

Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

21 May 2008

Some Reflections on What the Bible Teaches about Men's and Women's Roles

Context: This Sunday we will be studying 1 Timothy 2:8-15, a passage addressing the roles of men and women in the church. For obvious reasons, this section of Scripture is one of the most controversial passages in the entire Bible. To assist you in benefitting from Sunday's sermon, tonight's study will overview what the Bible teaches on men's and women's roles and be an opportunity for you to ask relevant questions.

Read: 1 Timothy 2:8-15

Discussion:

- I. Why might the roles of men and women be a controversial issue? Does the fact that this issue has been particularly explosive since the 1960's tell us anything?
- II. Since men's and women's roles are so controversial, does that mean we should ignore them and focus on less divisive matters? Why or why not?
- III. Consider what practical ramifications your understanding of the roles of men and women in the family and church might have. What consequences might we experience if we disobey or ignore or misconstrue the Bible's teaching on this matter?
- IV. Did anyone here grow up in a church with a female pastor(s)? How did that influence your conception of Christianity?

Study:

- I. Men's and Women's roles and the Gospel:
 - A. One's understanding of how men and women are to function in the home and church is not part of the Gospel. If someone's trust is in Jesus Christ, they are saved, regardless of what they believe about women pastors or about who is the head of the family. We believe in justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, not justification through a particular understanding of masculinity and femininity. We should view those who disagree with us on this matter as brothers and sisters in Christ, if they share our understanding of the Gospel.
 - B. However, even through agreement on this matter is not essential for being a Christian, the ramifications are enormous. Imagine how our church would change if its leaders were women and not men; imagine how your home might change if the wife was the head of the home and not the husband. Confusion on these matters can lead to great marital conflict (even divorce), passive husbands, effeminate sons, discouraged wives, discontent daughters, and weak, ineffective churches. Perhaps part of the reason why men tend to ignore church¹ is because we have failed to speak with clarity and obey with humility on this issue.
- II. Some Key Terminology:
 - A. Egalitarianism – The view that since men and women are of equal dignity and worth, they therefore have the right to have equal roles in the home and church. Women can be pastors, women can be heads of their households, etc.
 - B. Complementarianism² – The view that though men and women are of equal dignity and worth they were intentionally designed by God for different roles. Men are to provide leadership in the contexts of the home and church and women are to fulfill support roles.

¹ It is not uncommon for your average evangelical church to be comprised of an overwhelmingly majority of women. Typical surveys discover that most churches are 65-70% female members. Just Google the words "men," "church," and "attendance" to find a number of such surveys.

² The definitive resource for understanding the Bible's teaching on complementarianism is *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* by John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991).

- C. Headship – Essentially a synonym for leadership but usually used to refer to male leadership in the home and church.

III. Manhood and Womanhood in Creation, Family, and Church – Five Key Issues:³

- A. Men and women have been created equal in value and dignity:

- 1. Scriptural Support:

- a. Genesis 1:27 – So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.⁴
- b. Galatians 3:28-29 – 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. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

- 2. Applications:

- a. Men and women are equally important and equally valuable to God. We should never conclude that men are better than women or that women are superior to men. Jokes about all women being bad drivers, or all men being Neanderthals, etc. are not consistent with a biblical worldview.
- b. Parents shouldn't feel disappointed when they have children of one gender or teach or imply that their children they are inferior because they are born a particular gender. If God equally values both genders, we should as well.

- B. Men and women have different roles in the family and church as part of God's created order:

- 1. Men, women, and singleness:

- a. When we talk about male headship, we are not talking about one gender being subject to another gender. No where does the Bible say all women are to be subject to all men.
- b. The primary relationship picture of the relation between men and women in a church is brother and sister – which implies no subjection:
 - 1 Timothy 5:1-2 – Treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.
- c. Marriage is good, but God teaches us that some are called to be celibate for His sake (and this is also good):
 - i. 1 Corinthians 7:7 – I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.
 - ii. Jesus was the most fully human person who ever lived yet never married. Therefore we understand that marriage is not essential to being a full, complete person.
- d. Male headship is limited to the contexts of family and church. Husbands are to be the leaders of their families (Ephesians 5:22; 6:4) and godly, qualified men are to be the pastors of churches (1 Timothy 2:11-15; 3:1-7).

- 2. Ten Biblical Reasons Why Male Headship was Ordained before the Fall and is Therefore Not a Result of Sin:

- a. In the Genesis creation account, Adam was created first then Eve:
 - i. Genesis 2:7, 18 – Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living

³ Much of the following material comes from a seminar delivered by Wayne Grudem at Bethlehem Baptist Church in March of 2006 and his *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 454-471.

