

Churched: We Have Functional Gender Roles

(1 Corinthians 11:3-16 plus other selected Scriptures)

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- God always has a design and He created men and women as His unique image-bearers to carry out His kingdom purposes through distinct functional roles.
 - Unfortunately, unbiblical men (passively neglectful or misogynistic) and unbiblical women (rebellious feminists or ambitious usurpers) have sadly and tragically distorted God's gender design and roles to the detriment of marriages, church life and society.
 - The power and influence of cultural beliefs and trends cannot be allowed to alter or overcome the priority commitment the church must have to the truthfulness, authority and sufficiency of God's Word on any given
 - Every follower of JC, whether male or female, needs to humbly compare their understanding, attitudes and behaviors to God's prescribed standard and be willing to adjust their lives in order to honor His desire and design for the flourishing of marriage, His church and society.
- There has been widespread confusion and rebellion regarding God's gender roles and sadly, it has crept into the church.
- There are two primary gender camps of belief:
 - **The egalitarian view** teaches that God created men and women as full and equal partners and image bearers who have equal opportunity and functional roles in marriage and the church (see Christians for Biblical Equality for its beliefs: www.cbeinternational.org)
 - **The complementarian view** teaches that God created men and women as equals in personhood, dignity and worth with different complementary gender roles in marriage, the home and church (see Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: www.cbmw.org)

There are three statements that summarize the Scriptural teaching on functional gender roles.

1. Functional gender roles are the creative design of God.

(Selected references)

- There are three equality statements:
 - Males and females are equally created in God's image in personhood, value, and spiritual worth (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18; 9:6; Gal 3:28)
 - Males and females are created sexually distinct and will display this in their manhood and womanhood (Gen. 1:27; Matt. 19:4). God gives these two sexually distinct persons the capacity to reproduce themselves and to illustrate the believer's relationship as the bride (church) to the Groom (Jesus Christ): Eph. 5:29-32
 - Males and females were both given the dominion mandate to "rule over the fish...the birds and over all the earth...over every creeping thing" (Gen. 1:26-28)
 - This mandate is accomplished in how we can be "fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gn. 1:28)
 - This mandate is accomplished in how we can uniquely harness the abundant resources God created to provide food, goods and services for the flourishing and enjoyment of life (sun, moon, sea, wind, animals, plants, chemicals, etc.)
- There are **eight observations** about functional differences and roles from the beginning:
 - **God named the human race "man"** (Gen. 1:26; 2:5; 5:1-2) as a generic term to describe humanity. It is noteworthy that God determined to use the name of one of the sexes to designate the whole human race.
 - **God made Adam the central character in His story** (Gen. 2:16-23). Adam, the male is the one to whom God speaks in the narrative (2:16), the first to receive divine revelation & instruction (2:15-17), the one called to name the animals (2:19-20), the woman is made from the man and to help the man (2:18, 22). The man makes a theological comment upon the woman's creation, not vice versa (2:23) and the man names the female (2:23).
 - God made Adam first (Gen. 2:7; 1 Tim. 2:12-13) and used this created order to show how Adam was given a leadership role (before Eve was

formed) to exercise authority over the animals by naming them (Gen. 2:19). God told Paul to communicate this point in 1 Tim. 2:13 when he was teaching that women should “not teach or exercise authority over a man” in the church (v. 12)

- **God formed Eve from out of Adam** (Gen. 2:21; 1 Cor. 11:7-8). This forming demonstrates equality, but also difference in function as Paul quotes Gen. 2:22 in 1 Cor. 11:8 to make this point
- God created the woman for the man (Gen. 2:18; 1 Cor. 11:9). She was made a “helper” (one suitable for Adam) with her own biology, physiology and psychology and would help Adam populate and rule the earth as a loving-companion partner. Paul quotes Gen. 2:18 in I Cor. 11:9 to make his point about functional roles in the church.
- God gave man the right to name the woman (Gen. 2:23; 3:20). Before the fall, Adam called her “woman” (Gen. 2:23). After the Fall, Adam “called” his wife “Eve”, a personal name (Gen. 3:20).
- Adam is viewed as the representative head of the fallen human race (Gen. 3:9; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45). Adam’s headship is recognized by God after the Fall as He calls to Adam, not Eve to give account even though Eve began the domino effect (Gen. 3:9). Adam’s headship is recognized in the New Testament as the representative head of the entire fallen human race (Rom. 5:12).
- The record of the Old Testament highlights men as the primary, prominent leaders with few exceptions (patriarchs, authors, kings, prophets, priests). The primary role of a woman in the Old Testament was that of a wife and mother (Prov. 31:10) and they had a godly, heroic influence in the home and society (Hannah, Rebekah, Rachel, Sarah, Esther, etc.)

2. Functional gender roles are the cursed distortion of sinfulness

(Genesis 3:16)

- The history of humanity since the Fall has been one of abuse and distortion as God gave some harsh consequences when Adam and Eve sinned.
- God’s curse impacted women’s role as a mother (3:16a) and as a wife (3:16b). The “desire” and “rule” in this verse represent sinful responses by

men and women. Her “desire” will tend to be a grasping usurping desire to control her husband and the “rule” of the husband will tend to be a harsh authoritarian reaction to his wife.

3. Functional gender roles are the clear demonstration of believers

(Selected references)

- Believers demonstrate functional roles in marriage (Eph. 5:22-32; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7)
 - Husbands are given the role of leadership and called to love his wife like Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:23-29), treat her with understanding and a fellow-heir of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7) and “not be embittered against” his wife (Col. 3:19).
 - Wives are given the role of support and called to submit to their husbands “as to the Lord” (Eph. 5:22, 24; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Tim. 3:4-5; 1 Pet. 3:1, 5)
- Believers demonstrate functional roles in the church (Eph. 5:22; Titus 3:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:9-15; 1 Tim. 3:2-7; 5:14-16; 1 Cor. 11:3-16; 14:34-35)
 - **Godly men** are called to lead the church (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4), teach and exercise authority (1 Tim. 2:13).
 - **Godly women** are called to teach and lead women and children (Titus 2:3-5), but are forbidden to teach or exercise authority over a man (1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:34-36). This limitation is seen as the overall pattern of Scripture (Adam, patriarchs, priests, kings, prophets, judges, apostles), prohibited in 1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:34-36, seen by the usage of masculine personal pronouns in the leadership texts (1 Tim 3: Titus 1), a problem in not being able to meet the qualification of being “a husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2), seen to be the practice “in all the churches of the saints” so it’s not a local or cultural issue (1 Cor. 14:33b), stated to be the particular order of creation as God notes in 1 Tim. 2:13 and the pronouncement of Jesus Christ in 1 Cor. 14:37-38 (“the things which I write to you are the Lord’s command”)

God is honored when his equal, yet different image-bearers (men and women) learn to function in the roles He has designed for the flourishing of marriage, the church and society.