



Anchoring Your Child to God's Truth



IN A
GENDER-CONFUSED
CULTURE



Helping Our Children Embrace
Their Calling to Godly
Manhood or Womanhood

Includes discussion questions for discipleship groups

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Introduction

Today's world is constantly sending our children unbiblical messages about gender identities, gender roles, same-sex attraction, and sexual fulfillment. Gender fluidity, which is at the core of many of these views, denies the sovereignty of God and the creation of man and woman as His image-bearers. The inherent uniqueness and value of each gender is not clearly understood by our culture because of historical stereotypes and abuses. We, therefore, must help our children put a biblical lens over whatever message comes to them from the culture. That biblical lens is called **complementarianism**. "God created them male and female" to *complement*, i.e., *complete* each other.

This mini-book is designed to equip Christian adults to understand the culture that is shaping their children's views of sexuality, so they can help their children respond to the deconstruction of male/female gender identities and roles taking place in our culture with gospel grace towards the sexually broken and with a whole-hearted celebration of the biblical teaching of complementarianism.

GOSPEL GRACE TOWARDS THE SEXUALLY BROKEN

We won't succeed in anchoring our children's souls to God's truth about sexual personhood in today's culture unless we approach the issue of gender confusion through the lens of gospel grace. Many in the rising generation believe that Bible-believing Christians are anti-gay. David Kinnaman of Barna Research conducted an exhaustive study of what sixteen to twenty-nine-year-olds non-Christians think of Christians. He published his findings in the book, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christians and Why It Matters*. Here is what he found:

The gay issue has become the "big one," the negative image most likely to be intertwined with Christianity's reputation. Outsiders say our hostility towards gays—not just opposition to homosexual politics and behaviors but disdain for gay individuals—has become virtually synonymous with the Christian faith . . . When you introduce yourself as a Christian to a friend, neighbor, or business associate who is an outsider, you might as well have it tattooed on your arm: anti-homosexual, gay-hater, homophobic.¹

Christian teens often assume their parent's generation is anti-gay since that is our reputation in the culture. If taking a stand for truth in our culture spills over to hostility towards those in the LGBTQ² lifestyle, we will have little influence in our kids' lives when it comes to their gender issues. Far worse, we will not be showing them Jesus! When it comes to the sexually confused, parents and church leaders must reflect both God's truth *and* His love. We must

lead the way in obedience to God's command, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts" (Col. 3:12).

As a church leader and parent, I must expel any potential judgmental attitude I have towards those in the LGBTQ lifestyle by remembering that to whom much is given, much is required. God has allowed me to know him through Christ and to experience the unconditional love of One Who died for me. Therefore, who am I to condemn one who does not know God as I do, who looks for love in places of sexual confusion or brokenness?

When I am tempted to be angry at LGBTQ political activists whose influence seems to be harming our country, my hard heart needs to be softened by recognizing they are not the enemy—they are being held captive by the true enemy, the evil one. Furthermore, LGBTQ political activists are a small minority of those who experience same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria. I also need to remember that in most of the cultures of the world, the LGBTQ community has been despised, loathed, and ostracized.

Those in bondage to this lifestyle need my compassion, not my hostility. Instead of finding value as one made in God's image, they are believing the empty promises of the world that do not satisfy. It is also quite common that those who experience same-sex sexual attraction don't want it; many have prayed through tears for God to take it away. When someone in the gay lifestyle repents and trusts Christ for salvation, God does not necessarily give him or her heterosexual attraction. In this case his or her sexual pathway becomes celibacy, which can be a very hard, lonely life. Those engaged in such a difficult struggle need the support and understanding of the Body of Christ.

Jesus' compassion for those who struggle with sexual sin is modeled for us in his treatment of the woman He met at the well of Samaria. He provides a paradigm for every Christian to follow who has a gay or transgender relative, friend, or work associate. It is an example our children need to see in us.

So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans) (John 4:5-9).

Notice that Jesus does not feel the need to immediately express His disapproval of her lifestyle. Some confused Christians seem to feel an urgency to express their disagreement with a gay friend's or relative's lifestyle, before he has gotten to know anything else about him. That was not Jesus' approach. Instead, He first takes three steps to *affirm the woman's value*. These steps *open her heart to discuss spiritual things*:

- 1. Jesus went out of His way to go into her world.** When any reputable Jew wanted to travel from Judea north to Galilee, he would go around the Samaritans who were considered to be unclean half-breeds. These idolaters had not only intermarried with the Assyrians, they had set up a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim. In the eyes of the Jews, Samaritans were idolaters, just below dogs on the social status scale. But Jesus affirmed the worth of the Samaritan woman and her culture by walking among them. He didn't stay in Jerusalem and demand they clean up their act before He would speak to them. In fact, the incarnation of Christ is the very picture of holiness coming down and bringing God's love to those the world devalues. Instead of treating homosexuals and the transgendered like lepers, we, if we would be like Jesus, need to take the first step toward friendship with them *because they are sexually broken*.
- 2. Jesus took the initiative to speak to her.** Jesus' request, "Will you give me a drink?" would have been revolutionary and countercultural, giving her both worth and dignity. In that culture, no self-respecting rabbi would ever speak to a woman in public, much less a Samaritan woman, and one living in sexual brokenness. Even among her own people, the woman probably experienced disapproval and harsh treatment. The fact that she travels to the well during the heat of the day, alone, and without the community of the other women, shows the woman's marginalized condition. And then Jesus speaks to her. He doesn't avert His eyes and look away. He doesn't condemn her. By taking the initiative to speak kindly to the woman, Jesus overcomes social stereotypes and treats her with a level of dignity she probably had never experienced.
- 3. Jesus overwhelmed her with acceptance.** More astonishing than the fact that Jesus spoke to her was what He said. Jesus asked for her help. According to the tradition of the Jews, drinking from the cup of a Gentile would make Jesus ceremonially unclean. Jesus' request for a drink from her cup was an act of true compassion. By willingly drinking from her cup, Jesus did not treat her as if she were unclean. She was clean enough for Holiness Incarnate to put His lips to her cup.

Jesus stepped into her world, spoke to her, and drank from her cup. Each act showered this sexually broken woman with God's love, affirming her value and worth. If we are to be like Jesus, we must find ways to pour affirmation into the souls of our sexually confused or broken friends, to give them a sense of worth and a sense of dignity as those made in the image of God.

Verses 10-26 describe how Jesus then led the Samaritan woman to discuss the need of her soul for the refreshing water that He could provide, His claim to be that soul-satisfying Messiah, and eventually, her own sexual sin. She came to faith and told her neighbors about Jesus. We read in John 4:39, "Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony."

What a story of the power of the gospel! It all started when Jesus refused to shun this sexually broken outcast, but deliberately went into her world, took the initiative to befriend her, and flooded her soul with acceptance. Only then did He raise spiritual issues and talk about her sin. (For a thrilling, current example of these principles being put into practice, see the story of Ken Smith, a former pastor of Syracuse Reformed Presbyterian Church, who reached out to Rosaria Butterfield, a lesbian feminist who came to faith in Christ.)³ As Christ's followers, we need to learn from His example!

SHEPHERDING OUR CHILDREN'S HEARTS TO ANCHOR THEM TO GOD'S TRUTH ABOUT SEXUALITY

Although the intent of this mini-book is to equip adults with a lot of information, it must be said that loving our children requires more than passing this information on to them. Good shepherding always begins with knowing your sheep. For parents, this means discovering what your teen thinks and feels about these issues. *You achieve this goal by asking questions.* What does he think about the transgender movement? What does she think about homosexuality? What has her experience been with lesbian friends? Does he think the biblical views are outdated? What does she think about male/female stereotypes? What do they think the Bible teaches about gender roles? It is only by asking questions and listening carefully to the answers and feelings behind the answers that we can help our children apply the truths of this mini-book to their lives.

Effective shepherding also focuses on the heart. This mini-book seeks to help parents shepherd their child's heart in three primary ways. First, it seeks to awaken compassion in the heart of both parent and child for the lost who stumble in the darkness without the light of God's truth concerning sexuality. Second, it seeks to create a quiet confidence in the heart of our children concerning the truth of God's Word regarding sexuality. Such heart-confidence prevents them from being defensive about the biblical view of sexuality and is a prerequisite for them to genuinely love those who are not living up to God's design of sexuality. The third way this mini-book seeks to help adults shepherd the hearts of their children is by helping them celebrate the wonder of our Creator's design of His image-bearers as male and female and wholeheartedly embrace their calling to show the world godly manhood and womanhood.

One final aspect of shepherding our children's heart is worth mentioning. As adults, a big part of reaching our children's hearts is *letting them see our own.* My desire is that, as God moves in our hearts, we will show the rising generation that it is because of deep heart-trust in the Designer that we grieve for those who are sexually broken, knowing that falling short of God's design is always destructive and that Jesus is the only pathway to wholeness. My hope is that we will be vulnerable enough to let our children see our own personal struggles in sexual discipleship. My prayer is that our children will see that it is our heart-driven love

for them and personal loyalty to Christ that make us want to see our sons and daughters glorify God by being all that He designed a godly male or female to be. May all who use this study be moved to lift their hearts in praise to the Designer of man as male and female.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important for Christian parents and spiritual leaders to model treating those who are in the LGBTQ lifestyle with gospel grace and compassion?
2. What have you learned personally about loving the sinner when you disapprove of his/her sin?
3. How can you identify with the woman at the well? How does acknowledging your sin equip you to love those who are struggling sexually?
4. What stood out to you about the way Jesus treated the sexually broken woman at the well?
5. In what ways do you think Jesus' treatment of the woman at the well is a pattern that shows us how to treat our gay or transgender friends and relatives?
6. Why do you think it is important to reach our children's hearts, not just their minds, with this material?



