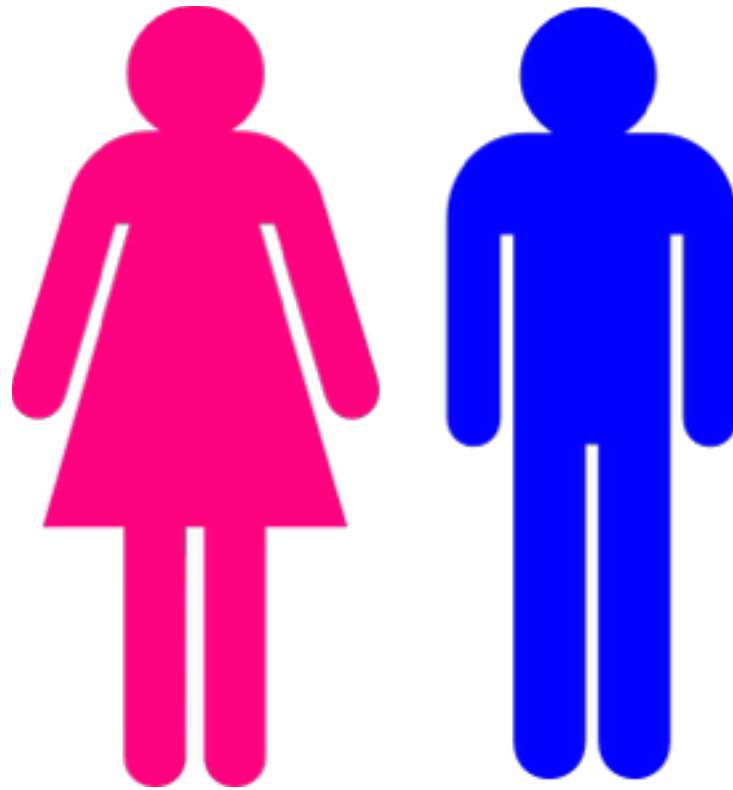


DIFFERENT BY DESIGN



God's Vision For What It Means
To Be a Man and a Woman

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Made In God's Image

A tremendous toll is being taken on young men and women who do not know what it means to be a man or a woman. Confusion over the meaning of sexual personhood today is epidemic. The consequence of this confusion is not a free and happy harmony among gender-free persons relations on the basis of abstract competencies as the world promises. The consequence rather is more divorce, more homosexuality, more sexual abuse, more promiscuity, more social awkwardness, and more emotional distress and suicide that come with the loss of God-given identity.

There is confusion for an entire generation today. So many young men and women don't know who they are. They have never been taught what a man or woman is. Families are such a mess, in such disfunction, or nonexistent that many do not have a role model for being a man or woman today. Young men and women lack a road map for their lives.

This confusion has reached strongly into the area of sexuality. Our society is training people to think wrongly about gender and sexuality. It says that there is no essential difference between men and women. You can change your gender if you want and it's fine. You can be attracted to whomever comes most naturally to you — boys can like boys, girls can like girls. You have no responsibilities or calling that comes with being a man or a woman. But the gospel not only saves us, but it remakes us and helps us understand who we truly are and what we are called to be for God's glory and our joy.

The Confusion

I want to help you get a sense of this confusion that is happening in the world today. A radical, fast moving current has been struck against the standard definitions of men and women, which we have especially seen in the last year. But let me share some examples of the gender confusion that is occurring right now.

On Facebook, you have three options for gender in your profile: male, female, and custom. By choosing custom, you can write in your gender, supposedly if you are not male or female.

You may have noticed that we have a new pronoun in the English language. No longer do we simply have "he" and "she." We also have "ze." "Ze" refers to someone who does not fit the gender binary.

I was watching the new Muppet show a couple weeks ago and one of the characters said, "Gender is fluid."

Bruce Jenner receives an award and media praise for courage because he decided to change his God given gender from man to woman.

An airport has this as its bathroom depiction: man, woman, baby, and then another image that appears to be half man and half woman (the image has half a dress on it).

