

Genesis week 10
 Genesis 1:26-28, 31; 2:6-8; 15-25
 In His Image pt 6
 Femininity and the Image of God pt 1

INTRO:

Before we get into today's topic, I want to say something regarding this series.

It is a call for us to strengthen our vision of who we are as image bearers. While scripture challenges us in the face of certain cultural norms, it calls us UP to embrace and live out the design that God has for us.

As believers we have the great opportunity to show what relational flourishing looks like as men and women. It is easy to look around and see that there is a lot of confusion about these things. It is something else to say, "By God's grace and with His good instruction, there is a better way."

Friends, God's teaching is GOOD NEWS for us. We don't have to wander through the social and cultural minefields trying to figure out "who we are". WE ARE image bearers – male and female. The Creation account is like a North Star for us when it comes to understanding our inherent human value and dignity. Those who seek to reverse the Creational norms leave us with no solid foundation for any sort of human value and dignity.

The ideas presented in this series apply specifically to the Christian community. They can't be understood, appreciated, and applied in life apart from the life changing work of the Holy Spirit. While Biblical ideals and the practical outworking of God's good instruction are not attainable in this fallen world, we must pursue clarity in teaching and obeying the Word of God.

With that in mind, I propose that we put aside the labels of "toxic masculinity / femininity" – in themselves, they are not toxic.

There are sinful people who bring a toxic distortion to the divine created order of the male / female distinctions.

As Nancy Pearcey notes, there is a TOXIC WAR on Masculinity.

I would note that there is an intentional or unintentional Toxic war on femininity in our culture today as evidenced by the controversy and confusion over a simple question, "What is a Woman?"

You may or may not be aware that the question, "What is a Woman" has become a hot topic in the past 2 years. Prime Minister and one Supreme Court Justice have tried to avoid responding to the question. For some reason it has gotten too tricky or complicated for post-modern elites to answer.

My guess is that if we were to go ask the kids in children's church, they could give us an answer.

That leads us into the topic for today, biblical femininity.

DISCLAIMER – I'm not a woman. I grew up in a two-parent home so I had a mother and four sisters. I have a wife, three daughters, three daughters-in law, and twelve granddaughters. Above and beyond that, I, like you, can read and study what the bible has to say to us about the image of God displayed through the male-female distinctions.

As we seek to maintain a biblical view of creation on This side of Eden and the Cross, let's consider what scripture tells us about male and female based on the scriptural teaching that both were created in the image of God.

Genesis 1:

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in

the image of God He created him; male (zakar) and female (neqebah) He created them
2:22 The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

23 The man said,
“This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.”

24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Jesus confirms this in Mark 10:6 6 But from the beginning of creation, God made them male (arsen) and female. (thelus) 7 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother

8 AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

Scripture is NOT Gnostic Genderism – i.e. where we focus on the spiritual or soul without regard for the body.

The physical male–female distinctions are essential to who we are as those created by God to fulfill the Creation mandates.

Man centered ideologies, philosophies, and theologies seek to reverse this concept of creational essence.

The most common attempt at this reversal is Existentialism which posits this: **I am not a human being by the mere fact that I exist; I must become a human being through my creative action in the world. Humanness becomes something I achieve, rather than something I am given.** (Abigail Favale [Genesis of Gender](#) p. 46 pdf re: podcast with KDY and book)

When that approach is applied to the male-female distinction then we get the current mindset of our culture...”I must become a man or a woman through MY CREATIVE ACTION in the world. A gender is something I ACHIEVE, rather than something I am given.

Schaeffer – Genesis in Space and Time p. 28 epub – At first there was one man differentiated from the rest of creation, and then woman taken from the man. Again, a differentiation yet suitable and corresponding to man.

** The first two chapters of Genesis give us a basis for understanding the real unity of mankind. We are all creatures ‘in His Image.’

EX: There was a time when secular society was seeking a basis for a united humanity. It goes back to the Tower of Babel and continued. Two very popular expressions were the Concert that gave us the song, “We are the World” and the Coke commercial that gave us “I’d like to teach the world to sing” Christians have ALWAYS had a basis for understanding human unity, but sadly it has often been ignored. Even sadder is that today few seem to be seeking unity. Instead, society is dividing and sub-dividing into as many competing IDENTITY groups as possible.

Crabb p. 29 While there is a lot of ink and energy is being poured out these days on the topics of ‘gender identity and toxic masculinity’, a more important question is often forgotten:

What does it mean to relate as feminine women and masculine men for the glory of God?

That is the question that Larry Crabb seeks to answer in his 2013 book [Fully Alive](#).

The Genesis text is clear that we are created as gendered beings in the image of God – male and female. So, what does it mean to be a masculine or feminine image bearer?

Based on the Creation narrative that we’ve seen, there are some key traits to biblical manhood that overlap; with womanhood. The NT adds others in light of the person and work of Christ.

1. **As women, whether single, married, single again, or married again, your primary relationship is with our Creator God.**

Biblical femininity means that women are grounded in God's original design for them as persons in His image and they are being restored to that image in Christ. All of the calls to discipleship apply to men and women – faithful Christian witness, service, and mission in the context of the local church, family, and community.

