

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

How God Has Created Men and Women Equal Yet Different

Phillip F. Foley

Copyright © August 2003 Phillip F. Foley
Printed by Permission

Published by
Exalting Christ Publishing
710 Broadway Street, Vallejo, CA 94590
www.cbcvallejo.org
Ordering email: publications@cbcvallejo.org

“Unless otherwise noted, Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
®, (*updated*), copyright ©1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The
Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.”

Contents

Introduction.	1
The Equality of Men and Women.	1
MEN AND WOMEN ARE EQUAL IN THAT THEY BOTH IMAGE GOD.	1
MEN AND WOMEN SHARE EQUALLY IN THE BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION.	3
MEN AND WOMEN ARE FELLOW HEIRS OF THE GRACE OF LIFE.	6
The Different Roles of Men and Women.	7
THE NAMING OF MANKIND.....	8
THE CREATION OF MAN AND WOMAN.....	8
THE ROLES CORRUPTED AT THE FALL.	13
THE ROLES REDEEMED IN CHRIST.	17
Conclusion..	18

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

*How God Has Created Men and Women
Equal Yet Different*

Introduction

For the past thirty-five years or so our culture has tried to convince us that there is no difference between men and women. Sexual differences, we are told, are caused by culture and socialization and thus are malleable and subject to redefinition. Thus, the reason little Suzie likes to play with dolls and why little Johnny likes to play with trucks is because our culture has ingrained it in our thinking to train our children this way. If parents did not impose their values on their children, then little Johnny might play with dolls. (I shudder to think what my three boys would have done with a doll if they had gotten their hands on one!) Of course, this thinking has crept into the church. There are those in the church who teach that the roles of men and women are a result of the fall; they are a result of sin and in Christ there is neither male nor female. In other words, Christ restores the equality of the sexes that is envisioned in Genesis chapter two. Is this what the Bible really teaches? Or are men and women created equal with different gender-defined roles? In this booklet we will see what the Scriptures teach about the equality of men and women and how they are different by design. The Bible teaches that men and women are equal in creation and redemption, but they have different gender-defined roles.

The Equality of Men and Women

MEN AND WOMEN ARE EQUAL IN THAT THEY BOTH IMAGE GOD

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." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:26-28)

In these verses we have the creation of man. Man is the pinnacle of God's creation; he is the high point. God had been preparing all that He created for man. He was to rule over God's creation. Moses highlights at least two things about man: his distinction and his differentiation.

The distinction of man

God created man in His image according to His likeness (Genesis 1:26). We see the uniqueness of the creation of man, since only man was created in God's image and after His likeness. Nothing else is said to have been created in God's image. This is an incredible statement about man because of who God is. He is all glorious, all powerful, majestic, and awesome. There is none like Him, none to compare to Him. Yet God stoops, as it were, and creates man in His image. What is so striking about this is that later God commands us not to make any images of Him. It would belittle Him because any image would be far below what God is really like, and therefore we would be worshiping an idol. Yet, here we see God making man in His image. "God seems almost to jeopardize His unique glory by sharing His image and rule with a mere creature."¹ Still, God does it anyway. What a high position man has!

Not only did God create man in His image and according to His likeness, but He created man to have dominion. God created man to *rule* over His creation (Genesis 1:26). Man was to rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, over the cattle, over every creeping thing, and over all the earth (Genesis 1:28). His dominion was over every distinct realm. Man was given a highly exalted position. He was to be God's vice regent. He was to reign under God's command because he was created in God's image. Clearly man is distinct.

The differentiation of man

When God created man in His image, He created man male and female (Genesis 1:27). This was not an afterthought, nor was it an addendum. God purposed to create man male and female. Male and female uniquely and specifically bear His image. This emphasizes the equality of the man and the woman. This teaching by Moses of the equality of the sexes was revolutionary in his day. Woman, as well as man, displays the glory of God's image.² This is consistent with God's intention stated in verse 26, that both the man and the woman should rule: "and let *them* rule."³ It is also consistent with the blessing God bestowed on the man and the woman: "God blessed *them*; and God said to them ..." (Genesis 1:28). This text stresses the equality of the man and the woman who alike bear the divine image.