Consider the change that has been made at Holyoke College admissions last year. Holyoke College has historically been an all-women college, created for back when the Ivy League colleges were men only. What is below is copied from Holyoke College's website regarding admissions.

“Mount Holyoke College welcomes applications for our undergraduate program from any qualified student who is female or identifies as a woman. As a pioneer in higher education, Mount Holyoke remains committed to its historic mission of providing access to excellence for academically talented women regardless of socioeconomic background. The College values each student’s development, both academically and personally, and recognizes that self-identity may change over time.”

“Mount Holyoke remains committed to its historic mission as a women’s college. Yet, concepts of what it means to be a woman are not static. Traditional binaries around who counts as a man or woman are being challenged by those whose gender identity does not conform to their biology. Those bringing forth these challenges recognize that such categorization is not independent of political and social ideologies. Just as early feminists argued that the reduction of women to their biological functions was a foundation for women’s oppression, we must acknowledge that gender identity is not reducible to the body. Instead, we must look at identity in terms of the external context in which the individual is situated.”

“Mount Holyoke College’s policy on the admission of transgender students states that it welcomes applications for its undergraduate program from any qualified student who is female or identifies as a woman. Can you clarify “who is female or identifies as a woman”?”

The following academically qualified students can apply for admission consideration:

Biologically born female; identifies as a woman

Biologically born female; identifies as a man

Biologically born female; identifies as other/they/ze

Biologically born female; does not identify as either woman or man

Biologically born male; identifies as woman

Biologically born male; identifies as other/they/ze and when “other/they” identity includes woman

Biologically born with both male and female anatomy (Intersex); identifies as a woman

The following academically qualified students cannot apply for admission consideration:

Biologically born male; identifies as man”

“5. If a transwoman decides, during her four years as a Mount Holyoke student, to change her mind and chooses a male gender identity, will she need to withdraw from the College? What about biologically female students who come to identify themselves as male?”

No. Once students are admitted, the College supports them regardless of their sex or gender identity, which is consistent with our current practice.”

I bring all of this up, not so that we will mock this or roll our eyes at this, but to recognize the growing confusion that is happening today regarding gender and gender roles. The goal of this short lesson series is to bring clarity to the confusion that is happening in our culture today. We need to not only examine and teach what the scriptures say about men and women, but also win people over to vision of men and women that God intended by showing that following God’s way is a deeply satisfying grace of God. We are seeing that it is good for us to commit to God’s good design.

Ignoring The Evidence

There are two things that are fascinating about this shift in our culture. Of course, it is amazing that people refuse to turn to the handbook given to the created by the Creator about their identity and purpose. The place we need to go to learn about who we are and what it means to be a man or a woman is to the God who created us. We will consider the scriptures on this in just a moment for this is truly all that matters. But it is also of interest to consider that our culture has even rejected scientific and psychological studies on this.

For example, the cover of Time Magazine on January 20, 1992 read, "Why are men and women different? It isn't just upbringing. New studies show they are born that way." What a breakthrough idea that men and women are born different. Our culture has tried very hard over that last few decades and particularly this last couple years to erase our differences. Culture has tried to make men to be more like women, and women to be more like men. But this ought not come as a surprise to us that all you need to do is look at a man and look at a woman and observe a staggering amount of differences.

These kinds of studies have been going on for years and the conclusions are that men and women are born different. Paul McHugh, the chief psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins Hospital, and is not a Christian and is clearly extremely intelligent to be the chief psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins Hospital, said this:

"Transgenderism is a 'mental disorder' that merits treatment, that sex change is 'biologically impossible,' and that people who promote sexual reassignment surgery are collaborating with and promoting a mental disorder."

"Transgender surgery is not the solution for people who suffer a "disorder of 'assumption'" – the notion that their maleness or femaleness is different than what nature assigned to them biologically. He also reported on a new study showing that the suicide rate among transgendered people who had reassignment surgery is 20 times higher than the suicide rate among non-transgender people. Dr. McHugh further noted studies from Vanderbilt University and London's Portman Clinic of children who had expressed transgender feelings but for whom, over time, 70%-80% "spontaneously lost those feelings."

