

# Male and Female Created He Them

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Genesis 1:26–28  
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Sometimes we don't know what to make of things. I suppose this is what it means to live in a fallen world.

A good example of this is Clint Eastwood. He's one of my favorite actors and directors. And even though he's ninety-three years old, he has more talent than 98 percent of Hollywood's greatest stars. But I have to admit that a lot of his films, especially his early ones, leave me wondering what the point was. It's obvious who the bad guys and good guys are supposed to be, but the bad guys don't seem so bad and the good guys aren't so good. So, who really wins?

The current gender debate leaves us in the same place. Does anybody really know what distinguishes a man from a woman? Womanhood seems to be an elusive quality that no one can put his finger on.

Last year, Matt Walsh released his documentary, *What is a Woman?* to the disappointment of gender ideologues, but their critiques were painfully disappointing. They simply couldn't answer the question. Saying that a woman is someone who identifies as a woman doesn't tell us what they're identifying as. The film ended with Walsh's wife defining a woman as an adult human female.

Walsh's definition of a woman may satisfy him, but it doesn't satisfy me. It's not that it's incorrect, but that it's incomplete. A lot more needs to be said. Today's text gives us a good starting point. The Word of God says that God created two, and only two, sexes — male and female — and that the reason for this was to fill the earth with other male and female image-bearers. Or more correctly, God created our first parents to fill the earth with individuals capable of fellowshiping with and serving him.

So, let's see what else we can add to clarify what the Scriptures say about this timely subject.

## Male

Let's begin with males.

In Genesis 1, God, speaking to both the man and the woman, declared that he made both in his image and instructed them to be fruitful. Of course, they couldn't be fruitful at all unless they were male and female and acted accordingly. The Lord also told them to exercise dominion over creation.

Now, if we had only this passage of Scripture before us and didn't reflect on what it says, we might suppose that God's expectations applied in exactly the same way to both sexes. But this isn't true. A man's role in bringing children into the world is very different from a woman's. Biologically, males can only beget and females can only bear their young. There's no escaping this.

A decade or two ago, most people would have called what I just said common sense. But common sense is not a good argument. If we want to understand the differences between males and females, we have to turn to the Bible. God himself must define these words since he's the one who made the two sexes.

This takes us to today's first stopping point — Genesis 2. Before God made a female companion for Adam, he gave Adam several very specific commands. According to Genesis 2:15, he *put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it*. Note his responsibility: he was to engage in agriculture. The text goes on to say that God wanted Adam to name the animals. Thus, his duties included both agriculture and animal husbandry. Do you see a theme here? Adam's main sphere of activity from the time that God created him was the outside world. He was to tame and fashion an environment suitable for covenant life. He had to make the world in which God placed him a home for himself and his family.

The same theme continues in the next chapter. After Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord judged both of them but in different ways. Adam's judgment emphasized the world and the work that God had assigned him in it. God said, *Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground* (vv. 17–19).

Thankfully, living in a sin-cursed world was only temporary. In Romans 8, the apostle Paul explained how the creation had been and would be redeemed by the Son of God. He wrote, *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now* (vv. 20–22).

We should note before going any further that what I just said is a general statement. In Scripture, women sometimes work outdoors. Rachel tended her father's sheep, as did Moses' wife and her sisters. And the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 surveyed a field, bought it and planted a vineyard (v. 16). Yet, the general principle stands: man provides the home. The primary responsibility is his, though he can and must involve his wife.

And further, Genesis 2 doesn't just speak about providing a home. It also mentions guarding or protecting it. God instructed Adam to tend and keep it. Men are generally the protectors of home and society.

## Female

Now, let's turn our attention to females.

The first thing we learn about Eve in the Bible is that God made her to be Adam's helper or companion. Even before God brought the animals to Adam to name them, he said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him* (Gen. 2:18). He then took one of Adam's ribs and formed Eve.

So what does it mean for Eve to be Adam's helper? Was she to be his servant? No, that's not the point at all. The idea of the woman being a helper goes back to the original mandate in Genesis 1. Eve was to help Adam by working with him to fill the earth, subdue it and exercise dominion over it. They were to be united in their service to God.

However, the woman's role took a turn in Genesis 3 after the fall. God's judgment against her had to do with an aspect of filling the earth that only she could do, viz., childbearing. Genesis 3:16 says, *Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.* Of course, this wasn't all bad. The fact that Eve would bear children meant she could still fill that role given to her in the creation mandate. The human race would continue, and the earth would be filled. But the fall made it a lot harder. It also guaranteed that the curse against the serpent would be fulfilled: the seed of the woman would triumph over the devil.

