabb.

To at least some degree, every man knows he is not fully happy. And when his unfulfilled desires surface, he is confronted with a crucial choice: to trust God or not to trust him; to rely on the name of the Lord or on himself. If he trusts God, the unhappiness (which must continue till death because we live in a fallen world) is surrounded by hope, acceptance, and meaning in spite of imperfection. And he is empowered to move well, with tender strength on behalf of others. That brings joy.

But if he refuses to trust, the unhappiness within him becomes his most compelling problem. He must find some way to deal with it. He becomes *needy* or *tough*.

Needy men (“love” with no strength)

Needy men insist that others come through for them. They're easily hurt and offended when people don't. Their background usually includes someone who brought them intense pleasure (perhaps a doting mother, a too-generous father, an overly affirming coach or teacher). As boys, these men learned a simple lesson: internal pain is most reliably relieved when someone does something for them. The needy man is willing to be responsible up to a point, and he is often willing to be kind, compliant, and thoughtful, sometimes even sacrificially helpful, but always with the demand that someone notice—and that someone give him what makes him feel good.

One woman said, “When I hear my husband's car pull in the driveway after work, my heart just sinks. I immediately feel even more tired than I felt before. I'm a housewife with three children to take care of all day and now here comes the fourth. It's always about him, about something that's wrong, like I'm supposed to do something. Even when he asks about me I'm supposed to tell him how wonderful he is...everything he does makes me feel that I'm supposed to come through for him.”

The person who takes on the job of meeting a needy man's needs has no hope of success. No effort is enough. People in relationship with this man typically feel the

pressure to come through and a chronic sense of failure that what they do is never enough.

Tough men (strength with no love)

Tough men push people far enough away from them to avoid any significant sense of connection. Men ruled by the passion of toughness typically have a history more characterized by neglect or anger than by pleasurable involvement. Rigid discipline, preoccupied fathers, non-nurturing mothers, meaningless churches, legalistic theology: relational connection never existed for long in these men's experience. These men were starving for relationship but lost hope. It was easier to kill their yearnings for intimacy and get on with life than to embrace their longings and hurt.

Often abilities surfaced that permitted them to find the pleasures of "relationship from a distance." Athletic talent or academic gift or social smoothness or a mechanical knack gave them a chance to feel powerful and to achieve goals worthy of commendation. Over time, the tough man comes to depend on his abilities so fully that his human longing for connection is smothered. And that's how he wants it. Distance maintains safety. No need to feel the soul-crushing terror of needing that which may not come your way.

Tough men deny deep longing for relationship, and chase after goals that do not require meaningful intimacy with people. Men more aware of their capacity to get things done seem to put greater energy into tasks than people. A tough man's relationships are more often shallow but stable. But the stability is fragile. A tough man's relationships depend on a conspiracy of pretending that superficiality is satisfying, and that the pleasure of comfort and excitement are acceptable substitutes for the lost joys of communion. When a spouse or friend breaks through the conspiracy and asks the "tough man" for more, the relationship erupts like a long-dormant volcano.

Tough men damage people by requiring them to perform without providing any real tenderness or nourishment for their souls. People in relationship with a tough man often feel undesired and desperate. Those victimized by the tough man often struggle with depression, anxiety and addiction.

Both styles (needy and tough) demand that others come through. But men in touch with their neediness require up close affirmation and support from a few intimates. Tough men want respect from a larger audience that keeps its distance. The styles may be different, but both are selfish and godless. And both cause great harm.

Thorns and Thistles: God's severe mercy

God curses the ground with thorns and thistles (Gen 3:17-19). Adam's impact and sense of adequacy will always be thwarted. He will always experience some kind of futility, frustration and failure in what he does. No matter how hard he plans, sooner or later he will always experience push back.

Adam isn't enough. He can't make life work. This is God's severe mercy. It's meant to break his determination to make life work on his own and thereby drive him back to a humble and joyful dependence on God. (This movement toward God is the substance of Session 5.)



Discuss...

3

Large Group Discussion

1. Talk about one thing you learned from this chapter that was helpful to you.
2. How do you see the toughness and neediness of men influencing our culture?