While the Obama administration, Hollywood, and major media such as Time magazine promote transgenderism as normal, said Dr. McHugh, these "policy makers and the media are doing no favors either to the public or the transgendered by treating their confusions as a right in need of defending rather than as a mental disorder that deserves understanding, treatment and prevention."

The pro-transgender advocates do not want to know, said McHugh, that studies show between 70% and 80% of children who express transgender feelings "spontaneously lose those feelings" over time. Also, for those who had sexual reassignment surgery, most said they were "satisfied" with the operation "but their subsequent psycho-social adjustments were no better than those who didn't have the surgery."

"And so at Hopkins we stopped doing sex-reassignment surgery, since producing a 'satisfied' but still troubled patient seemed an inadequate reason for surgically amputating normal organs," said Dr. McHugh.

The former Johns Hopkins chief of psychiatry also warned against enabling or encouraging certain subgroups of the transgendered, such as young people “susceptible to suggestion from ‘everything is normal’ sex education,” and the schools’ “diversity counselors” who, like “cult leaders,” may “encourage these young people to distance themselves from their families and offer advice on rebutting arguments against having transgender surgery.”

Dr. McHugh also reported that there are “misguided doctors” who, working with very young children who seem to imitate the opposite sex, will administer “puberty-delaying hormones to render later sex-change surgeries less onerous – even though the drugs stunt the children’s growth and risk causing sterility.”

Such action comes “close to child abuse,” said Dr. McHugh, given that close to 80% of those kids will “abandon their confusion and grow naturally into adult life if untreated”

“‘Sex change’ is biologically impossible,” said McHugh. “People who undergo sex-reassignment surgery do not change from men to women or vice versa. Rather, they become feminized men or masculinized women. Claiming that this is civil-rights matter and encouraging surgical intervention is in reality to collaborate with and promote a mental disorder.”

In short, our culture is choosing to ignore what psychiatrists and psychologists are learning through studies. We will recklessly disregard the truth in order to continue to destroy what it means to be a man or a woman.

What The Creator Says

But what really matters is what our Creator taught. Genesis 1:27 makes clear:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27 ESV)

Males and Females

The word translated “man” does not mean males, but humans (cf. NRSV, NIV, NET, NLT). All people, male and female, were created in the image of God. Notice that there are not other options. There is not a third choice. God made males and God made females. Psychologists have learned what God decreed from the beginning. Gender change is biologically impossible. In future lessons we will discuss what it means to be a man or woman according to the scriptures. But for now, let us accept what God says that you were made to be a man or made to be woman. This is what we must accept.

In the Image of God

But it is the rest of the sentence that changes everything. **“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27 NRSV).** You were made in the image of God. What does it mean that we were made in the image of God?

(1) We are different than animals. In Genesis 1:24-25 we see that all the living creatures have been created. Yet, God is doing something different when he creates humans. Humans will be made in the image of God. The animals are not. Therefore, animals are not equal to humans. We intrinsically know

this, though we seem to be forgetting this truth lately. If I am having financial trouble and I need to cut back on expenses, no one is going to say that I should get rid of my wife to save money. We will get rid of the fish or dog. Even though my spouse costs more and my children cost more, we recognize that there is a difference in human life versus animal life. We must never lose sight of this. Animals are not equal to humans. Humans are not animals.

(2) We have an identity. Who we are is defined by the fact that God made us. We are not defined by our desires. We are not defined by gender. We are not defined by sexuality. This is the problem with our culture right now: everyone is trying to understand who they are through their desires, gender, or sexuality. This is a false identity that will lead to disappointment. Our identity is in the Lord who created us and we must seek our value and purpose in him.