¹ Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, editors. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1991, p. 96

² Strauch, Alexander, *Equal Yet Different*, Lewis and Roth Publishers, Littleton, Colorado, 1999, p. 16

³ Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, p. 97

MEN AND WOMEN SHARE EQUALLY IN THE BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)

Paul, in this context, is defending justification by faith alone. A person is justified before God by trusting in the finished work of Christ alone. Negatively, Paul is refuting justification by works of the Law. A person cannot have a right standing before God by law-keeping. To prove this, the apostle shows how God made a covenant with Abraham and gave him promises (Galatians 3:16). God promised Abraham that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. This blessing would come from his seed, which is Christ. In Christ, we have the promises of the blessing of Abraham. We must then ask the question: how does the Law relate to this? The Law, which came four hundred and thirty years after these promises, did not invalidate the covenant previously ratified by God (Galatians 3:17). The promise precedes the Law. We are not justified by the Law but by the promise. So why was the Law given? The Law was given to show us our sins and point us to the only one who could save us (Galatians 3:19). It was given until the seed would come. The one who could save us, the seed of Abraham, is Christ. The Law was given to point us to Christ that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24).

This is the context that leads up to verses 26-29. The next logical question would be: who are these blessings for? Who is eligible to receive these blessings? What the apostle stresses in verses 26-29 is that *all* the sons of God share equally in the blessings of redemption. His emphasis in these verses is on our spiritual status or standing in Christ.⁴ We all share in what Christ has done for us. These blessings are for those who are in Christ. Therefore, the distinctions between race, social class, and gender are totally irrelevant when it comes to receiving salvation.⁵ This is good news! You do not have to be a certain kind of person to enjoy the benefits of salvation. It is open to all who come to Christ by faith.

We are all sons of God through faith

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26)

The apostle accentuates that we *all* become part of the family of God in the same way. All of us do. It is through faith in Christ Jesus. The issue, then, is not race, social standing, or gender. What matters is: do you have the right kind of faith? It must be faith in Christ

⁴Ibid, p. 157

⁵Strauch, Alexander, p. 99

Jesus. If you have that, you are part of the family of God.

We are all clothed with Christ

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:27)

All who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have clothed themselves with Christ. I believe Paul is talking about Spirit baptism, when the Spirit baptizes believers into the body of Christ at salvation. Again, Paul is emphasizing that there are no distinctions. *All* who have been baptized are clothed with Christ. *All* share in the blessings of this equally.

We are all one in Christ Jesus

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

Notice again, it is all-inclusive. *All* who have faith have these blessings. Distinctions of race, social standing, and sex disappear in Christ. Anyone who has faith in Christ, whether they are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or free person, a man or a woman, is one in Christ.

This was radical teaching. Even Peter struggled with this; Paul had to oppose him to his face. To realize how extreme this teaching was, just think about the Jew/Gentile issue. The Jews thought highly of themselves as God's chosen people. If a person wanted to be saved he had to become a Jew and then be circumcised. The Jews prided themselves that they were descendants of Abraham. Paul says this does not matter. Being a physical descendant of Abraham is not really what is important. What is significant is; do you know Christ?

Being in Christ is the emphasis of this passage. "You are all sons of God through faith *in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:26). "You who were baptized *into Christ* have clothed yourselves *with Christ*" (vs. 27). "You are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). "If you belong *to Christ*..." (Galatians 3:29). It is not about a person's race, nor social standing nor gender. Those things do not make a difference. It is all about Christ. Do you know Christ? If you know Him—if you have faith in Christ—you are a descendant of Abraham and are a partaker in the blessings. A person, according to Paul, could then be a physical descendant of Abraham and not share in the blessings if that person rejected Christ.

When Paul wrote this, there was still a distinction between Jews and Greeks within the church. Clearly, this was not the issue the apostle was dealing with here. His concern was: is the person in Christ? If he is, then he is an heir of the promised blessings.⁶

Paul also says that Christ crosses all social boundaries. A slave who was the property of another could experience salvation, and so could his master. This happened in the church. Philemon, who owned slaves, was saved; and Onesimus his runaway slave also

⁶Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, p. 159

came to Christ. Now, they were on equal footing in the kingdom of God. Paul told Philemon that Onesimus was more than just a slave to him; now, he was a beloved brother (Philemon 16).

The fact that Christ crosses all social boundaries was also radical teaching. A person can come into the church off the street as a drug addict or prostitute, and another person can come into the church as a white collar embezzler; yet they come into the church the same. They are all sinners. There is only one way they can be saved: by repenting of their sin and trusting Christ. When this happens, former prostitutes and drug addicts can then fellowship with former white collar swindlers. Christ breaks down all social boundaries. This brings Him glory.