⁴ All Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, *English Standard Version*, copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles.

creature...Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

- ii. 1 Timothy 2:12, 13 – I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.
- b. Even through Eve sinned first, humanity was charged with the guilt of Adam's sin. This demonstrates that, at least in this context, Adam (the male) was representing the entire human race:
 - i. Romans 5:12 – Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 15:22 – For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.
- c. Adam was given the responsibility of naming his wife. He called her by the name "woman:"

Genesis 2:23 – Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Throughout the Bible, the one giving something its name possesses authority over that thing (i.e., God calling the light day, etc.).
- d. When God named the entire human race, He named it "man" not "woman" or even a generic Hebrew word for "people" or "humankind:"
 - i. Genesis 5:1-2 – When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.⁵
 - ii. The Hebrew word for "man" is "Adam".
- e. After the Fall, God holds Adam chiefly responsible for the sin. Though Eve was the first to sin, God addresses Adam first:
 - i. Genesis 3:8-9 – And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"
 - ii. Romans 5:12 – Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.
- f. God designed Eve as a helper for Adam. This is the purpose for which she was created:
 - i. Genesis 2:18 – Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." (See also verses 18-22)
 - ii. "Helper" is not a demeaning term for God is called "helper" often in Scripture (i.e., Psalm 10:14; 30:10; etc.).
- g. When Adam and Eve sinned, they (and consequent humanity) were cursed by God for their rebellion. However, the curse brought distortion of previous roles not an introduction of new roles. Compare Genesis 3:16 and 4:7:
 - i. 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."

⁵ Though Genesis 5 is after the Fall, verses 1 and 2 recount an event before the Fall.

- ii. 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.
 - 1. “Desire for” can mean “desire against”. The phrase is only used 3 times in the OT, and only 2 times in Moses’ writings: here and Genesis 4:7. Just like sin desired to control and use Cain, the woman will be naturally tempted to control and oppose her husband.
 - 2. The word for “rule” in 3:16 has the connotation of oppress or dominate by strength. This is certainly not what the Scriptural idea of godly male headship should look like. This too is a tendency after the Fall in men, to dominate and oppress their wives.
 - 3. The curse brought pain in Adam’s responsibility – getting food from the ground would be difficult. Likewise, the curse brought pain in Eve’s responsibility – child bearing would be difficult and she would “desire” her husband. In other words, one result of sin would be that the woman would seek to usurp the man’s leadership.

- h. In salvation and sanctification, the curses of sin are replaced by blessings. In Christ, things are restored to the way they were created to be:
 - Colossians 3:18-19 – Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.
 - i. On the part of the wife, godliness leads to submission, not opposition.
 - ii. On the part of the husband, godliness leads to love, not harshness.

- i. From the beginning of creation, marriage was designed to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church.
 - Ephesians 5:31-32 – “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.
 - i. A biblical mystery is something hinted at in the OT and explained fully only in the NT.
 - ii. Marriage is meant to be a pattern of Christ and the church. Obviously, that relationship includes submission to Christ’s authority.
 - iii. This means that submission is NOT culturally variable, since the relationship between Christ and his church is not culturally variable.

- j. Consider the parallel in the Trinity. The equality, differences, and unity between men and women reflect the equality, differences, and unity in the Trinity.
 - 1 Corinthians 11:3 – But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.
 - i. Is there equality in the Trinity?
 - ii. Are there different roles in the Trinity?
 - iii. Jesus did not complain that He was sent to do the Father’s will. Rather, He said, “Not my will but yours be done.” He gladly functioned according to His role.
 - iv. When did the idea of headship and submission begin?
 - 1. In the Roman Empire, when men were physically stronger than women? No.
 - 2. In the 1920’s, as a reaction to women’s rights? No.
 - 3. In Ephesus, in response to 1 Timothy 2? No.

4. With the Old Testament patriarchs? No.
5. As a result of the Fall of Genesis 3? No.
6. With the created order in Eden? No!
7. Answer: It never began. It has always existed within the eternal fellowship of the Trinity.⁶

v. A few implications:

1. This shows us that authority is not based on gifts or intelligence or ability but rather on God-designated role.
2. Submission to authority is noble. This virtue has been demonstrated eternally in the glad fellowship and unity of the Triune Eternal God.
3. Submission to authority does not exclude the mutual giving of honor. Rather, the husband is to demonstrate honor to the wife as the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3) just as God the Father gives honor to God the Son (John 17:1).

o *Conclusion – since male headship is part of God's creation design, it is not a result of sin which we should seek to overcome, nor is it a cultural distinctive unique to Bible times. It is something that should be taught and obeyed in every home and church.*