(3) We have a purpose. You and I are made in the image of God. There has been a lot of discussion about what this means. But we can understand that we are made in the image of God by taking a very simplistic point of view. I am sure there is much more to the idea that we are made in the image of God. But at minimum we can understand this. An image represents what it is made after, drawing attention to whom the image reflects. For example, what is the purpose of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.? If you have been to that memorial, you will see an enormous statue of Lincoln inside the memorial. What is the purpose of this image of Lincoln? The image itself is not important. The image is to draw people's attention to Lincoln, the person for whom the image was made. In the same way, we are made in the image of God. This means we have a purpose to draw attention to the Lord who made us in his image. Ancient near eastern kings placed images of themselves in the far off provinces of their kingdom, which told everyone that the land was part of his kingdom. We are images placed in God's kingdom, serving the same purpose while we live on this earth. You are not the point. I am not the point. I want to be the point. We want to be the point on the job. We want to be the point in our marriage. We want to be the point in our homes. But none of us are the point. God is the point and he is why we are here! Until we understand this, we will continue to suffer identity confusion.

Conclusion

This is the point that the scriptures draw for us. We are here so that we show God to the world around us. Listen to the apostle Paul as to why we are to put on a new self and have life transformation for the Lord.

But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. (Colossians 3:8–10 ESV)

This is the basis of our study in this series. We are different by design. We are made in the image of God. With this knowledge we can cut through the confusion about who we are and why have been put here on this earth by God. We are not to transform ourselves into what we think we should be but into what God has called us to be.

Made For Different Roles

We are in a series called Different By Design. In our first study we considered the confusion that our culture has right now regarding what it means to be a man and a woman. People are looking for an identity that cannot be found until they look to the Creator who made them. Our identity is not in our desires or sexuality. You will not find your identity by undergoing gender reassignment surgery. Our identity is declared in Genesis 1:26-27. You are made in the image of God. Being made in the image of God means that you are to show God to world and reflect his glory. With this knowledge we are given meaning, purpose, and identity in our lives.

What God Gave Men To Do

Genesis 2 is the further explanation of the creation of man and woman. In Genesis 2:7 we are told that the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, breathed into him the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. But notice what God does next with the man. In verse 15 God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden "to work it and keep it." God designed men for work. Sometimes we think of work as the curse of Adam's sin. But the curse was that the labor would be painful (Genesis 3:17). But work was always the design for the man. We can see this by looking at the male body. It is a utilitarian body built for strength to do work. Men were not meant to stay at home playing video games all day. You were built by God to go to work. The apostle Paul gave the command for work to the Thessalonians.

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. (2 Thessalonians 3:6–12 ESV)

What God Gave Women To Do

The Lord God makes a declaration that it is not good for the man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). So God declares that he will make the man "a helper fit for him." Adam is shown all the animals and names them. But in the process of doing so, the conclusion is reached that in none of the animals was there "a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:20). Now we need to talk about what this means.

Woman as a compliment

The idea is that she is made to be a complement to him. She is not the same as him in every way, though she is a human being and she is made in the image of God. He was made to work and she was made to compliment him. Some of the translations try to help communicate this concept.

I will make a helper as his complement. (Genesis 2:18 HCSB)

I will make a companion for him who corresponds to him. (Genesis 2:18 NET)

The point is that what the man lacks, the woman accomplishes. She is critically important. Being a compliment to him is not demeaning or derogatory in any way. Do you remember complimentary angles in geometry? Remember that the complimentary angle is the angle needed to complete the other angle so it is at 90 degrees (a right angle). The complimentary angle completes the angle. We get this if we think about it. We even have movies that say this. The man says to the woman, "You complete me." Yes! This is the point. There is nothing demeaning or derogatory in that. It is lovely. If there is anything that is derogatory, it is to the man because he is described as being incomplete without her. God's point is not to be derogatory but to teach us that we need each other. One is not better than another. Men are not better or higher than women. Women are not better or higher than men. They are meant to work together. Thus, as the ESV reads, the woman was made to fit him. She is the puzzle piece that matches him.