For Men Only

1. Read and discuss the quote from the *Silence of Adam* at the top of page 24 together. In what ways do you resonate with this quote; in what situations do you feel threatened, causing fear and self-doubt? If you forget God in those moments, how do you go south and try to seize control? What would it take for you to “dream noble dreams” by remembering God and his vision for you as a man when you experience hardship, failure and uncertainty?
2. Are you more characterized by neediness or toughness? What do you think has fostered that style of relating in you?
3. If you are married, what do you think your wife would long for from you if you were to depend more on God for your validation and live in greater balance of strength and tenderness? Try to be specific.
4. If you are single, what do you think the women who know and work with you would want from you if you were to depend on God for your validation and live in greater balance of strength and tenderness? Try to be specific.

For Women Only

1. How has your life been impacted by the lust and/or anger of unmanly men?
2. In your background have you experienced men as more tough or needy? How has this shaped your present attitude and way of relating to men?
3. How has your experience with fallen men influenced your attitude toward yourself and about your femininity?

4 Femininity: Marred Design

According to the Genesis narrative, Eve was deceived. The serpent convinced her that what God had given her was not enough and that God was not trustworthy. He convinced her to take charge and do what she needed in order to know good from evil; then she could run her life according to her own judgment and she wouldn't have to depend on God's wisdom. She accepted this lie, ate the fruit, and then gave the fruit to her husband who was right there with her. He chose to eat even though he was not deceived.

Since that day, life on this planet has never been the same.

Fear of vulnerability and disconnection

After Adam ate, their eyes were opened and they realized for the first time that they were naked. Adam and Eve felt, for the first time, the emotion of shame and immediately made coverings for their "nakedness" and hid among the trees in the garden.

What did Adam and Eve seek to cover? They probably didn't make hats or shoes. Before the fall, Adam and Eve were completely open and vulnerable, both physically and personally; after the fall, it was clear that it was no longer safe to live that way. Physically they worked to hide their uniquely sexual parts, and personally they sought to protect their deepest masculinity and femininity from exposure and shame.

While the man's core design for impact is now haunted by a fear of exposed inadequacy, the woman's core design for relational connection is haunted by a fear of disconnection or abandonment. To be relational now is to be vulnerable to rejection, shame, and pain.

Fallen woman despises this vulnerability. Rather than express her femininity by being soft, confident, and open to relationship, she will forfeit her femininity to feel safe and in control. She still wants relational connection, but it will be on her terms. Fallen woman works to minimize her vulnerability to pain by managing her world either directly or indirectly.

The desire to control

The desire to control is very deep in the nature of fallen women. Genesis 3:16 tells

us that after the fall, God pronounced a curse on Eve. Part of the curse says, “Your desire will be for your husband.” This word “desire” is unique in the Hebrew language. It means, “having the desire to control.” This word is the same word used in Genesis 4:6-7 when God said to Cain, “Sin is crouching at your door; it *desires* to have you, but you must master it.” Sin desired to control Cain.

Because of Eve’s sin, she is separated from God and that leaves her insecure. Consequently, she seeks to resolve her fear and insecurity by taking control. The urge to control is a stubborn one and it’s in all daughters of Eve. Some control by being dominant, others by being a doormat. It seems so reasonable to get the husband to change and be involved in her life. But the more a woman seeks to control, the more she sends the message to her husband, “You’re inadequate. You don’t have what it takes to be a man. You need me to make you do what you need to do.” Men are very sensitive to this kind of message. If they are not trusting in God for their sense of competence they are easily threatened. An insecure man senses this message in his spirit, forgets God and goes south. He gets angry with his wife and sins against her by protecting himself. He gets harsh and defensive or he may comply with her demands but he resents her inwardly. Not feeling loved, the wife then works harder to control and the husband reacts. This cycle continues as conflict grows between husband and wife. Oneness, joy, and intimacy diminish.

Control through manipulation or emasculation

In Genesis 3:16 God pronounces the curse for the woman, predicting the two major relationships the woman will turn to in order to get her needs met: her children and her husband.

“To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.’”

Primarily, fallen woman will turn to man and use all of her feminine resources (mind, body, sexuality, personality, skills, talents, etc.) to get from the man what she believes she needs in order to feel secure. Women do this with their husbands, but will also do this in any relationship in order to get her needs met apart from trust in God. Fallen woman may control indirectly through excessive weakness, dependence, frailty, and neediness; or through excessive strength, contempt, and demandingness.