Again, in Paul's day, the distinction between slave and free man still existed within the church.⁷ Onesimus was still a slave, yet he was just as much an heir to the promises as was his master.

Christ also crosses all gender boundaries. A man or a woman who has faith shares in the blessings of Abraham. We are all one in Christ. Now, obviously, there were distinctions between men and women in the church when Paul wrote this, just as there were distinctions between Jews and Gentiles and slaves and freed men. His point in mentioning these pairs is to emphasize our standing in Christ, which we all equally share. Paul is not speaking about relationships in the family or church, but of our standing before God in righteousness by faith.⁸ This is not about our roles, but our position in Christ. There is no distinction in our standing before God, but there are distinctions in our roles.

We are all heirs of the promise

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:29)

The one who belongs to Christ is a descendant of Abraham and therefore an heir according to promise. The key is the connection to Christ. If you have Christ by faith, then you have the blessings God promised to Abraham. You have become part of the family of God. You will receive the promises.

Clearly, the emphasis throughout this text is what all the people of God have in common. We all share in the blessings of redemption equally. As long as we are connected to Christ by faith, we are equally qualified to be sons of God, one in Christ, and heirs of the blessing of Abraham.⁹ People of vastly different racial and social backgrounds and even

⁷Ibid, p. 159

⁸Ibid, p. 160

⁹Strauch, Alexander, p. 100

gender are brought together in the household of God.¹⁰

In this world there are constant wars because races cannot get along. They hate each other. People of different social standing do not associate with each other because some people think they are above others. Men and women cannot get along. We see the battle of the sexes. Yet, in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free man, male nor female; we are all one in Christ Jesus. There is unity in Christ. He breaks down all the barriers. When people see the unity in the church, it glorifies Christ. We share Christ. This is what the text is about. It is what we share in common.

Evangelical feminists have interpreted the text “there is neither male nor female” to mean that there are no role distinctions between men and women. But, as we have seen, this is not what Paul is talking about. He is talking about our standing, our position before God. If you have Christ, you have a right standing before God and it does not matter who you are.

Now, if the feminist interpretation is correct, if this means that there are no role distinctions between men and women; then when we follow this reasoning to its logical conclusion, it would be right to have same sex marriages since there is “neither male nor female.” This is where many evangelical feminists have gone because this is the logical conclusion. The problem with this conclusion is that there are other texts in the Bible regarding homosexual sin that qualify this passage. In the same way, there are other passages regarding male and female roles that also qualify this text. The same apostle who wrote Galatians 3:28 also wrote, “the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church” (Ephesians 5:23). Galatians 3:28 pertains to equality in salvation; Ephesians 5:23 pertains to husband-wife relationships created by God. Both truths coexist without contradiction in the Bible, so we must give equal weight to both.¹¹ Both must be taught.

In summary, this text teaches a glorious truth that has nothing to do with roles. What it teaches is that all who are in Christ, regardless of race, social standing, or gender, share equally in the blessings of redemption. We are all one in Christ. If a person bows to Christ, then he shares in the blessings.

MEN AND WOMEN ARE FELLOW HEIRS OF THE GRACE OF LIFE

You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)

Peter commands husbands to show honor to their wives because they are fellow heirs of the grace of life. Even though she may be someone weaker, she is not so spiritually.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 102

¹¹ Ibid, p. 101

Women are not second class citizens in God's kingdom. They are not inferior. They are fellow heirs. The husband is to treat her with special honor because of her position. Peter addresses the man's headship. Because he is the head, he is not to be domineering. *Do not dominate your wife. Treat her as your equal.* She is a fellow heir of the eternal kingdom. She is his equal in the faith. She, like her husband, is part of the royal priesthood and holy nation. Peter gives a warning to husbands who do not treat their wives with honor because of their position in Christ. Their prayers will be hindered. Therefore, the husband must be careful in his position as the head. He is not to lead with domination, instead he is to show his wife honor.

From these texts we see that men and women are equal in creation and equal in their standing before God. Men and women are saved in the same way—by faith in Jesus Christ. They are fellow heirs of the grace of life. This is how they are equal. Now, we want to look at their differences.