Woman as a helper

Now many read that she was made to be a helper for him and think that this is a derogatory term. I will agree that historically some men have misused this teaching to suggest that women are to serve men. That is not the idea of her being his helper. She is not to help you by getting you a glass of iced tea while you sit on the couch watching football. In fact, being a helper does not even suggest a lesser role or lesser value. The reason why is because God repeatedly called himself a helper, the same Hebrew word.

The God of my father was my helper and delivered me from Pharaoh's sword (Exodus 18:4 HCSB)

And this he said of Judah: "Hear, O Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him in to his people. With your hands contend for him, and be a help against his adversaries." (Deuteronomy 33:7 ESV)

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, "Till now the Lord has helped us." (1 Samuel 7:12 ESV)

In each of the above instances, God is called the helper (same Hebrew word). So we know that being a helper is not derogatory. Being a helper does not mean the person is lesser, for God is not lesser. Being a helper does not mean the person is less valuable. In fact, the Lord is praised in each of these instances because he is their helper. God being the helper means that he has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves. This is the point of Genesis when God said that woman was made to be the man's helper. She is not lesser. She is not less valuable. She is not inferior. She has a different role. She is doing for the man what he cannot do for himself. This is why she is the answer to the problem that God declares in verse 18. It is not good for the man to be alone. Another man cannot solve this (again showing that homosexuality is against God's design for humans). The animals cannot solve this. The animals cannot be the complement to him and another man cannot be the complement to him. The animals cannot be his partner. Another man cannot be his partner. The animals are not suitable for him. Another man is not suitable for him. But the woman is. She solves what the man could not solve.

The Beauty of Difference

I hope we will see that God has made it beautiful that we are different. Men and women were made with different purposes. Men and women were made for different roles. We will get into more details about the scriptures mean about the different roles in the next lesson. But before we can we need to deal with some issues that come up when talking about the differences between men and women.

First, let us begin with a false thought. Why does our culture tell us that a woman must be able to do what a man can do, and a man must be able to do what a woman can do?

All kinds of scientific studies have been done which have revealed again and again that we are born different, exactly as God said in Genesis! It is not our environment or our nurturing that makes us a man or a woman. Men and women are born different. We should know this just by looking at each other. We should know this just by talking with each other. We understand very quickly that we are different, far beyond reproductive organs. We are different in how we use our brains (<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-mens-brains-are-wired-differently-than-women/>). We are different in hormonal and chemical make up. We are different in how we handle relationships. We are different in emotional reactions. We are different in our behaviors. We know this from marriage. There is a reason why there are thousands and thousands of self-help books on marriage. If we were the same, it would be so much easier to figure each other out. Men understand men and women understand women, but men and women struggle with understanding each other. We also know this from all of the scientific and psychological studies that we have been done for the last few decades. Most importantly, we know this because the scriptures say so. God did not create two males. He created them male and female. The two are different.

Culture says that women can do anything men can do and men can do anything that women can do. Let us end this nonsense thinking right now. Men cannot breastfeed. Men cannot give birth. Does this mean that men are lesser human beings or are inferior to women because men cannot give birth and cannot breastfeed? Of course not! The whole point is to glory in our differences. Men and women I think can quickly agree that women were made physically, mentally, and emotionally for bearing, nurturing, and raising children. Somehow, after all the pain the woman goes through in childbirth, a woman wants another child. A man has one sleepless night from the newborn and he is ready to never have any more children. We are wired differently. My wife's definition of the children being ready is that they are dressed, look nice, hair is brushed, teeth are brushed, and so on. My definition of if my children are ready is that they are still breathing. "They are alive, what else do you want!" God made her different so that she could do things that men could not do and vice-versa. We are biologically different and there are things that women cannot do that men can do and there are things women can do that men cannot do. This is not a slight against either gender.

God made us specifically to do things that the other cannot do. We are supposed to be able to recognize this. God made us different. **The goal is not being able to do what the other person can do.** I think that this has been a tremendous failure in our culture's thinking for the past few decades. Not only can we not do what each other can do, we **should not** want to do what each other can do.

