

Beautifully Different:

God's Design for Femininity and Masculinity

All the wonders of God's creation— brilliant sunsets, majestic mountains, ocean waves crashing into granite cliffs, a dark sky filled with sparkling stars and more — pale in comparison to the pinnacle of God's creation: the people we see every day.

On the sixth day of creation, *“God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* (Gen 1:27, NIV) There is a unique intentionality to God's creation of humanity that makes them distinct from the rest of creation. From that moment to this one, each individual human being, male and female, has been *“fearfully and wonderfully made”* by God. (Ps. 139:14)

Masculinity and femininity are not just aspects of our humanity; they are inseparable from it. The reality of masculinity and femininity is a fact of God's design. The differences in them are a beautiful, complementary wonder. Masculinity and femininity are callings from God that shape who men and women are and how we live our days — and our faith.

In our time, all of that is being challenged. The world is aggressively rejecting God's authority, creation and design for humanity. People live immersed in a different story with a different view of what it means to be male and female. That narrative is being told by movies, legislation, social media, school curricula and more. In this alternative to God's story, God's creation design of masculinity and femininity—which He called “very good”—has been distorted, redefined, caricatured, disparaged, and dismissed as a valid way for any contemporary person to live.

But we believe God's authority over all of life still stands. We believe that God created the universe by His Word; that His creation design—including masculinity and femininity— is good, beautiful and true; and that intentionally and enthusiastically living it is key to a life of satisfaction, meaning and blessing for all people.

We are committed to equip disciples of Jesus to understand, obey, and faithfully live God's plan for masculinity and femininity while being equipped to train their children and grandchildren to do the same. We also intend to prepare disciples of all ages to share God's creation design for men and women with grace and truth as the Lord gives opportunity.

So, first, consider the truths that form the foundation for the visions for both Biblical masculinity and Biblical femininity.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS FOR BOTH MEN & WOMEN

By creation (Gen. 1:27-28)

-“*God created mankind*” (Gen.1:27a) Both are...utterly dependent on Him for every breath, heartbeat, and resource for life (Jms. 1:17) and are not independent in any way; under His authority as created beings; *“knit together in [the] womb”* (Ps. 139:13) by God with a unique appearance, personality, disposition, abilities, and more. No one is a clone!

-“*in the image of God*” (Gen. 1:27b) Both are...beings of profound dignity, unconditionally worthy of deep honor and respect; meant to accurately display the character, purposes, heart and glory of God in their words, actions, relationships, and lives.

-“male and female” (Gen.1:27c) Gender is *received* from the sovereign God at conception as a biological reality, not *chosen* at a later time by humans. But gender is more than biology; it is central to a person’s fundamental, God-given identity. While the external physical differences between men and women are obvious, they also tend to differ in their innate strengths and approaches to the circumstances of life, i.e., mental, emotional, relational, etc.

God has designed men and women to fulfill complementary roles in the family, church, and community. Each needs the other. Life is designed to function best when there is a holy and healthy collaboration between men and women together.

-“Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, have dominion” (Gen. 1:28) Both are...assigned the authority and responsibility to live as God’s royal representatives on earth; called to care for, develop, and cultivate the raw materials of God’s creation for the flourishing of humanity and the glory of God. While having children is an aspect of this assignment, the callings of masculinity and femininity stand whether or not one has biological children (and also regardless of age, marital or socio-economic status, vocation, etc.)

By salvation and discipleship, both men and women are...

-sinful, spiritually dead rebels by nature and choice, under God’s wrath, and in desperate need of rescue (Rom. 3:23, 6:12, 23a; Eph 2:1-3);

-saved by the only Gospel there is: repentance of sin and trust in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection alone for forgiveness, reconciliation with God and eternal life; (Jn. 3:16, 14:6; Rom. 5:8, 10:9-10; 1 Peter 3:9);

-called to pursue a life-defining relationship with Jesus, treasuring Him above all others (Matt.13:44-46), submitting to Him as King (Luke 9:23), and affirming God’s Word as the authority for faith and life (John 8:31-32, 17:17);

-expected to take responsibility for their own spiritual growth (1 Cor. 9:24-26; Phil. 2:12), pursuing the five commitments of the Disciple’s Life—to *gather* for worship each Lord’s Day, *connect* with a group to live out Biblical community, *serve* the church and the world, be *equipped* for lifelong spiritual growth, and *make more disciples* of Jesus;

-indwelt with the Holy Spirit, which enables them to live by faith (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 2:20); abide in, obey, and mature like Jesus (John 14:12-18, 15:1-11, 16:13-15; Gal. 5:22-25); **and empowers** them to contribute to the growth, mission and health of the church (Eph.4:7, 12; 1 Cor. 12:4-7, 1 Pet. 4:10);

-commissioned and deployed as agents of the Kingdom of God (2 Cor. 5:20), loving God with priority passion (Matt. 22:37), loving others with radical grace and selflessness (Matt.5:43-46, 22:39); and spreading the Gospel by making disciples of all people (Matt. 28:18-20).

These two realities for men and women —creation design and Gospel-rooted discipleship— are not separate from each other. They are linked and form the foundation of any healthy view of Biblical masculinity or femininity. There are no male or female versions of the Gospel or discipleship. But as one ancient disciple, Irenaeus, said, “The glory of God is man(kind) fully alive”. Both men and women have been given unique ways of expressing God’s glory by being fully alive to who God created them to be in their masculinity and femininity.

