

The Nurturing Image of God

Exodus 23:19; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; May 8, 2022

You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother. – Exodus 23:19b

A wonderful Mother's Day verse! The same command is mentioned two other times in the Old Testament. (Exodus 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21) The context of the first two references is the celebration of feasts (scheduled 'holy-days' or holidays!) to the Lord in Israel. The context of the last reference is the distinction between clean and unclean animals that could and could not be eaten. In all three cases then, the context is one of eating. And eating is a life-giving activity. It is a nourishing activity. And to feed someone is a nurturing activity. *Why did God command this?* There are quite a few ideas since there is no clear explanation in Scripture given. I think God gave this command because of a *practice* and a *principle*, just as we find in another command in Scripture. (Deuteronomy 25:4; 1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Timothy 5:18) This text in Exodus forbids following the pagan fertility practice of literally boiling a young kid in its mother's milk. But it also provides a larger, broader principle to apply (like the command regarding not muzzling oxen): *That which gives life should not be used to bring death.* The milk of the mother is intended to be life-nurturing not death-dealing! The milk of the mother points to the nature of true womanhood as nurturing. Indeed, nurturing in the image of God. *What is a woman?* Women are beautiful life-nurturing image bearers of God. Let's look at what the Bible says about women and mothers from different angles.

1. **Equal:** A woman is man's equal.

Men and women are equal: both made in the image of God. – Genesis 1:26-28

Men and women believers are equal: both fellow heirs of life. – Galatians 3:26-29; 1 Peter 3:7; Acts 2:18; Luke 24:10

2. **Different:** A woman is man's compliment (different in a profoundly good way).

Men and women are different: biologically, physically, emotionally. – Genesis 2:21-25; 1 Peter 3:7; Deuteronomy 22:5

This biological and gender difference is established at birth. – Psalm 139:13-16

Women have the capacity to give birth to a child and nurse. – Genesis 3:20; Matthew 1:18; Jeremiah 30:6; John 16:21; 1 Corinthians 11:12; Exodus 2:9; 1 Samuel 1:23; Psalm 22:9; Luke 11:27

Women are 'weaker vessels'. – 1 Peter 3:7; Proverbs 31:25; 1 Peter 3:5-6; Proverbs 12:4

Men and women are different: roles. – 1 Corinthians 11:3; Genesis 2:18-22

Men and women have different roles in the home and church. – Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 2:9-15

In our fallen state, we don't carry these roles out well but that does not mean the roles are bad or unimportant; the roles must be redeemed in Christ not eliminated. – Genesis 3:16

3. Nurturer: A woman is a nurturer (a giver and sustainer of life).

Women were made to image God as nurturers. – 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8; 1 Kings 3:16-28; Lamentations 4:10-11

Motherhood is very important and very challenging! - Proverbs 1:8-9; 6:20-23; 10:1; 29:15; 30:11

God, at times, as an exception to the rule, may change up roles as an act of judgment and mercy. – Ruth 3:6-13; Judges 4:4-10; Judges 5:7; Judges 5:24-27; Isaiah 3:8-12

4. Helper: A woman is a helper.

Women were made to be helpers for men. – 1 Corinthians 11:7-9; 1 Corinthians 11:11-12

Wives were made to be helpmates for their husbands. – Genesis 2:18-22; 1 Corinthians 11:11-12

But a woman is a helper like God is a helper not like a maid is a helper! – Psalm 54:4

Women are gifted members of the body of Christ. – Romans 12:1-8; Acts 2:18; 1 Corinthians 11:11-12

5. Homemaker: Married women are called to be homemakers.

Wives and mothers are given the responsibility for the home. – Titus 2:3-5

This doesn't mean that women can't work outside the home, but for a wife and mother the home must have the priority. – Proverbs 31:10-31

Not every woman is meant to be a wife and mother, but that doesn't mean she is not meant to be a life-nurturer! – Matthew 19:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:32-35; Isaiah 54:1-3; Galatians 4:27

6. Life-Giver: The Church is pictured as a woman: the Bride of Christ.

Wives and mothers picture the Church as life givers in submission to Christ. – Ephesians 5:31-32; Galatians 4:19; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Matthew 16:19

The Good News and Life

So, what does this say about God and salvation through Christ?

God wants us to honor our mothers. – Exodus 20:12; John 19:25b-27

God wants us to see motherhood as a wonderful calling. – Proverbs 31:25-31

God wants us to look at good mothers and see Him! – Isaiah 49:14-16

God wants us to trust Him like a child would trust a good mother. - Psalm 139:13

God calls women to image Him as the Life-Giving Nurturer in how they conduct their lives.

Jesus came to reconcile us to a God who is tender and nurturing like the best mother you can imagine.