One woman said, “I smiled my way onto several committees at my church so I could be part of the decision-making body.” She said that she knew that in order to get the pastor to do things as she would like she would need to find ways to get others to go along with her ideas and put on the pressure. She used her personality to gain access to opportunity to make decisions and she influenced

many decisions that accomplished her agenda to get things done her way and according to her time table. Fallen woman finds it difficult to be vulnerable to the leadership of fallen men whether it is in the church, the work place or the home. Because men can and do fail, they must be managed. In so doing, a woman destroys her own house. How is this possible?

A woman's deepest beauty and femininity are found in having a quiet and gentle spirit (1 Peter 3:1-4). Having such a spirit does not mean a woman is always demure. Rather, Proverbs 14:1 says, "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." How does she do this? Scripture says it's "better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome, complaining wife" (Prv 21:19 NLT).

Quarrelsome and Complaining

The idea of a quarrelsome woman isn't one who is always nagging, abusive, and angry. The word is likened to an umpire—one who knows the rules and is always enforcing them. A quarrelsome woman has the attitude that says, "What I want you to do is what I say." A Christian woman who knows how a godly husband ought to be, how a home "ought to run" and tries to manipulate and pressure her husband into fitting that mold is being quarrelsome.

Complaining means she keeps troubling him in order to punish or aggravate him into doing what she wants him to do. She lets him know whenever he is doing something wrong or not coming through for her the way she thinks he ought to. A fallen woman can do this in an outward and aggressive way by showing open contempt for men, characterizing them as stupid and inept. (Since the rise of the feminist movement we have gone from "Father Knows Best" to "Homer Simpson" as symbols of masculinity in popular culture.) Or, a woman can seek to do this in subtle and passive-aggressive ways such as pouting and withdrawing, seeking to induce guilt in her husband for not coming through.

Through contempt a fallen woman discourages masculinity and encourages weakness and passivity. Through excessive dependence and weakness she encourages masculine dominance and brutality.

Life-takers

Instead of being the life-giver she was created to be, fallen woman becomes a life-taker. There are many ways to be a life-taker. One way is to suck life from those around you by demanding to be served rather than to serve. When fallen woman turns to human relationships and expects them to meet her needs for security, she will become a life-taker in some form. Rather than using her God-given resources to help man rule and subdue the earth, she uses her resources to get what she believes she needs to feel safe and secure. Instead of

contributing to the order, beauty, and civility of culture, she contributes to the chaos through the breakdown of relationships and through compromising sexual purity for personal gratification.

Fallen woman can become a life-taker through the use of her words. Proverbs tells us that the tongue has the power of life and death (Prv 18:21). Women are known for having very powerful tongues that are often used to wound and shame and even destroy relationships.

Ultimately, fallen woman can become a literal life-taker. The womb itself, the very place and symbol of woman's life-giving potential, is given over to become a place of death and destruction. Millions of children are sacrificed every year to the determination of fallen woman to put her needs ahead of those she was designed to nurture and give life.

Pain in relationships –God's severe mercy

After the fall, God steps into the garden and offers his severe mercy to Adam and Eve. For woman, this means that the very thing she was designed for—relationship—will also be the source of her deepest pain.

There will be pain in childbearing. This goes beyond labor and delivery, but involves every aspect of raising and nurturing children. All will not go well. There will also be pain in her relationship with her husband. God says that as she looks to her husband to get her needs met, there will be a power struggle. He will seek to rule over her. She will ultimately not be able to get what she most deeply wants and needs from her husband.

God brings pain into the life of the man and the woman, but that pain is not just punishment. It is designed to drive us back to God, to find him as the source of fulfillment for our deepest needs. He alone can restore us to the design we were meant to have.



Discuss...

4

Questions for this session | Femininity: Marred Design

Large Group Discussion

1. Talk about one thing you learned from this chapter that was helpful to you.
2. How do you see women's efforts to control through manipulation or emasculation influencing our culture?

For Men Only

1. How has your life been impacted by women who have been controlling through manipulation or emasculation?
2. In your background have you experienced women as more emasculating through excessive strength, contempt and demandingness or manipulative through excessive weakness, dependence, frailty and neediness? How has this shaped your present attitude and way of relating to women?
3. How has your experience with fallen women influenced your attitude toward yourself and your sense of masculinity?
4. How do you pray for the women in your life and sphere of influence?

