

The Making of Woman ~ Gen 2:18-23

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on October 7, 2007

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This morning we're going to look at a subject you don't often hear sermons about – biblical femininity and masculinity – in particular, God's original design for feminine humanity made in His image. The title of this message could also be “biblical womanhood.” This should be of special interest to all of you ladies, young ladies, girls, mature women, mothers, married or unmarried gals – we're going to look at what the Bible says about how God made you. 2 weeks ago we learned about the making of man, today we're going to look at the making of woman, which in Genesis 2 has more verses and attention devoted to it, and many profound and practical lessons for us today.

God has a specific and special role and place for both the male and female gender and the guidelines He has laid down in His word are for the good of both. God has designed for marriage and the church to function a certain way, and anytime any of us seek to do things differently and to find satisfaction or fulfillment outside of the unchanging standard from our loving God, there are serious consequences. We also miss out on the true joy God intends for us by the way He designed us. When man or woman distort or depart from the biblical teaching and role for masculinity or femininity, we suffer great confusion and chaos and conflict of the sexes.

I could spend many minutes illustrating the gender crisis in our culture as manifested in many ways:

- in wrong thinking by men on these matters
- in radical feminism
- in rising divorce rates
- in relational difficulties
- in our rights-oriented society (rather than others-oriented or service-oriented)
- in relativistic teaching (no objective absolute truth)
- in rationalizing our sin as to why our scenario is ok even though it is not God's pattern of one man and woman being one in every aspect of their life.

I could give you news clippings that show perversions in our culture or media or entertainment, and how these distortions and deceptions about manhood and womanhood play out in marriages, in society, and affect church life and leadership in a devastating way. But I don't think I need to spend that much time convincing you there's a problem - I want to focus our time on the *solution* in Scripture. We all know what the world has to say about these things, we all know what so-called experts have to say – what we want to is what GOD has to say, by looking at the pattern laid down in this immutable, indisputable, inerrant, infallible, inspired and infinitely sufficient Word of our Living God:

Genesis 2:18-23 (NASB95)

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

19 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.

20 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.

21 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.

22 The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

23 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."

God exerted and exhibited great care and *design* in creating woman. In verse 22, we read that God "fashioned" – literally God "built" a woman, He carefully "constructed" her according to the blueprint, the architect's design. God's most beautiful creature was crafted by her Creator according to God's wise purpose and glory.

THE DIVINE DESIGN IN THE CREATION OF WOMANHOOD:

FIRSTLY,

1. God made woman EQUAL WITH MAN

At the end of Genesis 2:18, God says He will make man a "helper suitable" (NAS, NIV)

The marginal note in my Bible for the word translated "suitable" says it can also mean "corresponding to him." The ESV also has this alternate note and translates as "helper fit for him"

Other translations have:

- "help meet for him" (KJV) – old English for "suitable or proper ... made to fit" – marg. note "Heb. "as before him"
- "comparable to him" (NKJV)
- "who corresponds to him" (NET, TWOT, KD, HALOT)
- "who is just right for him" (NLT)
- "fit for him" (RSV)
- "partner" (CEV, NAB) or "as his partner" (NRSV)
- "as his counterpart" (YLT)
- "companion" (GNT, Message)
- "who is like him" (HCSB)

It 'literally means "according to the opposite of him." Translations such as "suitable [for]" (NASB, NIV), "matching," "corresponding to" all capture the idea. (Translations that render the phrase simply "partner" [cf. NEB, NRSV], while not totally inaccurate, do not reflect the nuance of correspondence and/or suitability.) The man's form and nature are matched by the woman's as she reflects him and complements him. Together they correspond.'¹

One lexicon has "equal and adequate to himself" (BDB 617.2). My Hebrew professor translated this verse "a helper who is his equal."

God creates another being equal to Adam in essence and personhood. Twice this passage emphasizes this about woman, using the same phrase in v. 20. And God doesn't just say this, He *shows* it to Adam by parading a long line of animals for him to name, but there is none found on his level, or as his equal, no animal is corresponding to him, comparable to him, or an exact

counterpart, companion, or complement to him.

There is no implied inferiority in woman by this phrase, in fact, verse 18 instead emphasizes the insufficiency of *man* – “it is not good for *man* to be alone.” God speaks of man’s need and inadequacy or incompleteness alone and both male and female are necessary in God’s program.

<Read Genesis 1:27-31>

Before this passage we had read 9x in chapter 1 that after God created something “He saw what He had made, and it was good.” Now all of a sudden, our attention is drawn to something that is not good – it’s not good for man to be alone. This is not complete, this is not God’s ideal, it is not God’s norm for man to be alone. Once male and female are created, God gives them the creation mandate and responsibility to reproduce and replenish and be rulers or regents - stewards of this world. It is after this first couple are both created, that God pronounces the benediction “very good” (v. 31).