The Different Roles of Men and Women

God has created men and women uniquely different. He has created them to fulfill different roles not only in the family but also in the church family. The Bible does not trace these different roles back to the fall of man and woman into sin, but rather to the way things were in Eden before sin warped our relationships. Different roles between men and women were *corrupted* by the fall; they were not *created* by the fall. They were *created* by God before the fall.¹²

In the first three chapters of Genesis, we have the foundation of what the Bible teaches about the equality and differences between men and women. All additional biblical texts on manhood and womanhood must be interpreted consistently with these chapters.¹³ Key passages in the New Testament that speak on men and women either directly quote or allude back to these chapters of the Bible (e.g. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 alludes to Genesis 2:18, 22; Ephesians 5:31 quotes Genesis 2:24; 1 Timothy 2:9-15 alludes to Genesis 2 and 3).

Before we begin looking at the different roles of men and women, we need to be reminded that having different roles does not make someone less of a person. God Himself has different roles. The role of men and women in the church is modeled after Christ. The Lord is our example of what it means to lead in love and to submit with respect, for He did both. He leads His church, and He submits to the Father. This does not make Him less God. He is equal with the Father, yet He willingly submits to His authority. His constant theme was that He came to do His Father's will. His subordination to the Father did not make Him less of a person. It did not lessen His dignity or worth. Instead, it magnified His glory. When a person of equal rank willingly puts Himself under the authority of another, this

¹²Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, p. 35

¹³Ibid, p. 95

magnifies His character. This exalts Him. This makes Him more precious. It makes Him more glorious, more beautiful, more honorable.

When men and women practice the roles that God has ordained for them, it magnifies the glory of the Lord as well; and it brings the most fulfillment in their own lives. When a person does what God has designed him to do, it brings satisfaction, fulfillment, joy, and freedom. It brings liberty. It is the truth that sets us free. So when a person practices the role God has given him, it leads to liberty and joy. Yet when he does not, it undermines God's glory and brings confusion and disunity to His church.

Feminists argue that the creation account cannot justifiably be used to demonstrate the existence of male authority and female subordination before the fall,¹⁴ but I believe we will see otherwise. God did create men and women different with distinct roles, and these roles are clearly seen in the text.

THE NAMING OF MANKIND (Genesis 1:26-28; 5:2)

In Genesis 1:26-28, we have the creation of man. As I said earlier, this passage stresses the unity and equality of the man and the woman. They were both made in the image of God. When God created man, He called both the man and the woman, "man" (Genesis 1:26). "God created *man* in His own image, ... male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). He chose to call the man and the woman, i.e. mankind, after the man. God "created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them *Man* in the day when *they* were created" (Genesis 5:2). God named them both "man." Why would God do this? This only makes sense against the backdrop of male headship. Ray Ortlund says, "God's naming of the race 'man' whispers male headship, which Moses will bring forward boldly in chapter two."¹⁵

THE CREATION OF MAN AND WOMAN (Genesis 2:7-8, 15-24)

The creation of the man before the woman emphasizes his headship

Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2: 7-8)

Genesis chapter one gives a brief overview of the days of creation; chapter two gives the details of creation and in particular the details concerning the creation of man. The central figure of chapter two is the man, Adam. Everything else is introduced in

¹⁴ Strauch, Alexander, p. 20

¹⁵ Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, p. 98

relationship to the man, even the creation of the woman. God created the man before He created the woman (Genesis 2:7, 22). God made a garden for the man and placed him in it before the woman was created (Genesis 2:8). God gave man the job of cultivating and keeping the garden before He made Eve (Genesis 2:15). Before Eve was created, God gave Adam a command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). God brought all the animals to Adam for him to name before He created the woman (Genesis 2:19-20). Everything in this text centers around Adam. He was lord of the earth,¹⁶ reigning as God's vice regent.

Some people say, "So what! It doesn't make a difference that the man was created first. Somebody had to be." The creation of man before the woman, however, is not an incidental fact. It has fundamental significance. We do not have to guess what this significance is. We have a divine commentary on its importance in 1 Timothy 2:12-13. Paul says, "But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." He then gives the reason why: "For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve." Paul is emphasizing that because Adam was created first, this shows that God designed him to be the primary leader and teacher of the family of God.¹⁷ This is the reason he gives for why a woman cannot teach or exercise authority over a man. The creation of the man before the woman emphasizes his headship.