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Chapter 1: The World Where Our Children Live

Ella was a high school athlete in a rural South Carolina town. She and her parents were long-time church members and professed faith in Christ. They met with three pastors for counseling before contacting a Christian counselor for help: Ella believed she had been born the wrong sex. She was certain that she was a boy; she just had a girl's body.⁴ This condition, called *gender dysphoria*, though still rare, is on the rise in our culture. It is the experience of being born one biological sex but feeling a psychological or emotional identity as the other sex.⁵ What used to be called *gender identity disorder* was changed in 2013 by the American Psychiatric Association to *gender dysphoria*.⁶ As today's culture loses its biblical roots, being transgender is now mistakenly seen as a positive identity. The result is that those with this confusion, who are in deep emotional turmoil because they don't feel like they fit their gender-stereotype, are not given the help they desperately need.

While channel surfing, a friend of mine, who is a high school administrator, came upon a counseling professional who listed seven traits of a boy whose "true identity" was being gay: sensitive, creative, artistic, passive, finds friendship with girls easier than friendships with boys, nonathletic, dislikes roughhousing. My friend said, "I could relate to every one of the traits. In today's world, I might conclude that I am gay and pursue homosexuality. Twenty years ago, I might have been called a sissy. But I am now being urged to pursue homosexuality because I am sensitive, nonathletic, and love art and music."

A colleague who specializes in ministry to the sexually broken advised me, "Gary, let me tell you what is happening on college campuses today. Of course, there is rampant sexual immorality—that has always been the case. But now, freshmen men and women are told that they can't know if their sexual orientation is heterosexual or homosexual until they try homosexual sex."⁷ Among the dangers of such sexual experimentation is that the imprint of sexual experience stays in the brain, creating a hunger for the same kind of experience. For our gender-confused sons and daughters, taking a few steps down the path of same-sex sexual

contact is to step onto a steep slope that often ends in adopting the homosexual life.

A PCA pastor confided to me, “Gary, I am seeing a lot of teen guys at our Christian school, as well as guys who were home-schooled, who don’t have the slightest idea what masculinity looks like in their relationships with girls.” Another added, “Yeah, when my son went to the prom, the girls decided on all of the arrangements—where they would go for dinner, what to do at the after-party, etc. Christian guys today are really passive and unsure of their roles with women.” Meanwhile, from the Christian counseling room, I repeatedly hear, “Gary, I praise God for today’s renewed efforts at men’s ministry. Ninety percent of the marriage problems I deal with would be solved if men would stop being passive and lead their homes.” *God’s design of gender roles in marriage is foundational for successful marriage.*

In this cultural environment, today’s church has an unprecedented opportunity to step into this cultural malaise and point to sacrificial, self-giving manhood, the way God designed it to be. Restored masculinity and femininity ultimately point to Jesus, the Lover of His bride, the Church, Who sacrificed His life for His bride. The “Me Too” movement, which has brought to light stories of influential men in Hollywood and Congress using their power to sexually abuse women, reinforces the message of those in our culture seeking to deconstruct male/female differences altogether. Masculinity is called *toxic* because men use their power to serve their own desires at the expense of women. Similarly, women are encouraged to act like men by being fierce warriors instead of life-giving nurturers. Both pictures of gender reflect the brokenness of sin.

If parents and church leaders are to help our children recover godly manhood and womanhood, we must understand the growing influence in our culture of a worldview that distinguishes and separates **five aspects** of our human sexuality. A group called the Trans Student Educational Resources (TSER) is using a graphic they designed, called The Gender Unicorn, to propagate this splintered, five-category view of sexuality to students around the world.⁸ Making the right to choose its highest value, this view of sexuality proclaims that every human is free to choose and change all five aspects of his or her sexuality. Here are those five component parts identified:

1. **Sex assigned at birth:** the sexual anatomy with which you were born
2. **Emotional attraction:** which is separated from physical attraction
3. **Physical attraction:** sexual orientation (same-sex, heterosexual, or bisexual attraction)
4. **Gender identity:** seeing yourself as a man, a woman, or androgynous (gender fluid)
5. **Gender expression (role):** the way you express your gender; adoption of expectations for your gender

This fractured view of human sexuality permeates the thinking of key influencers in the

culture who are shaping the rising generation. The importance of choice in sexuality is seen on television and on college applications, is discussed in YouTube videos, and promoted in the social media. This view of sexuality may seem more fair and inclusive to our teens, but, in reality, it is harmful to both those inside and outside of the Church. Understanding and following God's perfect creation design is *always* the pathway to wholeness.