For Women Only

1. What thoughts or feelings go on inside of you when you think about being vulnerable to pain, rejection and shame? In what area of life do you fear these things the most and why?
2. How have you been tempted to take control in the face of potential rejection, pain or shame? Do you do this mostly through manipulation or emasculation? What do you think has fostered his style of relating in you? How do you think your control impacts your husband, children and/or people in your spheres of influence? How does your control tend to discourage a man's sense of competence?
3. Does the pain of life drive you back to God? Please explain.

Part Three
“The Restored Design”



5 Masculinity: Restored Design

Review

God created us male and female. We cannot understand ourselves if we ignore the way God designed us. Both genders are equally made in God's image, equally blessed, and equally given dominion over the earth. Men and women are to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue and rule over God's creation together.

And, God intends we do so in complementary union with each other. Like two pieces of a puzzle fitting together. Or like a couple on the dance floor—the man leading and the woman gracefully following that lead. Something beautiful can then be seen that reflects something of the Great Dance of the Trinity where the three are so devoted to one another that they are one. We stumble as we learn those dance steps but it's truly possible to eventually move as one (John 17:20-23).

What does it take?

The true meaning of leadership and authority

In our world we are accustomed to seeing people with high status get the perks and privileges. But in the life of the Trinity, the greatest is the one who is most self-effacing, most sacrificial, most devoted to the good of the other. Jesus redefined leadership and authority, or more accurately, truly defined it as God intended:

Jesus called them [the disciples] together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

—Matt 20:25-28; see also John 13:12-16

It's God's nature to serve. Our fallen nature stubbornly wants to be served. True masculinity means you die to self in order to love and serve your wife, children, and others. Any exercise of power can only be done in service for the good of the other, not to please oneself.

Men get to be like Jesus by choosing to be the first to die

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy...and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

—Ephesians 5:25-27

That's what leadership and headship means. *Strength* means having the love and courage to sacrificially die for the good of others so they can flourish.

Jesus moved into our lives (John 1:14) and gave himself up for us. He gave his life so we could live. He is the Warrior King of glory. He was truly a man. And in the very act of dying for us, Jesus showed us what it meant to joyfully submit to his Father. Jesus modeled true leadership and submission in the same act! A man cannot be a godly leader without fully submitting and abandoning himself to Christ for fulfillment of his needs for significance and security.

Becoming the shelter in the storm

One of the great tragedies of life is that no man fully sees the damage his un-masculine style of relating (tough or needy) does to others. Men who get a glimpse of that descend into the depths of brokenness and godly sorrow. Such sorrow leads to life (2 Cor 7:10). And it's from those depths that genuine repentance and surrender to God begin. It's the crucible from which authentic masculinity emerges. This isn't a one-time event. Repentance is a lifestyle. The hope of actually blessing others, nourishing our wives, positively influencing our children, grows stronger than the terror of failure. Good movement begins. In that position, a man becomes the shelter for others instead of adding to their storm through his self-centeredness.

See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.

—Isaiah 32:1-2

When a man realizes how much his wife longs for a shelter in the storm of life, for an advocate who truly loves and enjoys her with a tender strength that is sensitive to her longings, hurts, and fears, he may first feel anger. He gets angry that she is needy when he feels needy himself. He may also feel

threatened because he is not sure he has what it takes to touch his wife's deepest desires and fears. His fear of failure tempts him to retreat into blame-shifting and passivity—"She wants too much!"

The following story of a man who's beginning to be the shelter is adapted from *The Silence of Adam* by Larry Crabb:

He went to bed early, exhausted. Maybe he was coming down with a cold. It was the first time in months that he was able to get to bed a little early. An hour passed. He had just fallen asleep.

His wife, catching up on a few responsibilities in another part of the house, heard a noise. She was frightened. Out of reflex, she called his name once...and then again, this time outside the bedroom door, speaking loud enough to wake him.

Before he could respond, his wife recognized the source of the noise. It was the wind blowing through an open window. No cause for alarm. "Everything's okay," she said. "It's just the wind." Then she apologized: "I'm sorry I woke you."