The problem of ignoring our different roles

But here is what happens when we do not appreciate these differences. I read this article this last week about the problem of the lack of girl action heroes. "Our girls deserve action heroes with flowing hair and combat boots. Our girls deserve to see themselves onscreen as well calling the shots behind the scenes." Here's the issue that the woman who wrote this article is missing and our culture is missing. Men are wired to protect women and children. When a gunman went into a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, two young men protected their girlfriends (not even their wives) with their bodies and took the bullets and died. Our society praised those young men and rightfully so. This is not chauvinism. If there is a strange sound in my house in the middle of the night, I do not roll over and tell my wife to go check

it out. The man checks it out. The man protects. I hope women are not saying that they want their men to tell women to put on the combat boots and be the hero when danger comes. The point has nothing to do with the fact that a woman could do this. Of course she can do it. That is not the point. The point is that the woman is to expect the man to care, protect, and provide for her. But we are trying in our culture to erase this and then we wonder why men no longer accept the proverb, "Women and children first."

This was seen in 2012 when the Italian cruise ship Costa Concordia ran aground and sank. There were several accounts of men pushing past women and children to get to the lifeboats, completely opposite of what happened when the Titanic sank 103 years ago. People were rightly angry at this display. But listen to what Slate and Jezebel magazines declared:

"And there's no real reason why ladies should get first crack at fleeing a sinking ship — although grownups probably should help children, who are smaller and less able to evacuate on their own. True, the Costa Concordia evacuation process sounds like it could have been a lot more orderly. And all things being equal, there's nothing wrong with opening a door for somebody if you feel like it, or pulling out a chair. But when we're talking about a crash that killed at least 11 people, chivalry shouldn't be at the top of our list of concerns." (<http://jezebel.com/5877296/cruise-ship-disaster-is-apparently-proof-that-chivalry-is-dead>)

Appreciating Our Differences

Sexism cannot be that we have different roles or recognizing that men and women have differences. Sexism is saying that the worth of men and women are different because of those differences. The goal is not for men and women to compete with each other. They were made to work together. They fit together and each are to use their strengths to complete the relationship. Do not erase the differences but glorify the differences. We sin when we suggest that men going to work and providing for the family is lesser or greater than women caring for and nurturing the children. Neither are lesser or greater. Men and women and their corresponding differences are made in the image of God. They were made to do different tasks. Society's goal must not be for men to be women or women to be men. We need men to be men and women to be women as God defined those roles in the scriptures. We cannot reject the purposes and roles God has given man and woman. Being a man is good. Being a woman is good. Neither are to desire being the other for neither is superior.

Turn back to Genesis 1:27. Think about what God said: "Male and female he created them." Why did God say that? Why should Genesis state the obvious? Further, consider that the animals are not described as being male and female, though clearly they were so they would reproduce. Why is Genesis emphasizing this distinction that God made them male and female? Gender is part of who you are. You were wired and made a particular way if you are a man or a woman, and that cannot be changed. Gender distinction is something God wants us to celebrate, not regret or deny. God made men to be men and women to be women.

God's Vision For Men and Women

We have been studying God's design for men and women. Our world has made a mess of what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman that we need to turn to the Lord to understand our true identity. In the last lesson we spent the time observing that God made men and women different. Amazingly, what seems to be so obvious is being denied in our culture. God made us male and female. He did not make us all female nor did he make us all male. The goal is not for men and women to be the same. Rather, Genesis teaches us that we were made to complement each other. We are not meant to be the same, but to work together for the glory of God through our differences. Since we have been talking about the false views the world has put upon us concerning our identities as men and women, we need to look to the scriptures to understand the right view of ourselves. What is God's vision for men and women? We explain this in the last lesson that a man is made to work and a woman was made to be the complement to the man. But what does this mean and what does this look like? This is what we will consider in this lesson.

The Curse (Genesis 3)

After the sin of Adam and Eve, listen to the curse that is placed on the woman in Genesis 3:16.

