

Genesis week 10
Genesis 1:26-27
In His Image pt 5
Masculinity and the Image of God pt 2

In his 2013 book, Fully Alive, Larry Crabb recounts answers he got and didn't get to a question he asked dozens of women and men.

The question was the same to each group with a simple word change.

“When do you feel the most feminine, most glad to be alive as a woman?”

“When do you feel the most masculine, most glad to be alive as a man?”

He often got a confused look with response of, “I'm not sure I've ever really asked myself that question.”
Have you?

When the book was published 10 years ago, the words in the question made sense. Sadly, in some circles today the very terms and their definitions are seen as controversial.

Here are the answers Dr. Crabb never got...

“I feel most fully alive as a feminine woman when I relate to others in a way that reveals something wonderful about God, something wonderful about how He relates that I was specially designed as a woman to make known.”

“I feel most fully alive as a masculine man when I relate to others in a way that reveals something wonderful about God, something wonderful about how He relates that I was specially designed as a man to make known.”

This is why we need Biblical insight in our day and age.

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;

... 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

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. (note the date) p.35

Let's not overlook an important point...Distinct Genders is not just a good idea. IT'S A God IDEA.

Brief summary of In His Image of the past few weeks:

- “God first revealed Himself to be a community of persons-in-relationship, not when He created the heavens and the earth; the stars, suns, and planets; the plants, fish, birds, and animals, but only when He created male and female persons.
- At creation, He gave the persons He made equal authority over all subhuman life, but no issue of ruling authority over each other was revealed.
- As a God revealed as relational, He made male and female persons to be like Him, opening the possibility that men and women are to relate with each other in a way that resembles how the persons of the Trinity relate.”- Larry Crabb

I agree with Crabb when he says, “What I'm not hearing in our sex/gender debates today is a thoughtful, biblically dependent, open-minded discussion of what it means for men to resemble God in their

masculinity and for women, with equal importance but uniquely and differently, to resemble God in their femininity.”

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? How do men and women each reveal something of the wonder and mystery of the relationships within the Trinity? Related to that is the fact that the husband wife relationship points to the relationship of Christ and the Church.

There are bigger issues, -deeply spiritual theological issues- at play that go beyond who can use which restroom and play on which sports team? If we ignore the biblical and spiritual dimensions of the issue then we are left with a purely secular politicized topic for sound bites, protests, opinion polls, and social confusion.

If we take God out of the picture, as our culture is trying to do, then the question of “When do you feel most feminine or masculine” has no external reference point. Those questions become self-referential and self-reverential as we control the definitions, and our own sense of well-being is the arbiter of truth.

The desire to reveal God to others as masculine or feminine image bearers means that we will have to die to our self-obsession and embrace a Spirit wrought God-obsession.

To gain some clarity on these issues, we should study how God chose to reveal the creation of male and female persons. He used special words that should guide us.

Thus far in this series we’ve encountered the words “adam” for mankind as a whole, “ish” for man, and ‘isha’ for woman (2:23). There are two other key words that are used in Gen 1:26-27

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;

... 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male (ZAKAR) and female (NEQEBAH) He created them

Those words are Zakar -male; and Neqebah – female

‘Mankind’, (adam) was made in the image of the community of relational persons – “US”. By creational order we are created as relational beings to enjoy the kind of community that God himself enjoys in His divine community. MALE and FEMALE created He them.

As a continuation of last week, we’ll look at the concept of masculinity from a biblical perspective.
(LAST WEEK...)

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

1. As men our primary relationship is with our Creator God. We are called to be Cross-eyed First Commandment men (and women) of faith.

2. Biblical masculinity means that you take responsibility for what God gives you to do -

Prior to the creation of the woman, 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

BIBLICAL MASCULINITY is about taking responsibility for real things and the right cause in REAL LIFE.

(Achieving high scores or levels in video games doesn’t count)

This also entails taking responsibility for your own spiritual life.

3 v. 23-25 Biblical masculinity teaches men to have appropriate relationships with others.

“THIS IS NOW ...”

One aspect of biblical manhood for single or married men is to avoid the fake life of fake women and those to whom you are not married. Biblical masculinity pursues bonds of trust and oneness. V. 24 -25

Gen 1:27 gives different words to help us understand male/female... Zakar Neqebah

So God created human beings (adam) in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male (zakar) and female (neqebah) he created them. (Gen. 1:27 NLT)

Jesus confirms this in Mark 10:6 6 But from the beginning of creation, God made them male (arsen) and female. (thelus)

Every male person is zakar / arsen, a man designed by God to reveal something about God by the way he relates, a male who can become masculine only by relating in a distinctly male way. But what is that way? What do zakar and arsen mean?

Zakar means “to leave a mark, to make an impact.” In ancient Near East culture, the word referred to a king’s assistant, to a man charged with the important privilege of reminding the king of matters that required his royal attention. Zakar came to mean someone who remembers something important that moves him to do something important.

ARSEN – the Greek word used by Jesus means “to lift, to carry.” It points to the strength needed to move something from one place to another.

“Together, arsen and zakar suggest the beginning idea that a man reflects God by remembering what is important and moving into a disordered situation with the strength to make an important difference.”- Crabb

In the Christian world we can easily get caught up in ‘making a mark’ for God. WE see disorder and we want to move with true image bearer masculine desire to have an impact for God. or at least we think it is for God.