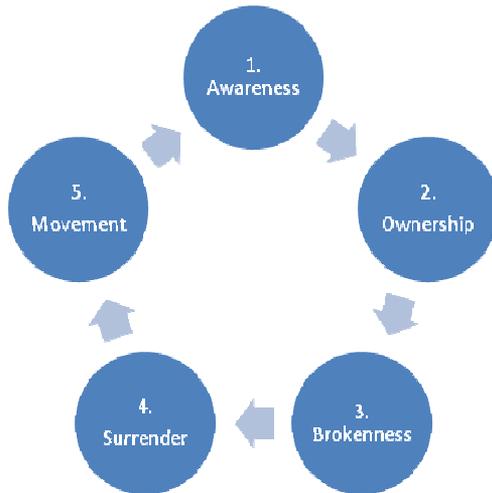
Some men would have grumbled, "Can't I get some extra sleep in my own house!" Some would have mumbled, wanting to get back to sleep. Good men would have felt concern for their wives, neither grumbling nor mumbling. Their wives would have felt wanted rather than bothersome.

As he turned his head to the pillow, he felt two things. First, he was encouraged. He had felt warm toward his wife; he had not snapped at her or tried to make her feel guilty for waking him. He knew he meant it when he had replied to her apology saying, "That's okay, honey. You were scared." He didn't feel proud, just encouraged. Second, he felt sobered. He realized the familiar lies still wanted to take him south. His self-talk still quietly whispered, "Things never really go my way. Why can't a man get a little sleep?"

But more than anything, he felt gratitude as he lay there. He had listened to a better voice and he was more aware than ever that the real battle he must fight was within himself, against an enemy, an enemy of self-pity, that pretended to be his friend.

The Five Stages of Spiritual Growth

To become the shelter a man must embrace five realities as a lifestyle:



1. Awareness

In many ways men can be blind to the self-centered and self-protective ways they relate to God and others. How can a man become aware? He must be open to feedback from his spouse, as well as God’s Word, Spirit, and people. A man must become increasingly aware of his “style of relating” so he can move to the next step.

2. Ownership

A man must take full ownership and responsibility for how he chooses to relate. No blame-shifting or justification for his self-centeredness. When he becomes aware of his sin and takes full responsibility for how he is forsaking God and hurting others when he does those things, he begins to enter into the next step.

3. Brokenness

The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin. Brokenness does NOT mean a man beats himself up or wallows in self-pity—“I’m such a worthless failure!” That is self-centered. Brokenness means he feels the sorrow that his selfishness has caused *others* and is truly saddened for the ways he has sinned against God. Such godly sorrow illuminates our hopeless condition unless we fully surrender to God as our only God, asking and trusting and receiving his grace and forgiveness for our sin.

4. Surrender

This is humbling and glorious. We see that we are the creature and he is the Creator. We are small. He is holy and almighty yet kind and full of mercy! We are gratefully dependent on him for everything. We realize how much we need him to help us depend on him every day, all day for our deepest needs. As we surrender our lives to him for our security and significance, and as we live to glorify him instead of ourselves, we become free to love others. We become living sacrifices (Rom 12:1-2).

5. Movement

We live with renewed energy to love and serve our wives, our children, and others so we can reveal the goodness of God by how we engage with a strong and tender involvement.

Finding continued courage to move requires we stay focused on two things:

1. Focus on God

We must remember and focus on God and all that it means to be forgiven (daily), accepted, and called until we are persuaded that there is real strength in our redeemed hearts that can and must be released for the good of our wives, kids, and others we influence. That requires serious and daily attention to self-examination and doing so through meditating and ruminating in the Word of God, being in authentic community with the people of God, and remembering who we are in Christ. The Spirit of Christ indwells us and empowers us to want to go north; to be grateful and giving men because we know God.

A biblically authentic man has faced his failures enough to become humbled and grateful for the grace of God. Yes, he knows sorrow and brokenness, but hope and joy in God's grace and involvement most defines and empowers him. Therefore he gladly (though it often must be a choice to go against his fears and passivity) embraces his calling to love and be loved by God so that he is able and willing to reveal the strength and tenderness of God to others no matter the situation.