C. What does male headship look like in practice? How does it work?

1. The following chart demonstrates the Biblical ideal contrasted with various errors we fallen humans tend toward:

	Error of Passivity	Biblical Ideal	Error of Aggressiveness
Husband	Wimp	Loving Humble Headship	Tyrant
Wife	Doormat	Joyful Intelligent Submission	Usurper

2. In addition to leadership roles, the Bible teaches primary responsibilities:

- a. The husband is to provide for, protect, and spiritually shepherd his wife and family (Ephesians 6:4).
- b. The wife's primary responsibility is to nurture the children and care for the home (Titus 2:3-6).
- c. Godly, qualified men are to function in the leadership roles of pastors/elders/bishops/overseers in the church (1 Timothy 2:11-15).

D. The equality and differences between men and women are very good.

1. The created order is fair.
2. The created order is best for us.
3. The created order is beautiful and "very good".

⁶ Due to 1 Corinthians 11:3, some egalitarians/evangelical feminists (even evangelicals) have begun to tamper with the doctrine of the Trinity – saying the Father actually submits to the Son and that "mutual submission" exists in the Trinity.

4. Because of the controversy in culture regarding this Biblical teaching, we have a tendency not to rejoice in this matter as we should. A family or church that delights in the God-ordained roles will stand out as unique in our society and have evangelistic potential (Matthew 5:16).
- E. Our view of manhood and womanhood is a watershed issue that tests our obedience to the Bible:
1. Evangelical feminism/egalitarianism does not advance on the strength of exegetical, biblically faithful arguments. Consequently, it encourages a loose, nonchalant, disrespectful attitude toward Scripture and a pick-and-choose mentality toward God's commands.
 2. Egalitarianism advances through:
 - a. Incorrect interpretations of the Bible (i.e., performing exegetical gymnastics to somehow make the phrase "I do not allow a woman to teach or have authority over a man" mean "allow a woman to teach and have authority over a man.").
 - b. Reading into Scripture things that are not there (i.e., claiming Paul had an oppressive mother, was therefore tainted by his childhood, and as a result became a male chauvinist).
 - c. Incorrect assumptions about the meanings of words (i.e., claiming that the word "head" in 1 Corinthians 11:3 does not mean leader but "source").
 - d. Incorrect assumptions about world history (i.e., claiming that the women of Ephesus were unusually ignorant and therefore incompetent to teach men).
 - e. Methods of interpretation that reject the authority of Scripture and tend toward liberalism (i.e., denying the authority of Genesis 1-3 – this is even being done by "evangelicals" to defend egalitarian principles.⁷)
 - f. Rejecting Scripture as our authority and deciding on the basis of personal experience or private revelations (i.e., the female televangelist who claims God has called her to preach, though such a calling obviously contradicts the Bible).
 3. Evangelical feminism has 2 significant allies:
 - a. Much of secular culture supports feminism and egalitarianism. They have TV, the movies, etc. on their side.
 - b. There are numerous egalitarian churches in existence today. This is the predominant view of the vast majority of mainline, liberal denominations and some evangelical groups.
 - c. Christian who are complementarian yet lack courage to teach their views or to take a stand in the controversy (Acts 20:26-27). Therefore, let us lovingly speak the truth with courage and obey with humility what God says on this important area.

Application:

- I. Can you honestly say that you think members of the opposite sex are equally valuable in God's sight?
- II. Before this lesson, what did you think male headship was primarily based on? Tradition? Expedience? Physical strength? The Bible?
- III. How does the Bible's teaching on male and female roles compare with the ideas and attitudes expressed in our culture? What are some contexts in which Christians will be counter-cultural in this area?

⁷ It's no coincidence that many churches that ordained women in the 70's and 80's are ordaining homosexuals today. The presuppositions underlying both acts are the same. Embracing the hermeneutic that subverts male headship puts one on a trajectory toward the approval of homosexual behavior and homosexual ordination.

IV. If women cannot serve as pastors, what ministry roles might they legitimately fulfill in the church?

V. Discuss the following situation:

Susie and Bob are married, the parents of two small children, and members of a good Bible, believing church. Susie is a very intelligent lady who enjoys leading family devotions in her home. Based on a strong, internal impression, she is starting to think that the Lord might be calling her to be a pastor. The present pastor of their church does not agree, declaring that women teaching the Bible is always contrary to God's will. In response, the pastor proceeds to relieve the women of the church of all their teaching responsibilities, including the children's Sunday school classes as well as the ladies' Bible studies, announcing that all these should be taught by men.

VI. What idea most stood out to you from this lesson and why?