The creation of woman as a helper (Genesis 2:18-24)

God's concern for man (Genesis 2:18-20)

In verse eighteen, we have the first mention in all of creation that something was not good. "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18). Seven times in chapter one, after God created and made the heavens and the earth and all that was in them, He pronounced it good. It is good, it is good, it is good! Then the last time when God was all done, He declared everything to be very good. It is complete, perfect; there is nothing lacking. As Moses reviews the details of the creation of man in chapter two, the only thing that was not good was for the man to be alone. It is surprising that he said, this since everything in creation up to this point had been good. Adam was in paradise. There was no sin; he had a job to do; he had a relationship with God; life was wonderful. Yet he had a need that he was not even aware of. It was not good for him to be alone. This was the only thing in creation that was not good. Man was incomplete without a woman.

Even though he had fellowship with God, he was still incomplete. Man had a need. He needed a companion. And that is what a wife is to a man (and vice versa). She is his companion and friend by covenant (cf. Malachi 2:14).

¹⁶ Strauch, Alexander, p. 21

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 21

However, she is more than just a companion and a friend. God says she is his helper (Genesis 2:18). Woman was created because man needed a helper. God had given man a job to do, but he needed help doing it. He did not say a servant. Woman is not the slave of man, but his helper, one who would come along side and help him. Here, we see her role. Her fulfillment comes in helping man do his job. The man was not created to help the woman, but the woman was created to help the man.¹⁸

This is what feminists balk at. One author emphasized that the woman was created to be the man's helper, but she never once said that the woman was created to help the man do *his* job.¹⁹ Yet the woman's role is centered around helping the man. Instead of emphasizing this, the same author went to great lengths to prove that the word "helper" is something that God does.²⁰ He helps those who are weaker. By implication then, the woman was created to help one who is weaker. The woman is the man's "rib, formed to protect and defend his vital organs."²¹ The author has reversed the roles! She sees the woman as the stronger one, in direct contradiction to 1 Peter 3:7 where Peter says she is the weaker vessel. The woman was created to be a helper; she is to help the man. God made a helper for him.

To be a helper means that the woman has the necessary ability, fitness, resources, and strength to be a help.²² God created women to be a help, and He will give them the necessary resources to carry out her role.

God is often described as our helper. What this emphasizes is that the helper role is a glorious one, worthy even of the Almighty.²³ This is the role that the Spirit takes. He is called our helper. In this role He does not exalt Himself. He comes to glorify another, the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not even know His name. He only has a title, but this is all right with Him because He is here to exalt Christ. His role is much like the woman's role. We see a beautiful example of the woman's role in Proverbs 31, which is a portrait of a godly woman. The emphasis is on what this woman does for her family. She is an excellent wife (Proverbs 31:10). It is her husband who is known in the gates (Proverbs 31:23). Even though she does all these things, it is her husband who is known because she is his helper. But because of all she has done for her family, her children rise up to bless her, and her husband rises up to praise her (Proverbs 31:28). Thus, a helper role is not denigration. It is an exalted, glorious role that even the Spirit takes.

She was not, however, just a helper; she was a "suitable" helper (Genesis 2:18). The

¹⁸Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, p. 102

¹⁹James, Carolyn Custis, *When Life and Beliefs Collide*, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2001, p. 180

²⁰Ibid, p. 181

²¹Ibid, p. 190

²²Strauch, Alexander, p. 23

²³Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, p. 104

word suitable means corresponding to or counterpart. This emphasizes the equality between the man and the woman. Here, we see then that the woman is not the same as the man. They are different in some respects, yet they fit together perfectly. She is his counterpart. She completes the man. At every point the man lacked, was the woman's strength. And at every point the woman lacked, was the man's strength. They complemented each other, fitted each other, and completed each other. This stresses their equality. She alone was Adam's equal. Out of all the creatures, she alone was suitable for Adam.²⁴ The woman was the man's spiritual equal, and unlike the animals, she was suitable for him. But she was not his equal in that she was his helper.²⁵ So we see a paradox between men and women. They are equal in one sense but not equal in another.

Thus, what Genesis 2:18 plainly implies is that there are differences between men and women. We are not the same, even though our culture has been trying to convince us for the past thirty-five years that there are no differences between men and women. This is simply not true. God has created men and women different. God created the man first, gave him a job to do, and commanded him not to eat from the one tree. Then God created the woman. She was created to be man's helper. Paul tells us that the woman was created for the man's sake (1 Corinthians 11:9). She was created for the man to be his helper.

