

**Practicing Biblical Manhood & Womanhood – Part 2**  
*Various Passages*

*“The fact that I am a woman does not make me a different kind of Christian, but the fact that I am a Christian makes me a different kind of woman.”*

Elisabeth Eliot

**Introduction:** In an episode of *“The West Wing”*, President Bartlett told a story of bringing his family to Egypt to see the pyramids and encountered a group of Bedouin shepherds. When they found out he was a father with 3 daughters, the man laughed and called him “Abu el Banat”, which translates to “Father of Daughters”, which also prompted a gift of tea to be poured out for the father. When the president reached to pay for the tea, the men only laughed and said the tea was the least they could do. Abu el Banat is an Arabic idiom that expresses simultaneous joy with a subtle undertone of contented resignation and just a hint of sympathy. As a father of daughters myself, I have gained a growing appreciation the joys of raising beautiful women, some amount of angst to try to understand who they are and how God made them, and how to best set them up to be women who have a heart for Christ and a Biblical understanding of womanhood, so they can leave our home and glorify the Lord with all they are. Strong, faithful women who live by conviction, never settle, never seek the path of least resistance, willing to serve, humble, and compassionate. Basically warrior princesses. So praise the Lord for Erin being in their lives...and the Bible...and grace.

We started last week looking at what Biblical manhood looks like, how God created men with primary responsibility in the home in both physical and spiritual ways, how the Fall corrupted his ability to do this graciously and humbly, and how the gospel frees men to work, lead, and be a model for their families to follow as He follows Christ. This morning we will turn our attention to **Biblical womanhood** and seek to answer the questions of what are God's expectations for women, how did sin create a roadblock for expressing this fully, and how Christ unlocks a new, redeemed ability to be women who glorify God in all things.

Before looking at three significant Scripture passages today, let's first talk about overarching Biblical principles regarding womanhood that we won't be diving deep into:

- **The primary place of men and women complimenting each other is in the home and church** - When the Bible lays out Biblical **male headship**, it is local and specific. It is contained in the context of the church (1 Tim. 2:12-13) and marriage (Eph. 5:22-23) where a wife submits to **her own husband**, not every husband or man. Though Biblical roles are confined to these spheres, the implications transcend: *servant leadership, taking responsibility, working hard, humility and leading out of Biblical character* should be normative in all areas of life.
- **The Bible clarifies PHYSICAL differences but does not FOCUS on these differences in roles** - Genesis 1-3 is clear that only women actually give birth to children, which is obvious to anyone observing reality from then until now. We recognize that men and women have different biological or anatomical make-ups, which are seen in culture from war to work to sports. We'll see in a few minutes that the issue in glorifying God is NOT in these differences but in how we use what God has given us to please Him.
- **Roles for Men and Women are Defined by God's Design** - Roles were determined by order of creation (Genesis 2:18-25; 1 Tim. 2:13). Adam was created first and Eve was created out of Adam second. Why? That is how God wanted it, and that is the essence of what we seek to understand its implications, both what it means and DOES NOT mean when it comes to womanhood and femininity.

**Womanhood in the Created Order (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Prov. 21:10-31)**

Just as Adam was created with specific role by God in his marriage to Eve, so Eve was given specific parameters in her marriage: she was NOT the husband, she did not have primary responsibility of physical and spiritual leadership in the home, she would support Adam in His God-given work. Let's break this call to **pre-fall womanhood in two ways:**

- **She was called to be a HELP to Adam as he fulfills the divine mandate (Gen. 1:18)**  
*"Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'"*

Mankind (men and women) were called by God to *"be fruitful, to multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over it"* (Gen. 1:28) Adam could NOT do this, any of this, alone. He needed someone who was just like him (as opposed to the animals) but different than he was. He had a mandate to fulfill and innate needs and desires given to him by God.