In their book, *The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them*, authors Owen Strachen and Gavin Peacock describe our culture's deconstruction of God's design of humans as male or female:

Many people today believe secularism. They pursue androgyny. As a result, boys want to be girls today and girls want to be boys. Many men embrace the traits and attitudes traditionally associated with womanhood. Many women do the same with manhood. Both sides avoid at all costs hard and fast stereotypes. The ultimate transgression today is to fit into past concepts of the sexes ... Men have grown increasingly passive, effeminate, and unsure of themselves. Women have become increasingly manly, aggressive, and unsure of their future. These are hard words today, but they sum up the drift of a secularizing world.⁹

Before we proceed in our effort to anchor our children in biblical truth concerning sexuality, it is important to pause to grieve for those who can't see God's glorious design of sexuality. Those in the LGBTQ lifestyle are looking for love, belonging, and sexual satisfaction in many wrong places. They are sinners, *just as we are*, but they don't realize that the deepest craving of their hearts is for the unconditional love that they can never fully find through sexuality, but only in Christ. This gender-fractured view of sexuality speaks of the brokenness of our race's fall into sin. The only way anyone's sexuality can be restored to God's intended design is by bringing their brokenness to Jesus. May we lead many fellow sexual strugglers to His feet.

In this culture, if we are to shepherd well the precious children entrusted to us, we must accomplish the following **four objectives**, which are the focus of the remaining chapters:

1. Saturate our kids' thinking in the biblical worldview that answers the gender-fractured worldview (chapter 2).
2. Shed our own cultural stereotypes and sharpen our thinking about true, biblical, masculinity (chapter 3) and femininity (chapter 4).
3. Examine how we can minimize the chances that our child's formation of his sexual identity will go awry, and help our kids adopt a biblical sexual identity that is rooted in Christ (chapter 5).
4. Strengthen our children's sexual self-esteem and call to biblical manhood or womanhood (chapter 6).

Discussion Questions

1. The chapter begins with stories that show the harmful consequences of disregarding God's design of masculinity and femininity. What alarmed you as you read the stories?
2. What are some examples of the gender confusion you have noticed in the world around you?
3. In what ways do you think gender confusion in the culture harms children?
4. What is new to you about the gender-fractured worldview?
5. In what ways is the "Gender Unicorn" understanding of sexual personhood a reaction to the brokenness of this world? How does it point to the need for Jesus?
6. Which of the four objectives of this mini-book (see above) do you think is most important? Which of these do you think will be most difficult to reach? Which one are you most looking forward to learning about?



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Chapter 2: A Biblical Response to the Gender-Fractured Worldview

Even as we help our children think biblically about the gender-fractured worldview that is articulated by TSER's "Gender Unicorn," we must view those in the LGBTQ lifestyle through the lens of grace. Those who hold these views, like the woman at the well of Samaria, need to be loved and valued as those made in God's image, much more than they need to hear our arguments against their worldview. Nevertheless, in order for our children to *love* those in the LGBTQ lifestyle or those espousing the gender-fractured view, instead of feeling the need to "argue them down," our children need to be humbly confident of the biblical answer to such views.

A. Biblical Worldview Regarding *Sex Assigned at Birth* (One's Biological Sex)

The irony of the gender-fractured worldview is that, although it emerged from a secular, materialist culture that *exalts this present physical world* as all that matters, the gender-fractured worldview values the physical body *too little*, rather than too much. This worldview denies that physical differences (such as the presence of estrogen or testosterone) have an impact on one's gender feelings or behavior. Its view is that one's physical body (sex assigned at birth) has no significance in determining the appropriateness of one's romantic or sexual attraction, one's gender identity, or one's gender role. A person has the right to ignore his biological sex, because *the individual's right to choose* is the highest value (which puts a huge burden on the individual to get the choice right).

According to this view, every individual has the right to determine: 1) his/her biology (through a sex change or hormone treatments), 2) his/her romantic and 3) sexual orientation,

4) his/her gender identity, and 5) his/her gender role—as *he* or *she* sees fit. Through the lens of Scripture, however, this attitude sounds suspiciously like Satan’s temptation of Adam and Eve “to be like God” (Gen. 3:5). It is, after all, God, Who created each of His image-bearers to be either male or female.

When it comes to understanding gender, Christians have something far, far better to offer our children and culture. It is not human *disintegration*—the splitting apart of one’s biological sex from one’s sexual identity and sexual role, or the separation of gender from emotional attraction. It is an *integrated* view of body and soul that sees God’s design of male and female to be glorious. Understanding how each of us is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139) in the image of God, to reflect both God’s beauty and God’s strength, elevates *both* genders.