So, right from the beginning, we see different roles. God created man to lead. The woman is to follow his lead and help him lead. And the woman is most fulfilled in carrying out the role that God designed her for. We see here God's well-defined chain of authority. This chain exists not because men are superior but because God instituted it.²⁶ God created man to be the head. The woman is the crown.

As I said earlier, God created the man last of all the creatures to emphasize that man is the high point of all that He created. Yet woman was made after man and out of man, as the glory of man (1 Corinthians 11:7). She is his crown. Proverbs 12:4 states this clearly, "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband."

Notice, God brought the animals to Adam to make him aware of his need.

Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. (Genesis 2:19-20)

There was not found a helper suitable for him. Of all God's creatures, man alone had no companion. Now, Adam began to see his need. He realized that he did not have a helper corresponding to him. This is what was not good. This need cannot be met by an animal.

²⁴Ibid, p. 101

²⁵Ibid, p. 102

²⁶Davis, John, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis*, Sheffield Publishing, Salem, Wisconsin, 1975, p. 79

Dog is not man's best friend. (Somebody has said a remote control is!) Therefore, man needs a helper suitable for him. Man was created in God's image and he required a being of like nature to himself. Man needs a counterpart, another half. He needs a woman, for woman is the complement of man.

God's crowning of man (Genesis 2:21-24)

Eve was the crowning of Adam.

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. (Genesis 2:21-22)

God made her from the man. God took bone and flesh from the man and fashioned the woman. Fashioned literally means to "build." He put her together from the side of the man. His life would become her life. Adam was formed from the dust, while the woman's source of origin was from the man. Here again we see a difference between the man and the woman. All other men have been born of woman, but the first woman was made from the man. God gave to her all the life qualities that He had given the man. Yet, her source of origin was from him.

God did not take part of the man's head, so woman is not superior to man. He did not take part of his foot, so woman is not under the man. He took part of his side to emphasize that the man and woman are equals. They are from the same substance. They are equal in nature, but they are also different.

Notice Adam's response to Eve: "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'*" (Genesis 2:23). This is the first time a man has seen a woman. He is excited. He could not believe his eyes. Wow! He rejoiced. All he had been looking at was a bunch of animals. Now he sees this woman and he is overwhelmed by God's goodness – "a prudent wife is from the Lord" (Proverbs 19:14b). He recognizes her as his equal – "she is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Then Adam names her woman (Genesis 2:23), stressing his headship and authority. God had already charged the man with naming the creatures. In doing this, Adam brought the earthly creation under his dominion. This royal prerogative extended to Adam's naming of his helper.²⁷ The one who names a person has the authority and power to name. For example, parents have the authority to name their children.²⁸ You can name your child anything you want, even a number or letters. My grandmother's neighbor was named "QB." His parents had so many children that when it came time to name him they ran out of ideas, so they gave him letters! Adam had the prerogative to name his

²⁷Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, p. 102

²⁸Strauch, Alexander, p. 24

helper because he was the head. He names her Woman because she was like him, yet different from him. God did not tell the woman her identity. He let the man do it as the head.

Finally, we see that headship is further emphasized in verse 24, where the man is told to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (vs. 24). The woman is never told to leave because this is the man’s initiative; he is the head. He is to take the initiative and do this.

In summary, we see that men and women are created equal yet different. Different roles do not imply that one gender is superior to the other or that one has less worth. Roles have nothing to do with our persons, dignity, or worth. This is clearly seen in the example of God Himself. The persons of the Trinity are equal, yet they have different roles. This magnifies their glory. God has created men and women equal yet different. They have different roles; and when they carry out their God-given roles, it brings Christ glory, and it brings them fulfillment and joy.

This was how the man and the woman were originally created, but something devastating happened. The man and the woman fell into sin, and the roles of men and women have been corrupted. There is a battle going on today between the sexes. This is a direct result of the fall of man into sin.

THE ROLES CORRUPTED AT THE FALL (Genesis 3:1-19)

Satan deceived the woman

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:1-5)

The devil’s goal was to get the man and the woman to rebel against God and join allegiance with him. Apparently, he felt it would be easier to deceive the woman than it would the man. This was not because she was necessarily more deceivable or gullible. The woman was more susceptible to his subtle deceptions because of her role.²⁹ The devil was attacking indirectly. The woman was not the head; she was not given the command. God commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (cf. Genesis 2:17). Since the woman was not given the command directly, Satan knew that he might

²⁹ Strauch, Alexander, p. 25

more easily persuade her to discredit the command. What Satan was attacking was Adam's headship. His subtlety is seen in his deliberate defiance of God's created order by ignoring the man and taking up dealings with the woman, thus putting her in the position of spokesman, leader, and defender.³⁰ He reversed the roles. He wanted to get Eve to decide, to lead the way. He deceived her into doing this.