2. Know your wife (and others you influence)

An authentic man must focus on his wife, girlfriend, or others he influences, focusing on (or at least realizing their struggle with) their fears, wounds, and longings. While men want to know their wives accept, support, and respect them, women need love. Many husbands give money, hard work, a nice home, and have never been unfaithful, but still fail to understand their wife's deepest needs. Such men find it hard to understand when their wives say they don't feel

loved by them. There is more to love than money, work, and loyalty. Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Just as Christ "gave himself up" for his bride, love involves sacrifice of the deepest kind. Love also involves cherishing your wife as you cherish your own body. Verse 28 goes on to say, "In this same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies." When you smash your finger, you feel pain, so you cherish and sooth it. You protect and take care of it. This kind of love involves the same idea. As the protector and guardian of your household, you are to nourish your wife. This is an emotional, tender, caring involvement. You must allow your redeemed heart to deeply care about how much your wife longs to be cherished and protected by your tender strength and love.

The Bible says a man is to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. This means men are to be the leader who sets the tone of the home. As he takes initiative to move toward his wife, he is to win her love by pursuing her and making it clear to her that she is his top priority in life next to God. Jesus never said, "Shape up and then I'll love you." We don't have to earn God's love. We can relax and respond to his love. In the same way, a wife longs to relax in a man's strength and tender love so she can go off duty and respond to his involvement. Such a man has learned to depend on God for his deepest needs for adequacy and acceptance.

Husbands are to live with their wives in such a way that their children and neighbors and others who know and watch them can see how Christ loves his people. To use the definition of masculinity used by Men's Fraternity: a man is one who rejects passivity, accepts responsibility and moves courageously with his eyes on the greater reward.



Discuss...

5

Questions for this session | Masculinity: Restored Design

Large Group Discussion

1. What did you find helpful in terms of understanding what it takes to restore masculinity?
2. What did you find encouraging and hopeful as you read this chapter?

For Men Only

1. What is stirred in you as a man when you read Isaiah 32:1-2? What would it take, what would it mean for you to be the shelter for your wife, children and/ or others in your sphere of influence instead of being the storm by your toughness or neediness?
2. Look at the cycle of spiritual formation on page 39 and reread the descriptions that follow. Which of these categories are you most embracing? Which do you need help with and why?
3. In what ways are you currently loving your wife or girlfriend with a strong, tender and sacrificial love? What would it look like for you to take your next step in being more involved with your wife or girlfriend with strong, cherishing, protective, tender and sacrificial love? What do you most need right now in order to take that step?

For Women Only

1. How as women can we embrace, encourage, support true masculinity in our men?
2. How might your own personal growth in femininity influence the masculinity in the men in your life?
3. What would it take and look like for you to more fully trust God to work in the lives of the men around you instead of trying to control them?

6 Femininity: Restored Design

Christ-centered security

For woman, restoration of her design is dependent upon her establishing a Christ-centered sense of security. Restored femininity begins with a growing choice to remember and believe the things that Eve forgot in the garden: That God is good; that he is her ultimate head, protector and provider; and that what he provides for her is enough. She no longer needs to turn to human relationships, particularly her husband, with a demanding spirit that seeks control through manipulation or emasculation.

Inner beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit

As a result of her hope in God, she is freed to relate from an inner beauty of a quiet and gentle spirit (1 Peter 3:1-6).

She has an inner quietness. She's not anxious and striving but resting in God's loving presence, provision and protection. She has a sense of quiet confidence in God that allows her to relax, let others get close. She knows that she is ultimately not alone and that it is not all up to her to make life work. She is approachable, inviting and open to relationship.

While fallen woman may be either harsh and demanding or needy and weak, restored woman is set free to be gentle and confident because she has faith in God's strength on her behalf. She does not have to be in control because she can trust in God. She is free to serve others with both kindness and truth. She is not quarrelsome or complaining, fighting to get her way in order to feel secure through manipulation or emasculation. Because of this she can be appropriately vulnerable to the leadership of good men in her life.

Submissive heart

A woman being restored is growing a submissive heart. Not just a "Do what she's told" sort of submission, but a heart that is first and foremost surrendered to God, then to her husband or the man she is devoted to. What might this look like?

When a woman tries to change or control her husband in order to get her own needs and longings satisfied, she does not have her husband's best interests in mind. These efforts result in frustration and loneliness. Intimacy is lost.