There is nothing wrong with being ambitious as long as it is for the right things. **Biblical masculinity is being ambitious for the right things, making your mark in the right way.**

EX: LIG young missionaries – “I want to have an impact”. Some said it that plainly, but I’m sure all of them thought it. Why else would you go through all that you have to do – application, evaluation, approval, support raising, arranging a move to a foreign country, learning a language and culture, etc,

You do that because you want to leave a mark and make an impact for Christ. But that godly ambition can fade, and other ambitions can set in. Sadly, the impact that is made does not align with the cause of Christ, even if things look good from the outside.

The same thing can happen in ANY vocation, any line of work or play. It can happen in a marriage, the career of a single person, a family, or a church. Success in different areas of life can keep us chasing the feeling in all the wrong places. Before we know it, we’ve built our lives on the shaky foundation of feeling good about ourselves. That good feeling has an end date, then we’re back on the treadmill. Knowing our identity as image bearers put us on a sure foundation.

Matt 7:24 If we build our house (lives) on something other than the Word of God, then we are building on sand, and we don’t have a sure foundation. When the rain, floods, and wind come the house will collapse.

If we are ambitious about the wrong things, we’ll get hit by reality, and as Dallas Willard puts it, “Reality is what hits you when you are wrong”, i.e. building on the wrong foundation.

What do we need to be ambitious about? Matt 6:33 Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Easy right? We can fit all sorts of things into that category of seeking the kingdom, or so we think.

EX: Beach project 1976 ‘Seeking a letter from M.H. I’d written to her just about every day. We were singing that song and it hit me...I was seeking the wrong thing first.

If our desire and ambition get curved inward, then we lose our perspective on what living for the glory of

God looks like. It is remembering God's gracious love for us that actually empowers us to reflect Him by loving others. The world offers a hollow counterfeit masculinity that can be appealing. It rewards talent, ambition, success, and self-obsession. We've all seen it on the ballfield or the boardroom. It can have the appearance of morality and self-sacrifice while remaining hollow. When Jesus encountered it, he called it a whitewashed tomb.

It looked good from the outside, but on the inside it was dead. It didn't reflect or reveal the reality of God's grace. Instead, it offered a religious version of man centered ambition. It was counterfeit masculinity because it didn't reveal God's divine initiating grace. Image bearing masculinity reveals and points to the priority of God's gracious work for us.

'Zakar' and 'Arsen' are words that indicate masculinity rooted in strength and impact that comes from being an image bearer.

Biblical masculinity means that as we remember our image bearer nature to make an impact, we move out to reveal the Relational goodness of God. Adam and Eve were in a relational paradise with God their creator. They were told to be fruitful, multiply, and exercise dominion. Those are functions that have strong relational dimensions.

The mark left by the male (Zakar) was to be one that reflected the nature and character of God – an initiating gracious provider, both before and after the Fall of chapter 3.

Biblical masculinity takes those traits of initiative, grace, and provision into relationships to make a mark for the kingdom of God in the lives of others. Whether we are single or married, as men we are called to take the initiative to reflect the nature of the Creator in our relationships.

If married, we are to love our wives as Christ loved the church, not be embittered against them, to live with them in an understanding way, and to grant them honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life.

Men, we are "Zakar – male", and we will leave a mark. As image bearers and as men of faith, TODAY, we have agency in who we will become TOMORROW. Each day is full of choices about the men we will become and the mark we will leave.

"Who we become is a direct result of what we pay attention to." – Brant Hansen

"What is in our 'heart' matters more than anything else for who we become and what becomes of us." Dallas Willard

For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he: Prov 23:7

Brant Hansen...

Our hearts are shaped by what we 'pay' attention to. EX: "ATTENTION IS THE NEW CURRENCY"

We are shaped by what we give our attention to, i.e. we "PAY" attention. Our 'attention' is a limited resource. It is valuable. We should guard our attention like we do our finances. "When you 'pay attention' to something you are buying a ticket so your brain (and heart) can attend.

IT COSTS us something i.e. our attention. And there is an OPPORTUNITY COST, i.e. paying attention to one thing means you are NOT paying attention to something else.

What are the lost relational, spiritual, intellectual, and physical opportunities when we "pay" attention that which is false, fleeting, empty, or even harmful?

Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise (Eph 5) Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. . . . Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry... Col 3

Men, we will all leave a mark – we are Zakar

The question is, "What kind?"

Will it be a mark of selfless love or love of self?

A mark of giving a blessing or a curse? Of being a blessing or a curse?
A mark of honor and care for those around us or bitter provocation?
A mark of giving grace or of demands and unrealistic expectation?

We can't leave a discussion about biblical manhood without looking at Jesus, the perfect example of Manhood.

Biblical masculinity is SOMEONE we meet before it is something we experience.

Jesus is the second Adam who perfectly reflected the Father and obeyed the will of God.

He was the visible image of the invisible God.

He understood why He came and fulfilled his responsibility. He lived a perfect life and died a real death for real sinners.

He had appropriate relationships with those he encountered to give them the bread of life, the living water, and the light of life. He died and rose again and intercedes for us before the throne of the Father.

Jesus left his mark by dying for sinners. In His body he bore the marks where love and justice met.

The table is where we see the marks of love and justice in the body broken and the blood shed for us

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RESOURCES:

Fully Alive, Larry Crabb

The Men We Need – Brant Hansen