The woman and the man sin (Genesis 3:6)

After being tempted, the woman sinned. She took the fruit and ate it. The text does not say, "She took from its fruit and ate; and her husband with her, also took some and ate." It says, "She took from its fruit and ate; and *she gave* also to her husband with her, and he ate." The text emphasizes that the woman took the lead. She ate; she gave to her husband to eat—"here you try some." In other words, she usurped the man's role of headship. Eve took on Adam's role and led him, and he passively let her lead him. She had stepped out of her role, and he had stepped out of his. The text also emphasizes that the man was "with her." It does not say how long he had been there. At some point in the conversation with the serpent, the man was there and he sat by passively, allowing the deception to progress without decisive intervention.³¹ He let the woman lead him into sin. Eve usurped Adam's role, and Adam abandoned his post as head. The human race fell upon an occasion of sex role reversal!³² We must not go on repeating the same mistakes, especially in the church where we have the truth. It only leads to confusion and problems.

God confronts the man and holds him accountable

Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9).

It is clear that this is the right interpretation because when God held them accountable for their sin, He confronts the man. Because he is the head, God calls out to the man. Adam therefore bore the responsibility to lead them in a God-glorifying direction.³³

The New Testament emphasizes that it was Adam who was responsible for leading the race into sin. Paul says through one man sin entered into the world (Romans 5:12). Adam is a type of Christ (Romans 5:14). He is a type because both are the head of a race. He unfolds this in Romans 5:15-21, where the apostle compares all those who are in Adam to all those who are in Christ. Adam is the head of one race; Christ is the head of another race. Man is the head; Jesus is the head. Therefore, Adam is held responsible for leading the race into sin.

³⁰Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, p. 73

³¹Ibid, p. 107

³²Ibid, p. 107

³³Ibid, p. 108

God cursed the man and the woman (Genesis 3:16-19)

In these verses we see that God pronounced a just sentence on the man and the woman. When you look at the curse, you see that it is related to the man and the woman's roles. In other words, God relates the curse to the particular responsibilities that He had determined the man and the woman to fulfill.

The judgment on the woman

To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." (Genesis 3:16)

Her role as mother and wife were cursed. God rightly cursed her role because she had stepped out of her role and into the man's role. Mother and wife are her essential roles. These are the two places that would bring her joy and blessing, yet both of them were affected by the fall. Her role as mother was cursed; she would bring children into the world with great pain. The curse was not on having children, since they were already commanded to be fruitful and multiply. The pain associated with it was the curse. That which should have brought her the greatest joy, would now come at a cost. She would have great pain in childbirth, which is why it is called labor. Yet, she would still be able to bear children. This is part of God's mercy since the destruction of the serpent would come through her offspring (Genesis 3:15), but now it would be done in pain.

She was also cursed in her role as wife. She was supposed to be her husband's helper. Now, we are told that her desire would be for her husband (Genesis 16). Desire in the context could mean sexual desire since he is talking about childbirth, but this interpretation does not seem to fit with the rest of the sentence. Her desire would be for her husband, but he would rule over her. The word "desire" is best understood by seeing how it is used in Genesis 4:7, which is close to the context here and is the only other place Moses uses the word. God told Cain that sin's desire is for him, but he must master it. Sin wants to control you, to master you, to conquer you. You must learn to master it. In the same way, the woman's desire will be for her husband. She will desire to rule him, to get the upper hand. She will want to usurp his role, but he will rule over her. "Rule" could mean that he will have headship over her. But again, this does not fit the context. He already has headship over the woman. Thus, rule is to be taken in a negative sense. Remember, this is a curse, and under that curse, the woman's desire will be to want to usurp her husband's leadership. However, he will rule over her; he will dominate her; he will lord it over her. We have seen this lived out in history. Women have been oppressed in culture after culture. So we see that God curses the woman's primary roles. "Because the woman usurped her husband's headship in the temptation, God hands her over to the misery of competition with her rightful head."³⁴ This is divine justice.