*"God might have given Adam another man to be a friend, to walk and talk and argue with if that was his pleasure. **But Adam needed more than the companionship of animals or the friendship of a man.** He needed a helper, specifically designed and prepared to fill that role. It was a woman God gave him, a woman, "meet", fit, suitable, entirely appropriate for him, made of his very bones and flesh."*  
 Elisabeth Elliot, *"Let Me Be a Woman"*

Did this mean or intent that Eve herself is secondary, weak, or incapable? Not at all. It also does not mean that men are programmed to be better leaders than women or that women are simply designed to followers, or that men are innately better leaders or more capable teachers. The issue is in the order of creation, not how they were created. Let me illustrate it this way. If we look at **the excellent wife** in Proverbs 31, we see a picture and model of Biblical womanhood. This is in fact **rare to find**, as we'll see how the Fall made being a Biblical woman difficult (or impossible without first yielding to God). If you turn to this chapter in your Bible, you may notice a little note at the bottom, as each verse starts with a successive letter in the Hebrew alphabet, which not only makes it profoundly true but also poetically beautiful (take on THAT challenge, men, in writing notes to our wives). As we read through this section, notice the **strength and hard work of this woman**, as well as how her husband thrives under her help.

**PROVERBS 31:10-31**

**An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.**

- 11 The heart of her husband **trusts in her**, and he will have no lack of gain.
- 12 **She does him good, and not harm**, all the days of her life.
- 13 She seeks wool and flax, and **works with willing hands**.
- 14 She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar.
- 15 **She rises while it is yet night** and **provides food** for her household and portions for her maidens.
- 16 She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
- 17 She **dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong**.
- 18 She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night.
- 19 She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.
- 20 She **opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy**.
- 21 She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.
- 22 She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

23 Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the  
land.  
24 She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant.  
25 **Strength and dignity are her clothing**, and she laughs at the time to come.  
26 She opens her **mouth with wisdom**, and the teaching of **kindness** is on her  
tongue.  
27 She looks well to the ways of her household and **does not eat the bread of**  
**idleness**.  
28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:  
29 “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.”  
30 **Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain**, but a woman who fears the LORD is to  
be praised.  
31 Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

If we were going to break this down, we see a woman who is:

- **Lives as a faithful servant (10-12)** - She is trustworthy, not in competition for leadership in her home, and serves selflessly, doing good and NOT harm (interesting - foreshadowing) to her husband.
- **Industrious & Hard Working (13-19)** - She works *willingly and tirelessly*, from before the sun comes up to the time it goes down (Luke 17:10). She is proactive in business and is a savvy entrepreneur, all so she can both *provide and be prepared to care for her family*. **She is strong and is not afraid of physical labor**. After a long days work she engages with the tools available to make clothes for family (replaced today by shopping on Amazon - with the spindle and distaff of iPhones and free delivery)
- **Prioritizes family & Care for others (20-24)** - She has prepared for family for all the seasons, has worked to have enough for them but also an excess to share with others. She is also pays attention to herself and dresses appropriately (22) in fine linen and purple.
- **She Has both Settled and Developing Character (25-27)** - She is strong, dignified, wise, kind, and never idle. These are the traits that we see in Titus 2 and these develop over time and continue to progress. In other words, this type of character **STARTS** in youth and in proven over years. This is what older, mature women teach to younger.
- **She is Respected & Worthy of Praise (28-31)** - She is praised by husband and children alike. Though she is her husbands standard of beauty, her true lasting beauty is founded in her **fear of the Lord** (which bookends the whole book of Proverbs). She is worthy to be praised since she never did anything to seek it, only to be and do what she was called to.

Now, as we step back we say, "*this is quite a woman!*", rare in the world but possible in Christ. This is who we hope our daughters become and who we encourage our woman to be, making sure we acknowledge and affirm our wives in these areas. She is NOT incapable, nor weak, but is strong in resolve, work, and provision. But I want to draw you attention to verse 23 in particular:

*"Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land."* (23)

This is the outcome of a helper fit for a man, a wife for a husband, a unified pursuit of Christ within a marriage. She was clearly known, respected, and praised, but simultaneously worthy of praise and willing to have her husband take a role of prominence. The gates is where leaders of the city would make judgment for the city, where the leaders would lead. A Biblical wife seeks to play her role in order to free her husband up to play his. When this

happens, fruitfulness abounds. NOTE that both in Genesis 2 and Proverbs 31 there is no hint of **resentment or frustration, only resolve to be obedient and fear the Lord.**