When we trust Christ as our Savior, the beauty of God’s design comes into view. Our conversion opens our eyes to the nature and purpose of our God-given sex. We see the body not as a blunt instrument for our lusts, but as the gift of God for his glorification. We see our relationships with the opposite sex not as a power play, but as an opportunity to serve others in the name of Christ. We see the plan of complementarity, the roles we have the privilege of filling, not as a sentence to misery but a summons to happiness.¹⁰

Every human is either distinctly male or distinctly female. The differences between male and female are not arbitrary or accidental, but intentional. God *created* them. They are designed to be different so that they can complete one another. The identity and roles of male and female in Scripture are not interchangeable. As one scholar observes,

Sexuality permeates one’s individual being to its very depth; it conditions every facet of one’s life as a person. As the self is always aware of itself as an “I,” so this “I” is always aware of itself as *himself* or *herself*. Our self-knowledge is indissolubly bound up not simply with our *human* being but with our *sexual* being.¹¹

When it comes to God’s design of the male and female body, it is common knowledge today that estrogen and testosterone significantly shape female and male behavior. The average man has 1,000 percent more testosterone coursing through his body than a woman.¹² *God’s physical design matters.*

Christians also recognize that God loves variety and that every male or female image-bearer He creates is *unique*. No one perfectly fits gender norms because there is a great overlap of masculinity and femininity and because God is glorified by diversity. The secular world tries to explain these differences by deconstructing the genders—saying you can choose to be a boy or a girl. The fractured worldview denies God’s divine design and God’s sovereignty over gender and even the differences within the genders He has chosen for each person.

Whereas the gender-fractured worldview denies that a person’s biological sex matters, Christians recognize that the physical world of creation is “a ‘theater of God’s glory.’”¹³ Behind

God's physical creation is the mind of God. *God's idea* of womanhood is expressed in the physical body He has designed for her. *God's idea* of masculinity is revealed in the cartoon masculinity is delivered in—his male body. Even if we didn't know about the differences that testosterone and estrogen make, Christians would expect the physical bodies of male and female to reveal much about God's design of masculinity and femininity.

The biblical view **celebrates** the different and complementary natures of male and female at all five levels—their biology, sexual and emotional attractions to one another, identity as a man or woman, and God-assigned roles. In their book, Owen Strachen and Gavin Peacock give a good working definition of complementarianism.

Complementarity (is) the way in which men and women find happiness in owning their God-given identity and filling their God-given roles. Equal in dignity and worth, men and women share much in terms of Christian discipleship. But we are not the same. Unlike what egalitarianism would argue, men and women have different roles to play in life. We thus cannot agree with the idea that men and women alike lead in the home and church, as our egalitarian friends would say. The gospel of grace does not erase sexual difference and role distinctions: the gospel actually opens our eyes to savor divine design and our God-formed responsibilities.¹⁴

The gospel of grace has given us the opportunity to know the Creator. The sight of majestic mountains, the smell of a new spring day, or the sound of a babbling brook causes us to stand in awe of this One we have come to know—the Designer of it all! When it comes to the creation of our own bodies—God's fabulous design of male and female to complete each other—ought not we to also be staggered by the wonder of His design?

B. Biblical Worldview Regarding *Separating Sex from Emotional Attraction*

Sex, in the gender-fractured view, can be just recreational. It is simply a way of having fun and making each other's bodies feel good. The separation of physical attraction from emotional attraction in this worldview is perilous. Separating sex from emotion reduces the mystery of sexual union to mere bodily pleasure. However, the physical union in sex reflects the unity and intimacy found in the Trinity. To reduce it to a physical act for an individual, perverts its purpose and leads to the misuse of sex by *dehumanizing both male and female*. Separating sex from emotion is at the root of prostitution, sex trafficking, and the endless ways that men have degraded women by sexually exploiting them.

In contrast, the biblical view associates sex with intimacy as the wonderful *uniting of two complete beings*, body, heart, and soul. Springing from supreme, life-long love in

the security of marriage, sex is an expression of total surrender to one who knows you and wants you, body and soul. It is exposing one's nakedness to another human without the fear of rejection but with the promise of acceptance, love, and the expectation of being unconditionally cherished because his or her partner has vowed to do so in front of God, the state, the church, parents, and friends.

Sexual union is designed for the covenant of marriage. It is the outward, physical expression of the inner emotional and spiritual oneness of uniting lives in marriage. Like a fire in the home fireplace, it sometimes blazes hot and other times burns simply as cozy embers. But if it is taken outside the covenant home, sex is like a forest fire, destroying everything in its path. Mike Mason observes the inherent contradiction of joining bodies in sex without the commitment to joining lives in marriage:

To be naked with another person is a sort of picture or symbolic demonstration of perfect honesty, perfect trust, perfect giving, and commitment, and if the heart is not naked along with the body, then the whole body becomes a lie and a mockery.¹⁵

Sex is not only intended to bring intimacy, it is also profoundly spiritual. Sex is like glue that helps hold a couple together in their relationship. Those who use sex casually glue themselves temporarily to each partner. Then when they move on to another, it's like ripping apart two pieces of paper that have been glued together—part of their own soul gets torn. Perhaps that is one reason why God warns:

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body (1 Cor. 6:18).