³⁴Ibid, p. 109

In summary, we see that the fall of man into sin has corrupted male and female roles. The battle of the sexes has begun. The woman's desire will be to usurp the role of her husband and lead him, while the husband will, in turn, lord it over her and dominate her. Men, instead of exercising a caring, loving leadership, will seek to rule in a domineering, unloving way. Women, rather than being submissive helpers, will desire to have mastery over their husbands. Sin will make the role relationship between the man and woman a place beset with struggle and pain. Here we see the root of male domination and feminism.

The judgment on the man

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:17-19)

Adam's sin was two-fold (Genesis 3:17)

First, it is clear that Adam sinned in his disobedience of God's command. But we are told that he also sinned when he listened to the voice of his wife. What this means is that he listened to her voice and let her lead him into sin, instead of listening to God and leading them out of sin. He abandoned his headship when he listened to his wife. Adam was following Eve's leadership; he was not deceived. This is why God rebukes Adam for listening to his wife. It is a rebuke for his failure to carry out his God-ordained leadership role. It was not simply a reminder that Adam listened to bad advice.³⁵

Note, there is nothing wrong with listening to your wife or seeking counsel from her. She is a fellow heir of the grace of life, and husbands must honor their wives and respect their views, opinions, and feelings. Yet the husband must not give over the leadership to his wife. Moses is emphasizing that Adam listened to his wife and let her lead him instead of listening to God and leading her.

God's judgment on man (Genesis 3:17-19)

Before God pronounces sentence on the man, He issues a formal indictment against Adam. "Because you did this, here are the consequences." God did not do this with Eve. (Genesis 3:16) God simply cursed her. Adam was the head; therefore his disobedience, not Eve's, was the pivotal factor in the fall.³⁶ God did not say, "It is because of both of you," as if they shared equal responsibility. No, God says, "Because you, Adam. You are responsible because you are the head."

³⁵Ibid, p. 529

³⁶Ibid, p. 110

God cursed the ground because of Adam. Again, this is related to man's primary calling, namely, the responsibility of breadwinner and provider for his wife and family.³⁷ His job was to cultivate and keep the garden and thus provide for his family, yet God cursed the ground. It would now be toil to eat. His work and desire to provide for his family would now require painful labor. Before the curse, he could eat freely. Now the ground would produce thorns and thistles. The picnic was over; the feast had ended. He would sweat and work hard to produce bread to eat.

We are also told that he would die and return to dust. It is interesting that God only tells the man he would die and not the woman. This is because, as the head goes, so goes the rest. Death spread to all men because of Adam's sin.

Unfortunately, this is the condition in which we find the human race today. The curse has brought pain to the joy of childbirth and sweat and difficulty to the joy of work. These are the two main spheres of men and women. The woman's responsibility is to give the primary care for the children and the home. The man's responsibility is to be the breadwinner and provide for the family. Both areas were cursed. The curse has also brought strife into the role relationship between men and women.³⁸ Man tends to dominate his wife, while the woman seeks to usurp his role. Thus, we have male domination on one side and feminism on the other. Both are wrong. Both lead to a plethora of problems. This was not God's original intent for the sexes. But this is the world in which we live.

THE ROLES REDEEMED IN CHRIST

(*Ephesians 5:23-33*)

The only hope to overcome these struggles is by God's grace. In Christ, God's intentions of creation for male and female are restored.³⁹ This is what Paul beautifully unfolds for us in Ephesians 5:23-33. The roles do not go away in Christ. They are redeemed. The husband is the head of his wife (Ephesians 5:23). He is to love her as Christ loves the church and love her as his own body (Ephesians 5:25, 28). The wife is to submit to her own husband as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22). When a husband and a wife carry out their God-given roles, it brings honor and glory to Christ. It pictures the relationship between Christ and His church.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 347

³⁸ Ibid, p. 346

³⁹ House, H. Wayne, *The Role of Women in Ministry Today*, Nelson, Nashville, Tennessee, 1995, p. 23

Conclusion

The Bible is very clear in its teaching that men and women have been created equal yet different. They are equal in creation and redemption, but they have different gender-defined roles. These roles were established at creation, before the fall, and are therefore permanent. The roles of men and women were corrupted by the fall of man into sin, but they are restored in Christ at salvation. When men and women carry out their God-given roles; it brings joy and fulfillment to them, and it brings glory to Christ. When they do not, it only leads to chaos, confusion, and destruction in the family, in the church, and in society. As Christians, we must by faith submit to our Head; for it is only then that Christ will be truly honored, and it is only then that we will be truly satisfied.