To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." (Genesis 3:16 ESV)

I think it is easy to misunderstand this curse. Is God saying that the curse upon the woman is that she will desire her husband? That would be a good thing that would help prevent adultery and unfaithfulness. The word for desire is a word that is used in Genesis in a negative way, not a positive way. Listen to what God told Cain in Genesis 4:7.

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." (Genesis 4:7 ESV)

Notice the same sentence construction between Genesis 3:16 and 4:7. Sin was trying to rule over Cain, but Cain must rule over it. This is the same point of the curse in Genesis 3. The woman will try to rule over the husband, but he will rule over her. English translations reflect that this is the meaning of this sentence.

You will want to control your husband, but he will dominate you." (Genesis 3:16 NET)

And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you." (Genesis 3:16 NLT)

The point I want us to see is that the temptation is going to be for the man to be passive and for the woman to take the lead. God says that women are going to want to control the men, but that is not right. We need to see that this curse is the overthrow of God's vision for men and women. In short, God says that men and women will be in conflict because of these desires. This does not make these desires correct (like we see in 1 Timothy 2; Ephesians 5; 1 Peter 3), but is reality. There will be natural difficulty between men and women in relationships. The conflict between men and women is because of sin. It is not right. It is not the way the relationship is to be. When we talk about what it means to be a man and woman, we are going to have a natural resistance to what we are hearing because of the fall of man and woman in the garden. The scriptures are restoring the marriage to what God's vision and intention are.

To say this another way: sin broke the concept of marriage in the fall but are to restore marriage to God's original intention through obedience to his laws.

God's Vision For Men

The summary of the picture God has for the man is this: The man has the divine calling to take primary responsibility for Christ-like, servant leadership, protection, and provision in the home. Women, God says in Ephesians 5:23 that you are to understand that your man is the head of your family. Men, you have a God-given responsibility to care for your home. This is why Ephesians 6:4 commands the fathers to not provoke the children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The man has the responsibility of being the spiritual leader. The man has the responsibility to be the protector and provider for the family. Even if we did not have the myriads of passages in the scriptures speaking about men ruling their household well, being head of the family, and raising the children in the instruction of the Lord, we have this leadership asserted from the very beginning.

Please consider why God condemned Adam. **"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you..." (Genesis 3:17).** Adam was the responsible person in this marriage. He was supposed to be the spiritual leader, but refused to do so by listening to his wife that encouraged him to sin with her. Adam is not excused. The man is to set the spiritual environment and lead it. Now, again, we see a rebellion against this in our culture. There is a full culture war waged on the men and the role of the man in the family. We see and hear this message that men are not necessary.

The responsibility of male leadership in the home has nothing to do with male dominance. In fact, the scriptures condemn where any man uses his position as a means to dominate or compel others in the family. Remember, God commanded the men to love their wives like Christ loved the church. Think about how Jesus brought about our submission. We submit to the Lord, not because Jesus strong armed us and forced, but because he sacrificed himself for us. In the same way, men lead their families, not through domination or force, but by sacrificing himself for his wife and children. Men, you are never told to subordinate your wife. You are never told to take or force her submission. Submission is given, not taken or demanded or forced. The man gives himself. The women and the children are first. Self-sacrifice is what makes you a man and not a boy. Men give themselves. Boys take for themselves.

Further, the responsibility of the man to be the spiritual leader in the home does not mean women are incapable or incompetent. It is a false idea to believe that since there is difference in the role of men and women there must be a difference in competence. I think this is why male leadership is fought against. Man being the spiritual leader of the family does not mean that the woman is not competent or capable of such. My wife is far more competent and capable over many things than I am. It is why I married her. I know she excels in areas over myself and I do not suppress this truth but encourage it. She can be and is better than me in all kinds of things. We see this in the scriptures where we read about women prophets, women supporting the ministry of Jesus, and being very active for the Lord. But I am the one responsible for the leadership of our family. God has laid that on me. God is telling us that women will flourish and have joy in a relationship where the husband leads well. If men did as they ought, as described in Ephesians 5:25, then women would flourish in their submission in that relationship. But here is how we know that having a different role does not mean that there is a difference in competence or value: Jesus. Jesus submitted to the will of the Father and exercised a different role than the Father and the Holy

Spirit. Was Jesus lesser in anyway because he did this? Absolutely not. In the same way, a woman is not lesser in any way at all just because she has a different role in the relationship than the man.