C. Biblical Worldview Regarding One's *Sexual Attraction* (Orientation)

Apart from the grace of God, fallen men and women can't see the glory of God's design for sexuality because the teaching of the Bible is so misunderstood. It is widely believed in Western culture that because homosexuals are born with same-sex attraction, it is unfair to make them live by the morals of heterosexuals. Hence, the Supreme Court has ruled that gay couples have the right to state-sanctioned marriage. At this point, the biblical worldview radically departs from the gender-fractured worldview. Among Bible-believing Christians, there is no ambiguity about the morality of homosexual sex. The Bible clearly states:

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination (Lev. 18:22).¹⁶

This verse comes from the section of God's moral law that explains unlawful sexual relations. The New Testament is consistent with the Old Testament moral law.

Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9b-11).¹⁷

While the Bible says homosexuality is a sin, it is also full of hope and the promise that the person who turns from it can find a better life in Christ! The verses from 1 Corinthians make it clear that the Corinthian church included those who had come out of the gay lifestyle. The gospel of Jesus Christ is for all—no matter what form our sexual brokenness, idolatry, greed, dishonesty, hatred, or other sin has taken. Homosexuality is not singled out as the unpardonable sin!

However, those who came from those backgrounds at Corinth had turned away from their former ways. They had *repented*. Paul would have never ordained an unrepentant homosexual to pastoral ministry, just as he would not have ordained an unrepentant idolater, adulterer, or thief. The denominations in America that ordain unrepentant homosexuals to be pastors or ruling elders don't believe Paul's words are God's words. There is no ambiguity about the meaning of Paul's words.

When it comes to the *origin* of same sex attraction, proponents of homosexual sex argue that some people are born with same-sex attraction; therefore, same-sex sex is right for them. The biblical worldview does not deny that some people are born with same-sex attraction. However, Christians trace same-sex attraction back to our race's sinful fall in Adam, to the doctrine of original sin. R.C. Sproul explains, "As a result of the sin of Adam and Eve, the entire human race fell, and our nature as human beings since the fall has been influenced by the power of evil. We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners."¹⁸

Every human being comes into this world made in God's image with the law of God written on his heart, but also with a sinful nature.¹⁹ Paul tells us that from that sinful nature proceed, "sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these" (Gal. 5:19-21). Same-sex attraction, like all other forms of sexual brokenness, comes from our fallen, sinful heart. Just as some humans are more susceptible than others to the sin of selfish anger, jealousy, alcohol abuse, or heterosexual lust, others are drawn to the sin of same-sex lust, which, like everything else mentioned, can only come from a heart that is corrupted by sin.

Out of obedience to Christ, Christians who experience same-sex attraction are committed to remaining celibate rather than acting on those desires. In Christ, they are new creatures. The Spirit of God invades their heart, establishing their new identity, not as gay Christians, but as children of God.²⁰ Saying "no" to any kind of sexual attraction that would lead a man or woman to sin is part of the Christian life for all believers. Living, therefore, with unfulfilled sexual desire is part of the process of discipleship for all Christian men and women, both

those with heterosexual attraction and those with same-sex attraction.

Christians do not help those in the LGBTQ community by compromising the truth that same-sex sex is wrong. Because it is sin, it is also destructive. The wage that sin pays is always death. At the same time, with compassion we must remember that non-believers do not have the Holy Spirit helping them overcome their sinful sexual desires as we do, and the secular world is telling them that their identity is tied to their desire. They need our empathy and kindness, not our disdain. Most of all they need Jesus!

In summary, the biblical worldview concerning sexual orientation is this: *Some are born with same-sex attraction (SSA), which they did not choose. Being born with SSA doesn't make it right, because its origin is the sinful nature received at birth through Adam. Those who come to faith in Christ are given a new identity and nature. Those who experience same-sex desire must turn away from (repent of) such desire, just as every other believer must turn away from the sinful desires of his or her heart to follow Christ. All who struggle with sin need Jesus!*

D. Biblical Worldview Regarding One's *Gender Identity*

In today's culture, the term, *gender identity* is used to describe how someone subjectively experiences or thinks of him/herself as male, female, or somewhere in between. It is based upon how masculine or feminine a person feels.²¹ Those who want to separate one's gender identity from his/her male or female body believe that one's sexual identity is not permanently determined at birth by being born a boy or girl, but that every human should be free to choose a male, female, or bisexual identity. Fluidity (what one feels his/her gender to be at any given moment) overrides biology—a person's birth sex.

To discuss being transgender is to discuss one's experience of *gender identity*, one's sense of oneself as male or female, and how that psychological and emotional experience is not aligning with one's birth sex. The biblical worldview concerning one's gender identity is that it matches one's created birth sex. God does not separate anatomy from identity. He does not bifurcate a human being into a masculine body and a feminine soul. To the contrary, Scripture teaches that your body and your identity are bound, a whole, constituting a single person, namely you.