Fallen man is very sensitive. He hears “control” even when it’s not intended by the wife. For example, suppose a husband comes home after a rough day. The wife offers advice on how to make things better. He gets angry. She’s confused. She was only trying to help. But she does not understand what her husband longs for. “Giving” to her husband involves acceptance, support and assurance that she believes he is competent. Advice, without communicating acceptance, communicates disrespect. How can a wife communicate respect?

In a mature marriage the wife should be able to offer advice to her husband but first, work must be done to show that she supports, accepts and believes in him right where he is. Submitting to God’s purposes of ministry to her husband means giving to him in the area of his deepest longings. *He longs for adequacy.*

A woman can never make a man adequate. Only God can do that. In fact, he already is adequate if he is in Christ. But a wife can bring the awareness of his adequacy by offering respect to him, by treating him as being adequate. She must be *for him*.

If what it means to be female is to be soft, confident, and vulnerable, a woman will enjoy her God-given femaleness to the degree that she is trusting in God, instead of a man, for her security. Jesus hung on the cross as he entrusted himself to his Father (1 Peter 2:23). He didn’t obey sinful man but he was vulnerable to them. Likewise, the wife is to be vulnerable to her husband. The core of this does not mean to obey her husband no matter what he tells her to do, but to obey God, entrust herself to God, and continue to give to and minister to her husband regardless of his response.

What if a husband is ungodly? Submission means that a wife accepts her husband as he is while she continues to pursue the Lord. Submission gets tough when a husband is angry and harsh. The wife is to accept him as he is and continue to be vulnerable to him and give. This sounds crazy! Such a view of submission is not simple-minded obedience. Rather, it forces the woman to think, “What really is ministry to my husband in any given situation?” Her purpose is not to protect herself (unless her life or safety is at stake) but to be vulnerable to her husband and give to him regardless of the cost. This is hard to describe in generalities. It takes thought and prayer to apply this to specific practices and life situations. Sometimes serving the best interest of another person can require speaking truth in love, drawing boundaries, offering a good meal, or overlooking and forgiving faults. There are no formulas. A woman must walk with God, trusting him for wisdom and discernment to know how to love well. God doesn’t give us a cookbook. He asks that we walk with him, surrender to him, and think through life’s events with a heart submissive to his purposes.

Finally, a submissive heart is a heart that accepts what is given, and does not demand what is not given. In examining the virgin Mary’s response to God when the

angel visited her and announced her impending pregnancy, author Elizabeth Elliot put it this way,

Unlike Eve, whose response to God was calculating and self-serving, the virgin Mary's answer holds no hesitation about risks or losses or the interruption of her own plans. It is an utter and unconditional self-giving. [When she says] 'I am the Lord's servant...May it be to me as you have said.' This is what I believe to be the essence of femininity.

Femininity receives. It takes what God gives (because of a deep trust in his goodness)—a special place, a special honor, a special function and glory different than masculinity, meant to be a help. In other words, it is for women to receive the given as Mary did, not to insist on the not-given as Eve did.

A submissive heart is also a heart that sacrificially puts the needs of others above one's own. While not denying her own needs, the submissive woman trusts that her needs can and will be met by God. As a result she does not need to be self-protective or self-serving in her motives, but can assess the deepest needs of others, especially her husband, and offer herself to giving to meet those needs.

Encouragement of men

Women being restored to their original design have an encouraging influence on men. They invite men to be better men.

Author John Piper has said, "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."

A feminine woman will feel enhanced, honored, and freed by men's caring strength and servant-leadership and will appropriately express desire and appreciation for it when it comes. A married woman will do this differently with her husband than with other men, but she will do it in some form in all her relationships with worthy men. A single woman also will do this as appropriate with the men she is in relationship with, honoring and appreciating their strength and leadership.

When women are feminine, men gain confidence in handling responsibilities and are encouraged to move toward sacrificial involvement. A woman who is being restored will consciously choose to use her resources (words, actions, the way she dresses and uses her body, talents, gifts) to encourage and support men in their commitment to follow God and live according to God's purposes.