Men, even though you are called to be the spiritual leader of the home, you are to honor your wife (1 Peter 3:7), be understanding of her (1 Peter 3:7), and lead like Jesus led in humility, love, and self-sacrifice (Ephesians 5:25-33). We are commanded to do this because it is not natural, but the way we honor and serve God while on earth. Men, if your wife is not doing all you desire, then you must ask yourself if you are leading her well and sacrificing yourself for her.

God's Vision For Women

In Titus 2 God gives Titus the instructions to give to the women concerning their role.

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. (Titus 2:3-5 ESV)

If the younger women need to be trained in these things, then we are learning that what is being taught here is not natural for her. A woman will not wake up and instinctively do these things. The first thing the women are taught to do is to love their husbands and their children. The woman's first responsibility is to her husband and children. Do we see how God made this relationship to fit together beautifully? God made the man's responsibility to be to love his wife like Jesus did and God made the woman's responsibility to love her husband and children. Her concern is for her husband and her children and this is her service to the Lord. We read this in Proverbs 31 where all that we see her doing is for the welfare of her husband and children, not herself. She is not doing for herself but for him. **"She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life" (Proverbs 31:12)**. She is sacrificing herself for what is good for her husband and her children all throughout that chapter. This is what it looks like to love your husband and children, to work at home, and be submissive to her own husband (Titus 2:4-5).

Let us look at this another way: if what you are doing as a woman is not doing your husband and children good, but is to their harm, you must stop what you are doing. Obviously this would include sinful things but those are not the only things. If your actions are harming him or your children, if the action is not sinful, it must be stopped. This is how you love your husband and your children. Paul said to the Ephesians that women are to respect her husband. Notice that it does not say that he is supposed to earn your respect. You are commanded to give it. You love and respect your husband by doing what is good for him and for the family, not what you think is good, but what is truly good for them.

Consider this: just as we noted that a woman flourishes and has joy in a relationship where the husband leads well, so also men flourish and have joy in a relationship where the wife yields and helps the relationship in all areas of life. Women, your submission is given. He is not to make you yield to his direction and leadership. You are to give it willingly, even if it leads the family in less desirable areas of life. Ask him what you can do or change that is for his good and for the family and then do it. You are not to compete with him. You were made by God to complete him, to fill what is lacking, not to destroy him and attempt to exercise superiority. Remember that Genesis 3 told the women that your temptation is going to be to rule over him. But notice that this is not what God wants. You are not to follow into this temptation but to yield to him.

Proverbs 31 is particularly interesting in its description of this godly woman. In the middle of describing all the good she is doing for her husband and children, it says, **“Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land” (Proverbs 31:23)**. Then the text returns to talking about all the good she does for her husband and children. Is this saying that the excellent woman marries a successful person? No. The point is that what she is doing has made him a success. The reason he sits in the gates and is respected in the community is because of what she does. Women, if your husband is not what you desire him to be, then your work is to do things to cause that success for him. Your work is to not complain, nag, and destroy him. Your work is to encourage him by doing him good.

Conclusion

Let me end with this question: what if you are single? You will notice that scriptures speak of God's vision for men and women in terms of how they relate to each other. A man is a godly man by how he treats his wife. A woman is a godly woman by how she treats her husband. If you are single, then you are practicing these things now.

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. (1 Timothy 2:8–10 ESV)

Single men are working, showing their willingness to sacrifice for a woman, ready to protect and provide for her, living a life devoted to the Lord (1 Timothy 2:8). Single women are professing godliness with their modesty and self-control, showing good works, living a life devoted to the Lord (1 Timothy 2:9-10).