- **She is WILLING to SUBMIT within the roles in marriage and the church**

This is always the rub because none of us naturally, in our sinful reality, like to submit to anyone. But the reality is ALL of us are in positions and relationships where submission is necessary. Submission is **willingly placing yourself under the leadership of another**, with the key word being "willingly". This takes place in marriage (Col. 3:18, Eph. 5:22) and in the church (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Now, this **FEELS all kinds of wrong and incongruous and inequitable**. If women are equal in image bearing to men, created uniquely to compliment the accomplishment of a divine call, why do WOMEN have to SUBMIT to men (in the church and home)?! The key to understanding this is embedded even before the world began, and in the fact that men and women **first and foremost submit to the Lord, and in humility play their roles in the strength He provides**. Here is what I mean, starting with reading Genesis 1:27-28 again:

Then God said, "Let us make man in **our image**, after **our likeness**. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 So God created man in his **own image**,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

Note that in the creation of the world, it was not God the Father alone, but out of inter-Trinitarian unity, relationship and love. The marriage relationship mirrors or pictures the interaction and submissiveness within the Godhead itself.

*"In fact, the idea of headship and submission did not even begin with creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 and 2....It began in the relationship between the Father and Son in the Trinity...It has **always existed** in the eternal nature of God Himself. And in this most basic of all authority relationships, authority is not based on gifts or ability (for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal in attributes and perfections). It is just there."*

The Son willingly submits to the Father the Spirit points people and brings remembrance of all that the Son taught. Though they are each God, there is a willingness to exercise functional roles (i.e. 1 Pet. 1:2 - God the Father foreknowledge, God the Spirit sanctifies, and God the Son Jesus Christ sprinkles His blood - all for our salvation). The interworking of the Godhead gives not only a **picture of willing submission, but a reason for it**.

#### **Womanhood Distorted in the Fall (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 will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.**"*

We looked last week at the pervasive nature of the Fall into sin in Genesis 3 over mankind: death (physical, spiritual, eternal), separation from a relationship with God, marriages that now face shame, fear, and blameshifting, and creation is now set against its design, making work difficult. The effects of sin on our body, relationships, outlook, mindset, pleasures, desires, and roles should NEVER BE UNDERESTIMATED. Sin changed EVERYTHING. So understanding sin will help us overcome it and reverse its effects in the gospel. When Eve took the fruit, ate it, and gave it to her husband who was WITH HER (Gen. 3:6), the world was sent into a talespin. For Eve and women after her, it meant **pain, specifically in childbearing**. Not just overcome with epidurals, bearing and giving birth to children involves

discomfort, shock to the body, and pain. But an even more pervasive consequence is found in the second part of the verse: "**your desire will be for your husband.**" A better translation for "for" is found in Genesis 4:7, where sin was crouching at the door of Cain, and its desire was "for" him. The idea is not a positive one, but a negative, meaning its "**set against**" or "**opposed to**". In other words, a result of sin is the fact that now a woman's desire is **set against her husband**, rather than to serve and follow him willingly. Here is Susan T. Foh explained his desire in a *Westminster Theological Journal* article called "What is the Woman's desire?"

*"The woman has the same sort of desire for her husband that sin has for Cain, a desire to possess or control him. This desire disputes the headship of the husband. As the Lord tells Cain what he should do, i.e master or rule sin, the Lord also states what the husband should do, rule over his wife. The words of the Lord in Genesis 3:16b, as in the case of the battle between sin and Cain, do not determine the victor of the conflict between husband and wife. These words mark the beginning of the battle of the sexes. As a result of the Fall, man no longer rules easily; he must fight for his headship. Sin has corrupted both the willing submission of the wife and the loving headship of the husband. **The woman's desire is to control her husband (to usurp his divinely appointed headship), and he must master her if he can. So the rule of love founded in paradise is replaced by struggle, tyranny, and domination.**"<sup>1</sup>*

There are a couple of dominant implications of the fall for women, particularly in marriage but built into her heart overall:

**1. Desire to Control** - In the great reversal of roles because of sin, men have a difficult time leading, or knowing how to lead, and women DO NOT like leadership over them. This would be a beneficial conversation in small groups, but just to illustrate some of the ways this manifests in women/wives, we can explain some things. Remember, men's issues are often overt and seen (angry words, brawling, drunkenness, pornography/sexual immorality, etc), where women's issues can seem much more subtle and sanitized. The desire to control can be masked as good things, where control is veiled as a desire to help or see the best in others. There can be a desire to **control outcomes** with children by overstepping in their education to make sure they get the grades and recognition you want to see, or with spouses to try to get him to be the leader you've always wanted. It can be a desire to **control narratives** where you want the world to see you or your family a certain way, so external appearances and social media presence reflect a "perfect" life that is betrayed by reality. Or it can come in the form of trying to **control circumstances**, where happiness is only found when everything goes according to plan and anything short leaves you miserable, irritable, anxious, or angry. The old adage, "**If momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy**" makes for a cute meme, but actually reflects the fall and desire of a woman to control.

**2. Default to Compete** - The created design is to see ones husband thrive in his role, but the Fall creates competition, with a wife now **competing** for the role of headship and leadership in the home. Again, this comes in subtle ways, from tearing down a husband with words or in public, to nagging him constantly (Prov. 27:15) to a lack of encouragement, wives can be prone to compete. This typically comes out when things do not go according to your own plan, or one's husband makes decisions a wife does not like or agree with, and thus drags her feet, becoming a weight rather than a blessing. I think there is some wisdom in not pointing out too many specific ways that this kind of **control and competition plays out**, but I think you get the picture. The real question is NOT

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<sup>1</sup> Susan T. Foh, "What is the Women's Desire?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 37 (Spring 1975): 376-83.

that this exists, but how do we overcome it. The answer for women is the same as men, and it is sourced in the **gospel of Jesus Christ**:

**Womanhood Reclaimed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:2:5-8)**

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count **equality with God** a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> **but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.** <sup>8</sup> **And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.***

Jesus is the "*radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.*" (Heb. 1:3). "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. By Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities ---all things were created through Him and FOR Him." (Col. 1:16). Jesus is God. He is perfect and powerful. No one could accuse Him of being less than God or lacking in any power. Yet, Jesus Himself did not **count equality with God a thing to be held onto**. Instead, He emptied Himself, NOT of deity but by adding the form of a humanity and becoming a servant so that He could die as our replacement. This He did out of **willing obedience to the Father, who is His equal yet is different, and out of HUMILITY**. Jesus who deserved all glory as God willingly obeyed God the Father so that He could put Himself in the hands of men who would beat Him, pass judgment on Him, and nail Him to a cross! Do not miss the words: *Willing. Voluntarily. Humbly*. This sacrifice not only was the **means of freeing men & women from our sin, but gave a model and example to follow**.

*"Have this mind among yourselves, which is your in Christ Jesus..."* This command is given to men and women for sure, but ladies, this is the secret to your ability to reverse the curse in your marriage, in this church, and in your overall character. Your *security* is in Christ alone, so you do not have to find it in a marriage. Your *satisfaction and joy* is found in Christ alone, so you do not have to find it in family or outcomes (John 15:11). Your *Lord is Jesus Christ alone*, so your submission is to Him first and foremost, and out of that you can submit to an imperfect husband/man. Your *identity* is not bound in the performance of your kids or the size or cleanliness of your house, but in being a child of the King. You have the freedom and power to **willingly humble yourself, to yield yourself to Christ, to enjoy the fact that God will reward, and to play your role with strength, determination, and joy**. Godly women who fear the Lord are more precious than jewels, and one who finds one finds a good thing (Prov. 18:22) and is blessed from the Lord. The reality is this: godliness is produced by Jesus through the Holy Spirit as we know, understand and live out Biblical truth, and that is available to every woman here, regardless of marital status, physical stature or gifting. This is what Elisabeth Elliot, the wife of martyred missionary Jim Elliot, pointed out in her book "Let Me Be a Woman."

*The fact that I am a woman does not make me a different kind of Christian, but the fact that I am a Christian makes me a different kind of woman."*

May we have women here who in **humility submit, in strength work, in trust of Christ selflessly serve, and in all things seek to glorify God**. That would truly be a **counter-cultural, light shining, gospel proclaiming way to live**. This is what I hope as an Abu el Banat, a father of daughters, that they would not only live this way but follow the example of others here.