Adam himself recognizes at last that there is an equal, there is one created for him and from him and like him, unlike the other animals. In verse 23 he describes her as at last the only one who is “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”

The text goes beyond the physical when in verse 24 it speaks about how husband and wife become “one” – this is the fundamental biblical truth of marriage that we’ll look more at next week. The oneness God ordains for marriage is not just sexual intimacy, it includes emotional intimacy and oneness that God does not want us to give any other member of the opposite sex. Our deepest feelings and emotions and heart and soul are not to be shared outside of God’s ordained pattern – it’s possible to have an emotional affair by telephone or even by Internet that violates this principle. Man and wife are to be one only with each other on those levels; they are not only equal, they are to be united.

Spiritually speaking, we are equal in and before Christ in value and are united inseparably as a family:

Galatians 3:28 (NASB95)

28 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.

In 1 Peter 3:7, husbands are commanded to show their wives “honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life”

But that same verse that shows this spiritual equality and sharing in the grace of life and heirs together, the verse also affirms that man and woman are not identical. I’m thankful for that. God makes women marvelously and mysteriously unique. Peter says men must be sensitive to their wives and live with them in an understanding way as toward “a weaker vessel.” The word vessel in the Bible often refers to the physical body, and although wives may be stronger spiritually or in other ways, they are usually *physically weaker* than their husbands. Wives must be treated as a valuable and costly vase, a precious treasured vessel, a fragile valuable possession that must be handled with care, treating the wife like “fine china.” Wives are to be honored by their husbands

and not treated like just one of the guys. God made us different. God did not make us the same emotionally, physiologically or psychologically, and that's ok – in fact, it's good because God designed it that way that we would complement each other.

Women have different needs, and if men are not sensitive to and meeting these needs and seeking to understand her, this verse says our prayers will be hindered. This is convicting, men, and we need to be convicted, and confess to our wives our shortcomings and strive by the grace of God to fulfill this calling as men.

2. God made woman DIFFERENT THAN MAN

In verse 18, the word translated “suitable” emphasizes equality and has a lot of nuances, but one definition you won't find is “identical.” The word before it - “helper” – also emphasizes that man and woman are different in their roles and responsibilities. God created us *equal, yet different*. This is so critical and important and is missed by so much of our world, and even much of the Christian world that we need to really take time to emphasize this.

God created us EQUAL:

- as persons
- in worth
- in value
- in God's image
- spiritually in Christ

But God also made us DIFFERENT:

- in roles
- in responsibilities
- in the home
- in the church

For Adam's bride, God speaks within the Trinity of His plan to create a “helper” in v. 18 – this word “helper” implies one who voluntarily subordinates one's will before another to serve and support and submit to another in authority, to its head.

This role is different, but not inferior. In fact the Trinity itself is used as an illustration of the principle in marriage of the man being head over his wife.

1 Corinthians 11:3 (NASB95)

3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

Is Christ inferior to God? Of course not, in every way by essence and being and personhood and character and nature, Christ is fully equal to God. But there is a different role between the first and second member of the Trinity – Jesus although equal takes on a different role and willingly voluntarily submits Himself before God the Father. Marriages are to be living illustrations of this divine truth, not only of Christ toward God, but as models of the church submitting to Christ in

all things, as Ephesians 5:22-24 says.

Ephesians 5:22-24 (NASB95)

22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

A body that does not follow its head is dysfunctional or disabled – and a wife or a church which does not follow the biblical pattern will suffer similar consequences spiritually and practically. Ephesians 5 is the longest biblical passage on these truths, and it is thoroughly Christ-centered, it is all about Christ, and through Christ, and for Christ, and unto Christ, and to be like Christ. The wife must submit and the husband must sacrificially lay down his life and love his wife like Jesus did in dying for His bride the church. Denial of self, dying to self is required of both parties, putting the other as more important is required of both – the language of Ephesians 5 describes the particular duties as submission by the wife and sacrificial love by the husband.

It's not about our rights and it's not even primarily about our spouse. It's all about Christ first and foremost. The center and source of this is the authority of Christ, not the husband's innate authority – it's the beauty and perfection of Christ, not our wife, that must drive us. It is only by and through and in Christ, that marriages can be all that Christ intended.

Our motivation in working through marital difficulties and struggles can't be our own rights, feelings, desires, and whether we feel our spouse deserves to be treated the way God calls us to. Our motive must be to please Christ and obey Him and glorify Him, regardless of our circumstances, and even if they don't change.