A Biblical Vision of Femininity

Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. (Prov.31:30, CSB)

A woman who embraces both God's creation order and a disciple's calling will exhibit a godly femininity that....

-lives as a **strong helper**, using her unique intellect, energy, emotional sensitivity, and relational wisdom to develop ways to support others in becoming all God designed them to be;
(Gen. 2:18-22; Lk. 1:35-38; Prov. 31:10-12, 23, 28-29)

-is **modest**, valuing purity and inner beauty over external attractiveness while developing the ~~unfading~~ holy qualities of heart that are precious to God and cultivate a life set apart for Him;
(1 Pet. 3:3-4; 1 Tim. 2:9-10; Prov. 31:25, 30a; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:13-16)

-is **confident** in her dealings with both ordinary and challenging circumstances, living with consistent strength, poise, wisdom and faith in God;
(Esth. 4:4-16; Ex. 1:15-21; Prov.31:17, 21, 26; John 2:3-5)

-is **resourceful** in her responsibilities to strategically care for and astutely lead those in her God-given spheres of influence;
(Prov. 31:13-16, 18-22; 1 Sam. 25:14-35; Lk. 8:1-3; Col. 3:16-17)

-is **nurturing**, building communities of love marked by kind-hearted respect and empathy so all kinds of people experience the mercy of God's welcome;
(Is. 55:1-3; Lk. 10:38, 11:28; Acts 12:12, 16:14-16; Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Pet. 4:9)

-is **intuitive**, having an unusual ability to understand beneath the surface of conversations and circumstances, and then respond with tempered, Christ-centered, life-giving words or actions to encourage their faith and life;
(Prov. 15:4, 18:21, 26:20-22, 31:26; Ruth 1:15-18; Eph. 4:29)

-is **resilient**, anchored so deep in the hope of God that she faces the future with more anticipation than anxiety, more peace than fear, more faith than doubt;
(Prov. 31:25; Mk. 5:21-34; Luke 1:48-55; John 11:21-22; Heb. 6:19)

-is **fruitful**, investing in a Gospel legacy by leveraging her life and resources for the King's mission, living for the things that last forever, and intentionally passing the faith to the next generation by modeling a life that loves Jesus and faithfully lives out a godly woman's God-given identity, roles and opportunities;
(Ps. 78:4-7; Acts 13:36; Rom. 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5; Titus 2:3-5; Rev. 5:9-10)

...so that Jesus is known, people flourish, the Kingdom advances, and God receives glory.

A Biblical Vision of Masculinity

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Cor. 16:13-14)

A man who embraces both God's creation order and a disciple's calling will exhibit a godly masculinity that....

-lives as a **sacrificial leader**, using his intellect, energy, and influence to initiate wise actions across the spheres of his life that further God-honoring purposes and foster the growth of others;
(1 Cor. 16:13a; Gen. 2:15; Mark 10:43-45; Gal. 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10)

-is **responsible**, gladly submitting to the expectations of his God-given roles, fulfilling them with faithfulness and excellence, and being prepared to answer to God and others for them;
(Ps. 78:70-72; Col. 3:16-17; Matt. 25:14-46; Mark 6:7-13, 30-31; Rev. 20:12)

-is **courageous**, standing firm in the face of challenge to God's Word or ways, and defending others from any threat to their life, heart, or flourishing;
(1 Cor. 16:13b; Joshua 1:6-9; 2 Chron. 17:3-6; Prov. 31:8-9; Matt 10:16-22; Phil. 1:20-21)

-is **disciplined**, regularly training his mind and heart for godliness while exercising Christ-like self-control over his body, words, emotions, and strength;
(1 Cor. 16:13d; Prov. 9:9, 29:11; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; 1 Cor. 10:23; Gal. 5:23b)

-is **protective**, guarding his own thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions from sin and worldliness in every area, and shielding the vulnerable with a special commitment to honor girls and women as fellow heirs of the grace of life;
(Ps. 15, 139:23-24; Matt. 5:27-30; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:13-16, 3:7; 1 Thess. 4:3-7)

-is **humble**, right-sizing God and himself from the heart so his actions make it clear that he is not the focus of life—God and others are;
(Is. 66:2; Matt. 18:4, 23:12; John 13:3-14; Phil. 2:3-8; 1 Peter 5:5)

-is **loving** with his words and actions, treating all those he engages with compassion, gentleness, and a willingness to sacrifice for their best;
(1 Cor. 16:14; Matt. 5:43-48, 9:36, 22:39; Luke 15:20; John 11:33-36; Gal. 5:23, 6:1; Col. 3:12; 1Thess. 2:7)

-is **fruitful**, investing in a Gospel legacy by leveraging his life and resources for the King's mission, living for the things that last forever, and intentionally passing the faith to the next generation by modeling the life of a man centered on, defined by, directed by and passionate about King Jesus;
(1 Cor. 16:13c; Ps. 78:4-7; Acts 13:36; 1 Tim. 6:11-14; 2 Tim. 1:13-14, 2:2; Rev. 5:9-10)

...so that Jesus is known, people flourish, the Kingdom advances, and God receives glory.