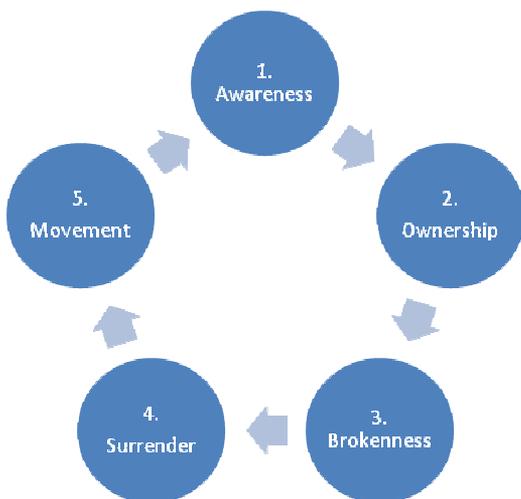
Renewed life-giving

A woman being restored in her femininity is being renewed in her life-giving aspect. As she depends upon God for her own personal needs, she is freed to think of the needs of others. Rather than being a self-centered taker, she is a giver who seeks to bless, encourage, and help alongside the man.

She brings all of her resources (her intellect, emotions, words, time, talents and gift- edness) to bring life to her world and culture. She nurtures others physically, emotionally and spiritually. She brings a sense of peace, order and beauty to her own home and personal relationships, seeking to help others thrive, flourish and grow. From there she moves out into the larger world, bringing her gifts of compassion and nurturing and productivity to a world that desperately needs her. She finds joy and satisfaction in knowing that she has something of value to offer in relationship to others and has a secure awareness of her ability to bless and encourage those around her.

The Five Stages of Spiritual Growth

Women become the life-givers they were meant to be as they embrace the following five categories as a daily lifestyle:



1. Awareness

In many ways women can be blind to the self-centered and self-protective ways they relate to God and others. How can a woman become aware? Is she open to feedback from God’s Word, Spirit, and people? A woman must become increasingly aware of her “style of relating” so she can move to the next step.

2. Ownership

A woman must take full responsibility for how she chooses to relate. No blame-shifting or justification for her self-centeredness. When she becomes aware of her sin and takes full responsibility for how she forsakes God and hurts others, she moves to the next step.

3. Brokenness

This comes by being honest and open to God and others. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. Brokenness does NOT mean a woman should beat herself up or wallow in self-pity—“I’m worthless! No one could ever love me!” That is a self-centered focus. Brokenness means a woman feels the sorrow her selfishness has caused *others* and is truly saddened for the ways she has sinned against God. Such godly sorrow causes a woman to see her hopeless condition unless she fully surrenders to God as her only god. From there, she asks and trusts and receives his grace and forgiveness for her sin.

4. Surrender

This is both humbling and glorious. This is the step where she sees that she is the creature and he is the Creator. She is dependent on him for everything. She realizes how much she needs him to help her depend on him every day, all day for her deepest needs. As she surrenders her life to him for her security and significance, she becomes free to love others.

5. Invites and nurtures relationships

She lives with renewed energy to love and serve her husband, her children and others. She does this so she can reveal the goodness of God by how she engages with life and people—marked by soft and confident vulnerability to God and others.

Final thoughts

As men and women together seek to be restored to their true masculinity and true femininity, they work together in complementary fashion that brings glory to God and speaks powerfully to our world.

In presenting this material, it is our desire that we all, both individually and corporately as a body, work together to see the men and women of BHBC restored to God’s design for our lives. In this way, we can glorify him and know the joy that we were designed to experience in living out our unique callings as men and women.



Discuss...

6

Questions for this session | Femininity: Restored Design

Large Group Discussion

What did you find helpful in terms of understanding how femininity can be restored?

2. What did you find encouraging and hopeful as you read this chapter?

For Men Only

1. How as men can we encourage, support and enjoy true femininity in our women?

2. How might your own personal growth in masculinity influence and draw out the femininity in the woman in your life?

3. Where would you place your wife or girlfriend on the cycle of spiritual formation described on page 46? How might your strong and tender involvement encourage (not pressure) her to take her next step in that cycle?

For Women Only

1. Where are you being the most challenged to grow in restored femininity as you read this chapter?

2. Where could you place yourself in the five step process of spiritual formation described on page 46? What is the next step for you and what do you think it will require for you to take that next step?

3. How will your growth in having a quiet and gentle spirit, a more submissive heart and being more of a life-giver likely improve your relationships?

Notes: