

Hot Topics

The Patriarchy
Ephesians 5:25-28

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Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself (Ephesians 5:25-28).

Introduction

Judges records a wild story about a woman named Jael. Jael was instrumental in delivering the Israelites from King Jabin of Canaan. Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army thought he could find refuge in the house of Jael. In a seeming gesture of accommodation, she welcomed him in, covered him with a blanket. He asked for some water, and she brought him some milk instead. He then asked her to be a lookout for him (keep a lookout sweetie). Having endued this evil commander with a sense of comfort, she proceeded to grab a tent peg and a mallet and **"drove the peg into his temple"** (Judges 4:21).

What does the Bible say about her behavior? Women were not to wear the gear designed for a warrior (Deuteronomy 22:5). Was she cursed or judged for taking matters into her own hands like this? It appears not. Although a less significant character than Mary, she is considered **"most blessed of women"** (Judges 5:24).

They even write a song about it in the next chapter, a song about a violent as many current rap songs. Deborah and Barak singing about how Jael **"crushed his head...shattered and pierced his temple"** (Judges 5:26). So, whatever your understanding of the patriarchy, biblically it doesn't exclude the possibility of a woman with a mallet and a tent peg. All to say, it's not a simple topic.

A Creation Mandate

We will be taking a break from our study of Luke to engage an issue that impacts our most basic and fundamental understanding of humanity—men and women. It is where the Bible begins. Scripture records the first five days of creation quite rapidly. But on the sixth day, when it comes to the creation of man, things come to a screeching halt, as if to say that everything to this point was merely the stage, now we have the stars of the show. Creation appears to be a house that God created for His children.

At the heart of this record, we read these weighty words,

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).

Men and women are made in the image of God. Any understanding of humanity which would seek to undermine the inherent beauty and value in either of the sexes is patently unbiblical. The question before us here is, does this mean that men and women are the same in design and role? In the second chapter of Genesis, we read the supplemental account of creation which contain the somewhat unpopular words,

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2:18).

With the equality of value and beauty ever lighting the room, we must not miss this message of the roles and responsibilities of the sexes. Here, at the very beginning we see a creation mandate laid out for us. If the head of your arrow is one inch off in the beginning, you will miss the target by a mile. And we live in an era where the initial anthropological dynamic of a man being a man, a woman being a woman and a family being a family is under siege. Arrows are flying all over the place.

“Christian” Views of Men and Women

It would be overly ambitious to seek to engage the entire dynamic of the “non-binary” movement. It will have to be sufficient for our current purpose to restrict ourselves to those views that, at least, seek to present

themselves as if they are either Christian or traditional. But what we will find is (and this shouldn't surprise us) the more biblical we get, the more hostile the world is to the position.

Egalitarianism

The first and probably least biblical view of men and women is known as *egalitarianism* or *equalitarianism*. The world is generally very tolerant of this view. Egalitarianism is a philosophy derived from a misunderstanding of Paul's words in Galatians,

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

Of course, there were still Jews and Greeks. Paul wrote in great detail about his **"kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3)**. They were Jews. Of course, there were still slaves and free. Paul had written to slaves and how they should interact with their masters (Ephesians 6:5). Of course there were still male and female. Paul wrote about how husbands and wives should function (Ephesians 5:21-33). Paul wrote that elders should be a **"one woman man" (1 Timothy 3:2)** *mias gyne aner*. These are not gender-neutral words.

Whether intentional or not I cannot say, but the egalitarian seems to miss Paul's context. If you belong to Christ, whether Jew, Greek, slave, free, male or female, you are **"heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29)**. Neither your gender, nationality, social status, intellect, talent, virtue, etc. can separate a true believer from the love of God and the riches of heaven.

Egalitarians have gone so far as to create their own translation of the Bible, *The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation*. To be sure, there are passages in good translations where a gender-neutral word would be sufficient. But egalitarians function as if the New Covenant has entirely disavowed the clear Old Testament teachings on the roles of men and women. Nothing can be further from the truth.

Jesus picked twelve men to be apostles, even though He clearly was not concerned with the social pressures of His day or the education of His followers (John 4; Acts 4:13). Paul taught that elders should be men. He

also taught that women should not teach or have authority of a man (1 Timothy 2:12).

The egalitarian position is so patently unbiblical that it requires Christians intentionally ignore, or emotively dismiss the plain and obvious reading of Scripture. The remaining two positions aren't as simple to analyze.

Complementarianism

Complementarianism seems to have won the day among more orthodox Christians. I would probably use this word to describe myself (at least somewhat). It is a fairly new term (Wayne Grudem and John Piper coined the term in the late 1980s). Both egalitarianism and complementarianism are smooth off the palate. One sounds like equal, the other like you're paying a compliment. But that is not the type of complement in view.

Complementarianism promotes "equality with beneficial differences." Adam was given "**a helper fit for him**" (**Genesis 2:18**). Men and women have complementary roles. As Rocky Balboa would say, "She got gaps. I got gaps -- together we fill the gaps."

Complementarianism is generally a pretty solid biblical position so I will not spend much time critiquing it. The world doesn't particularly like it, but it doesn't hate it so long as you keep your male headship views in your own church.

Churches that believe that men should be pastors, elders and deacons are, for the most part, complementarian. Complementarians also believe that fathers should be heads of households. Good enough. How does this differ from patriarchy?

Patriarchy

Patriarchy (or as it's often called, The Patriarchy, which literally means father-rule) is a type of unfiltered complementarianism. It tends to go beyond the church or family in its application. Anything from combat to civic office, the participants, according to an exacting or rigorous patriarchy, should be male.

As you might expect, there is a very wide spectrum among self-proclaimed patriarchists, on these matters. One pretty outspoken patriarchist indicated that had he lived in England in the 1980s, he would have voted for Margaret Thatcher. I think if Condoleezza Rice ran for president, I might vote for her.

While I don't think it is a good idea to embrace a position simply because the world hates it, I do think the adage is true that you can measure the integrity of a person based upon the character of their enemies. And I must say, the darkest in this dark world hate the whole idea of a patriarchy.

One needn't descend to the basement of your local library to find a venomous assessment of the so-called patriarchy. Secular sociologists define it as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women. One of the strategies employed by patriarchists to keep the exploitation functioning is, according to Shulamith Firestone (a radical-libertarian feminist), is to convince women that there is joy in giving birth, which she labels "a patriarchal myth."

Other theorists (Irish Marion Young and Heidi Hartmann, who are socialist Marxist feminists) weave the patriarchy into a denunciation of capitalism (another word becoming increasingly vilified). Along with many movements (before you jump on board with a movement, please read their charter) those who steam against the patriarchy believe one of the answers is to overturn, what they call the "heteropatriarchal family." Or better known as "the family."

In short, when the world fixes their gaze upon patriarchy, the words 'dominance,' 'oppression,' 'repression,' 'inferiority,' and 'subservience,' are its assessment, words that certainly do not arise from a dispassionate evaluation. The contraption of patriarchy is, according to its critics, is the cause for almost every evil from the dawn of man. Their understanding of human history is one where men and women have abused and hated each other in virtually every venue of life. And this is simply not true.

The problem is not patriarchy. The problem is sin. In fact, human history has been a testimony to men loving, caring, protecting and providing for their wives and wives thriving in an environment where men take that responsibility to heart.

True biblical patriarchy is not about oppression or paying certain people less money for doing the same job. It is not about power mongering

at the expense of well-being of women. It is dangerously ironic that those who rage against patriarchy focus on positions of power. They are not looking for equality in ditch-digging, roofing or bricklaying. It is power. And people who are hungry for power are dangerous people, regardless of their sex.

And the supposed solutions to the current patriarch problem have had a dismal effect upon the world in which we live. I think Kevin DeYoung puts it accurately when he writes,

What school or church or city center or rural hamlet is better off when fathers no longer rule? Where communities of women and children can no longer depend upon men to protect and provide, the result is not freedom and independence. Fifty years of social science research confirms what common sense and natural law never forgot: as go the men, so goes the health of families and neighborhoods. The choice is not between patriarchy and enlightened democracy, but between patriarchy and anarchy.

And entire conference can be dedicated to this topic. But I must conclude with two basic points. First, like anything else (any system of social structure), it is not a cure for sin. I have seen up close and personal men who, in the name of patriarchy, have been self-centered, harsh, uncaring and cruel. Their wives feel trapped and abused and their children can't wait to get out of the house.

Second, in order for the patriarchy to produce that which is lovely, we must develop a biblical understanding of fatherhood. When Jesus was asked how we should pray, He said, **"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven"** (Matthew 6:9). Father is the Greek word *pater*. God is Spirit (John 4:24), so God the Father doesn't have body parts, or the biology used among creatures to determine maleness. But we are to think of God as a Father.

He is a Father who loves us, provides for us, protects us, knows us, never abandons us and on and on. If fathers on earth sought to emulate their Father in heaven, the patriarchy would be the beautiful thing God has designed it to be. To take it a step further, God the Father, because of His great love, sent God the Son (John 3:16).

And with Jesus we have another picture of a Father (Isaiah 9:6) and a Groom.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself (Ephesians 5:25-28).

The verb in verse 25 of the above passage “**gave**” *paredoken* is used in Matthew 17:22 where Jesus says that He is going to be “**delivered**” into the hands of sinful men. Jesus, because of His love for us, His bride, orchestrated His own betrayal. Are men willing to take this kind of action—this kind of responsibility?

If the Father in heaven or the Groom of the bride becomes the model for men, then patriarchy becomes something beautiful. And that will only happen when we place our trust in Him.