A wife may ask, "What if my husband is not acting like Christ or not even a Christian?" I recognize this is a major difficulty, and to some degree, this is a factor in perhaps the majority of counseling situations that comes across a pastor's ministry – a man's sin. But based on the authority of the Lord who wrote 1 Peter 3, as it says in that chapter, wives are still by God's grace to lovingly submit and seek to win him over not by arguing or attacking him, not by using your tongue as a weapon, not by manipulating things. Our Lord calls you in 1 Peter 3 to "be submissive" that "they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior" (v. 1-2). You are not to win him over by worldly means or the externals (v. 3) but it says:

4 But let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands;

6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

3. God made woman AFTER THE MAN

Genesis 2:15-17 gives us a very important detail in the order of this narrative (note singular *man* given this responsibility)

Then in the following verses Adam alone names all the animals. It seems that all of God's other creatures He created at once, but with humanity, God creates Adam first and then waits perhaps most of the day before creating woman. Why?

Someone has suggested it's because if Adam already had a wife, he would never have been able to name all the animals in one day. There may be some truth in that – any time there's a committee or multiple opinions – guys or gals, things take longer.

But there's much more to it than that, of course, God wants to teach Adam his lack of a perfect companion and helper, and God also wants His readers to see some important lessons.

Adam was given spiritual responsibility and God's instruction before woman was created, and it's not reading too much into the narrative to say that the creation order and sequence was to reflect God's design for loving authority and spiritual instruction.

In the context of a church service, Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:11:

11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

13 **For it was Adam who was first created**, and then Eve.

Christians who believe in women pastors try and argue that this only applies to that culture, but Paul bases his argument on *creation* not the culture. God set things up this way before sin existed, not as a sinful judgment or accommodation to fallen man or fallen culture. When Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees, He also took them back to creation to show God's original design for marriage which stays unchanged even though the Pharisees had distorted it. God knows why He did things a certain way in Genesis 2, and we need to let His Spirit-inspired Word guide our practices, not pressure from feminism or political correctness or anything else

Twice in I Corinthians 11, the Scripture defends the concept of headship and submissive actions and appearance by going back to creation and stating that woman came from man and not the other way around. This is not a minor detail in the text but was purposeful by God.

God says to Adam alone in verses 16-17 as spiritual leader and head essentially, "You're in charge. I'm holding you responsible for this garden and for this rule I've laid down about the tree."

You know the story ... let's look over at Genesis 3:9-12

Even though Eve sinned first, God seeks who first? Scripture consistently holds Adam primarily and ultimately responsible for plunging the human race into sin. Adam was not only the head of his wife, he was the head of the human race, either as representative or as federal head.

"by one Man [Adam] sin entered into the world" - Rom. 5:12

In Romans 5 alone, I counted eight different times in that chapter alone where the responsibility for humanity's sin, death, or judgment is placed at the feet of Adam the man. In my studies of

this passage I haven't found too many feminists arguing against Adam getting the credit for plunging the world into sin rather than women being blamed for it. Whether we like it or not, or feel up to it, God holds man with a higher responsibility because of His role as head of the home.

It's been well said, "Men, if there are problems in your marriage or relationship, do you know where you must begin? The same place God begins, with you. [A man may object:] 'But, she needs to change.' Well, she may, but you know what, if she never changes you have a responsibility to live godly not only towards your Lord, but toward her. To love her ... with the love of Jesus Christ."

-> The first sin ever committed by mankind involved a role reversal.

See end of Gen. 3:16 and how same Hebrew phrase is translated in 4:7

- Some think the Hebrew language is saying woman's sinful desire will be to overthrow his authority, cast off his leadership, and want to dominate him
- Man's sinful tendency will also be to rule over his wife, rather than treat her as a precious helpmate and gift from God to love sacrificially like Christ does.

The headship and responsibility of man is NOT the curse, it existed in perfect Eden before sin. The tricky part in human relationships now is that both man and woman are sinners, and tend to distort their roles. But no matter what our culture thinks, and even if women try to fill that role because some men do not, God still holds man responsible for spiritual leadership.

John Piper writes in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (p. 37) that masculine responsibility is "not a *right* for men to exercise for their own self-exaltation or ego-satisfaction. It is less a prerogative than a calling. It is a duty and obligation and charge ... The word 'responsibility' is chosen to imply that man will be uniquely called to account for his leadership, provision, and protection in relation to women ... Adam must give account to God for the moral life of the family in the garden of Eden. This does not mean the woman has no responsibility, as we will see. It simply means that man bears a unique and primary one."

It should be clear that man's role is not about greater ability (in some ways and areas a wife will be stronger than her husband), it's about greater *responsibility*. We need to step it up, men.

May God help both men and women in this church, by His grace and for His glory, to better reflect Christ in this world.

¹Biblical Studies Press. (2006; 2006). *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible.* Biblical Studies Press.