Scripture further reveals to us that confusing gender identities and behavior is displeasing to God: "A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God" (Deut. 22:5). As part of the moral law of God, this command seeks to uphold the order of God's creation. This verse prohibits transvestite behavior, cross-dressing, and adopting the behavior of the opposite sex. It indissolubly connects morality with living in accord with one's biology. Like all other commandments of God, this prohibition is for our benefit. We are not to blur

the boundaries between the sexes and undermine the creative intent of God. To deny one's created gender or to try to change it is to rebel against the Creator who assigned him or her that gender identity, role, and sexual nature.

We must think carefully about how to help those who reject their birth gender. It is agonizing to feel that you don't fit in with others of your gender, but those who reject their birth-gender are misguided about true freedom. Freedom *seems to be the right to do what we want*. The Bible, however, teaches that true freedom is *living as we were designed to live*. A fish who decides it wants to live on land is not free. A mountain lion who jumps off a cliff because he wants to fly, does not end up free, but dead. A soaring eagle in the sky is a picture of freedom because it is doing what it was designed to do—fly. A man who decides to reject his masculinity and act like a woman is not free. True freedom for a male comes in being *all that God designed a male to be*. The same is true of a female.

With compassion, we must recognize that part of the way sin has fractured human beings is by creating confusion about what true masculinity and femininity look like and engendering hurtful, false gender stereotypes. These produce self-doubt about whether we measure up as manly or fully feminine and sometimes provoke rebellion against the Creator who shaped us to be male or female. In the words of Christian counselor, Mark Yarhouse, "I think the fall can be seen in the lack of congruence between birth sex and psychological sense of gender identity."²²

When it comes to gender identity, wholeness comes not from thinking we can define our gender identity based upon how we feel; it begins only through surrender to God's creation design of us as male or female image-bearers of Himself. Wholeness continues through heart surrender of our sexuality to God through Christ and growing into a masculine or feminine identity that is rooted in Him. This process is explained in chapter 5.

E. Biblical Worldview Regarding One's *Gender Role* (Expression)

One of the most powerful forces shaping our culture's understanding of gender roles over the past fifty years is what historians call Second Wave Feminism.²³ The primary focus of this movement is equality, along with ending gender discrimination.²⁴ The spokeswomen for this movement have exposed the sinful, unjust treatment of women by men who have used their position and power to abuse women in nearly every culture of the world. Feminists have led the way in opposing the unjust gender stereotypes that have unfairly closed doors of opportunity to women. They have rightly recognized the inherent unfairness to single women of defining femininity almost exclusively through the lens of being a wife and homemaker. To our shame, Christians have been too slow to recognize the injustices growing out of a perverted paternalism, which feminists have identified and opposed.

However, the feminist worldview, in opposing injustice, errs when it makes *equality* synony-

mous with *sameness*. Without the guidance of Scripture informing it, the feminist worldview is quick to consider nearly any generalization about male/female differences to be sexist. The utopian ideal is a society that is gender-free, or at least gender-neutral. Christian feminists are embarrassed by Paul's command to wives in Ephesians 5:22-24: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands." They argue that Paul's teaching is culturally determined and is not the voice of God speaking to His daughters. From its founding, the National Organization of Women has been committed to abolishing male leadership in churches.²⁵

The biblical worldview condemns both feminism and male chauvinism. It begins with God's magnificent creativity. God is glorified by variety. If no two snowflakes are the same, how much more is His imagination displayed by making no two human beings alike. It is essential, before examining the distinct roles of male and female, to recognize that no two portraits of godly masculinity will look alike. No two pictures of godly womanhood will be the same. No two married couples will work out the blending of their strengths and God-given roles in the same way. Complementarianism celebrates male/female differences, but God's diversity in creating humans cautions that those tendencies should not become confining, unfair, gender stereotypes.²⁶

Genesis 1 teaches the *equality of the sexes in worth and dignity* as God's image-bearers and deputy rulers on earth. Both masculinity and femininity arise from God's nature. What the man and woman share in common with one another as human beings is far greater than how they differ from one another as male and female. Gender roles and differences can be over-emphasized.²⁷

Nevertheless, the roles of male and female in Scripture are not interchangeable. Unlike secularists, Christians see a fundamental unity in the original design of each sex. Their body, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender role is a unified whole as a man or woman. In keeping with this fundamental design of our Creator, each is assigned different roles in marriage, in the home, and in the church. We are not left to wonder what these differences are; they are spelled out in Scripture.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Eph. 5:22-25).

A Christian wife is called to welcome her husband's leadership, not because he deserves it, but *because of his divinely appointed position*. This is crucial. As countercultural as it is, the wife's respect for her husband's leadership role is based on her husband's *position*, not his

capability, and is rooted in her delight to follow God’s great design for manhood and womanhood in God’s covenant household. Respecting her husband’s leadership role is an act of faith in the *Designer*, more than in her husband. A Christian husband’s obligation to love his wife is not a fluctuating feeling but a commitment to God to provide—sacrificially—what she needs in order to flourish. (These roles will be examined in more detail in chapters 3 and 4.)