John Piper calls "true womanhood . . . a distinctive calling of God to display the glory of His Son in ways that would not be displayed if there were no womanhood." His advice to women is this: "So whether you marry or remain single, do not settle for a wimpy theology. It is beneath you. God is too great. Christ is too glorious. True womanhood is too strategic. Don't waste it. Your womanhood—your true womanhood—was made for the glory of Jesus Christ." (quoted in Andreas & Margaret Kostenberger – God's Design for Man and Woman John Piper, "The Ultimate Meaning of True Womanhood," in *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 15 (Fall 2010): 15–18)

2. **Biblical femininity means that you take responsibility for what God gives you to do** - Eve shared the responsibility to multiply and to exercise dominion alongside Adam.

3 v. 23–25 **Biblical femininity teaches women to have appropriate relationships with others. Biblical femininity pursues bonds of trust and oneness. V. 24 -25**

Being made in His image – male and female is a reality that is to reflect truth about God.

Crabb p. 38 His essential glory, His relational glory, is to love, to give, to enhance the joy and well-being of another at any cost to Himself. To reveal His glory, God created human beings who, like Him, are capable of giving and receiving love. He created us to love us, and to empower us to reveal His love by the way we relate to others.

God's relational nature is embedded in those made in His image – male and female.

So, let's look at the Hebrew and Greek words used to describe "female" – neqebah and thelus

The Hebrew word is descriptive but less direct than the Greek word.

When God first introduces us to female (Gen 1:26-27), He uses the word 'neqebah'. The word means "punctured; bored through." It refers to something that is open and can be entered.

When it comes to the divine mandate to be fruitful and multiply, God created male and female to make that a possibility. In the most physically intimate relationship, the male and female fit together. This is not the result of random chance. This is God's design.

Crabb p.44 "Could femininity have something to do with a woman who is relationally open to receive? "

"Our likeness to God is not physical. God is a spiritual being, three persons who relate together not physically but personally. We reflect Him most clearly as we relate together as persons. ...

Neqebah suggests that femininity is relational. A feminine woman is a woman who relates in a particular way; she is opened to receive others who come to her."

Neqebah suggests a feminine woman discerns and is open to receive only what reflects God's character and advances His purposes.

The Greek word for female "Thelus" – comes from the root word that is connected to "suckle" as in nursing a baby.

That reality along with the corresponding interdependence is a trait that is biologically wired into the nature of women, even if not experienced by all women.

In seeking to give a distinguishing trait of woman/female, Abigail Favale offers a key idea. NOTE THAT she

came from a very radical feminist background in college, post-graduate studies, and work. She ultimately found that worldview to be confusing and inconsistent. She found a spiritual home is the Catholic tradition. Here is her offering to the current question of, "What is a woman?" She is trying to say something that should be generally agreed upon and not everything that is true of womanhood. Her concept is rooted in the creational design of scripture, and she speaks of Potentiality, not the actual experience of each woman.

A woman is the kind of human being whose body is organized around the potential to gestate new life. This potentiality that belongs to femaleness is always present, even if there is some kind of condition, such as age or disease, that prevents that potential from being actualized. (Favale p. 87)

This is a clear distinction from the creational design of a man or masculinity.

Embracing biblical femininity and masculinity means to accept our physical gendered bodies as a divine gift. We are embodied souls, with each aspect being important. (Favale p 162)

A physical aspect of biblical femininity is centered in the capacity to receive and give, to receive and bring life through procreation, and the bodily ability to pour out nourishment that sustains life.

Relational femininity is a way of relating that both invites life-giving connection from another and nourishes life-giving relating in another. Crabb p. 47

I find it interesting that the Genesis text which Jesus also uses specifically says "a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave" to his wife.

Why not tell the wife to leave and cleave?

It may be that the male (zakar) has a more independent wiring than the female (thelus). A woman, by created design, is wired to nurture life within her during pregnancy and nurture life to a baby through nursing.

Those are two very INTERdependent roles for the woman. "Gestating and caring for children is a state of radical interdependence." (Harrington – Staying Human in the Meat Lego Matrix; Favale p. 166-7)

She doesn't need to be told to cleave because it is in her nature to relate in a more interdependent way.

Along with this, a female distinctive is that of being more nurturing. It doesn't mean that men aren't or can't be nurturing, but it is different.

EX: both aspects are seen in family or large group gatherings as men and women tend to congregate together. The conversations and topics are different. When a child gets hurt, does he or she go to the room with mom or dad? THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG response of the child, but typically it is the room with the moms.

EX: maybe it's just our marriage, but if I say, "I talked to Burt today", Linda will ask, "How is Anita and tell me what their kids are doing." I'm like, "I don't know. We didn't talk about that. We talked about what they are doing and their ministry work and football."

In Gen 1:31 we have a summary after God had finished creation. He had made mankind in His image – male and female;

God saw the male (zakar) with the nature to remember and do what was important, i.e make a mark. "And He saw the female (neqebah), suitable to him, a strong partner who could reveal the openness of a personal invitational God". (Crabb)

He had created them male and female and had given them the mandate of procreation and dominion and in response to what He saw among his Creation, God broke forth with joy, and we read

"God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was VERY good." Gen 1:31

Why should we say anything to the contrary?

Francis Schaeffer – Genesis in Space and Time

Abigail Favale - Genesis of Gender

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1yVvk5AXiZRPfH3kY7IEba?si=2a4dc459842142ed>

Women, Creation and the Bible – Mary Kassain pdf p. 10

Crabb – Fully Alive

Men in the Arena podcast – 5 Differences of men and women

We are made differently for different roles and functions- physically and in other ways.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZkvN6Rjb8U&t=635s>

Meat Lego – mary Harrington on Mortification of Spin

<https://reactionaryfeminist.substack.com/p/staying-human-in-the-meat-lego-matrix>

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