The role of the woman was so vital to God's program of redemption that believing women throughout the Old Testament had an intense desire to bear children, always hoping that one of their little ones would be the promised deliverer. Eve thought that her firstborn son, Cain, was the Messiah. According to Genesis 4:1, she said, *I have gotten a man from the LORD.* The Hebrew literally says, 'I have gotten a man, even the LORD.' She thought her child was God incarnate. Consider also Sarah, Rachel, Manoah's wife, Hannah, and many others. But of course, Mary was the woman whose seed crushed the devil's head. Of all the women who will ever live on the face of the earth, she alone was the Θεοτόκος or bearer of God. Galatians 4:4–5 says, *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.*

Now, what does this mean? I'm not saying that women need to stay home, barefoot and pregnant, but that women exercise their role in the dominion mandate more internally than men do. When our daughter died two years ago, I remember my wife saying, "God formed her inside my belly, and I fed her from my breasts. The pain is so great." Mothers have a very special and privileged relationship with their children because of this bond. They relate to their children in a way that neither I nor any other man can fully understand.

But the physiological features of a woman that make this possible are only part of the equation. The Lord also equipped them with the psychological makeup to nurture children. They want a home and family. To use contemporary lingo, they want a crib they can call their own.

This comes out in a very interesting passage in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 2, Paul wrote, *And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety* (vv. 14–15). Huh? Christian women will be saved in childbearing? What can this mean? Does it mean they'll be saved *because* they have children? No, Mormons might think so, but the Bible says that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. Bearing children has no part in this. So, what did Paul mean? I believe he meant that having children is part of the sanctification process that Christian mothers have to go through. God sanctifies them when they experience the pain of labor, and he sanctifies them even more as they slowly learn how to raise and discipline their children to his glory.

Being a mother is hard. It comes with great pain and frustration and seemingly insufferable trials. Thus, according to the book of Proverbs, a virtuous woman's husband praises her in the gates and her children rise up to call her blessed (Prov. 31:28).

I further believe this is why God doesn't allow women in the ministry. How awful it would be for a woman to have to go through birthing and child-rearing, and still have to shoulder the tremendous burden of ministering the Word of God to God's people! Knowing how demanding the ministry is, I wouldn't want my wife to do it. This isn't an injustice to women. It's an act of mercy.

## The Image of God

The last topic I want to cover today is the image of God. How do maleness and femaleness express God's likeness in his creatures?

According to Genesis 1, both males and females bear God's image. His image includes, among other things, rationality. Without the ability to reason, even though it's been corrupted by the fall, we wouldn't be able to understand God's commands. We wouldn't know what it means to multiply, fill the earth or exercise dominion.

Here's where this becomes important. Men, generally speaking, bear God's image in the outside world. They grow crops, raise animals, build cities and businesses, and so forth. But sometimes women do these things, too. And women generally bear God's image internally. They have a bond with their children (and even their husbands) that no man can know or understand. Yet, Jacob was more domestic than Esau. Even Jesus showed a sort of motherly characteristic when he wept over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37. He said, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* He described himself as a mother hen caring for her little chicks.

But how is it possible for the two sexes to adjust their roles like this? It's not because a person can will himself or herself to have a different gender. That's nonsense. We saw last week that God alone has the right to define his creation, and he doesn't make mistakes. But we can change the roles we have in a limited way because we're rational creatures, made in the image of God. Being rational, we can adapt in ways animals can't. We can learn new things and assume new duties. We can grow. And we have to do this to fulfill the creation mandate. Before we can exercise dominion over cows, penguins and other creatures, we must learn to govern ourselves.

There are two important dangers to avoid in talking about the differences between males and females.

One is to minimize the difference and treat the two sexes alike, to deny the unique role and contribution each makes. This is a great loss to everyone. To borrow from the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12, it's like insisting that every part of the human body be an eye. If our arms and legs were eyes, and if every other part of our bodies were eyes, how could we hear or taste or move about?

The other danger is to separate the two sexes so much that they have little, if anything, in common. Often, one becomes nothing more important than the other, a mere appendage or servant. In this scenario, wives tend to suffer the most.

But there's one principle that helps us maintain the right balance, and it's this: male and female are equal in standing before the Lord Jesus Christ. Regarding salvation, neither one has an advantage over the other. Galatians 2:28 says, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* Husbands and wives are co-heirs of the grace of life, having been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb, and should treat each other

accordingly. When we honor this principle, we'll find that it's a lot easier for each of us to accept whatever role God has given us. Amen.