In the Church, which Paul calls the household of God,²⁸ this same pattern of love and order is to be followed: “Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the *husband* of one wife . . .” (1 Tim. 3:2). The human leadership role in God’s family, the Church, is assigned to men. “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet” (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Kathy Keller, in her booklet, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles: A Case for Gender Roles in Ministry*, explains that the historical setting in which the women were told to be silent was the authoritative determination by the synagogue elders of whether a visiting rabbi’s teaching was orthodox or heretical.²⁹ That authoritative function of serving as an elder was assigned by Paul in the New Testament to men. Writing about this male obligation, C.S. Lewis observes:

It is painful, being a man, to have to assert the privilege, or the burden, which Christianity lays upon my own sex. I am crushingly aware how inadequate most of us are, in our actual and historical individualities, to fill the place prepared for us. But it is an old saying in the army that you salute the uniform not the wearer.³⁰

So, in our two households—the household of God and of our own family—members of the redeemed community are to put on display the gospel reality of Christ being the Lover, Leader, and Bridegroom of the Church, and of the Church’s loving obedience to His authority. We do this through the *roles* male and female have been assigned to play. As Elisabeth Elliott writes:

Acceptance of the divinely ordered hierarchy means acceptance of authority—first of all, God’s authority and then those lesser authorities, which He has ordained. . . . The mature man acknowledges that he did not earn or deserve his place by superior intelligence, virtue, strength, or amiability. The mature woman acknowledges that submission is the will of God for her, and obedience to this will is no more a sign of weakness in her than it was in Jesus, when said, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.”³¹

TWO IMPORTANT CAVEATS

1. Accepting this divine hierarchy is easier when we recognize that in both settings in which women are to recognize men’s authority (the Christian home, and the Christian church), the men are accountable to the church authorities for their treatment of the women under their

care.³² It is also made easier when we grasp what Scripture teaches about the characteristics of godly manhood, which will be covered in the next chapter.

2. Christians have erred when they have extrapolated the principle of a wife's submission to her husband and male church leadership into overall society to prevent women from being CEOs or imply that men in general should be leaders rather than women. Women have leadership gifts, as Romans 12:8 makes clear.³³

Nevertheless, complementarianism is not seen *only* in the household codes of the New Testament. There are other biblical texts that must not be ignored. This includes the very creation of the man differently from the woman in Genesis 2, which is loaded with significance. The direct teaching of the virtues of a godly woman in Proverbs 31 cannot be ignored, nor can other gender-related texts. Even though it is challenging to fully shed our own unbiblical stereotypes in order to press back to what Scripture actually teaches about gender roles, we now turn to this task.

Discussion Questions

1. We teach that Christianity offers a far better view of sexuality than the world. What obstacles prevent our teens from believing this biblical worldview is superior to the fractured sexual personhood view that is increasingly shaping our culture?
2. The gender-fractured view of sexuality says that the design of your physical body as male or female has NO significance in determining your sexuality, gender identity, or gender role. In what way is the biblical worldview superior?
3. The gender-fractured view of sexual attraction splits physical attraction from emotional attraction. How is this a corruption of the biblical view of sexual union?
4. Why don't Bible-believing churches ordain homosexuals to be pastors?
5. How does the doctrine of original sin undermine the LGBTQ argument that since homosexuals are born with same-sex attraction, it must be right?
6. Bring Deut. 22:5 into the twenty-first century: *A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.* What does it prohibit and not prohibit? What do you think is the biblical principle behind the prohibition?
7. Why is it important to begin a discussion about God's design of gender roles for men and women with God's magnificent creativity and love of diversity?
8. How would you respond to the feminist argument that following Paul's command for wives to submit to their husband's leadership is to embrace the view that women are inferior to men?
9. If men are to be the leaders in their families, why is it logical that Paul teaches that men are to be leaders in the church?



Anchoring Your Child to God's Truth
IN A
GENDER-CONFUSED
CULTURE

Chapter 3: Adam's Distinct Calling as a Man

Today's church must teach our rising sons that godly manhood is a *calling*. Christ wants to redeem every Christian man's fallen, self-centered masculinity and restore him to the original design God displayed in creating unfallen Adam as a male. Christ came to fix everything that is broken in this world, including masculinity. In Christ, the Second Adam, men are empowered to become the Christ-like man Adam was designed to be. This chapter looks at that man.

In addition, there is an even higher calling for Christ-followers that we must help our covenant children see. A Christian man who marries is called by God to show Jesus to the world by loving his wife the way Jesus loves His bride. His relationship with his wife has been chosen by God to represent one of the deepest of mysteries: the relationship between Christ and the Church. *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. . . . This mystery is profound* (Eph. 5:23, 32).

There are two "theaters" in which the mystery is played out: the Christian home, and the local church. This is the reason, I believe, why such clear and unequivocal instructions are issued regarding how men and women are to conduct themselves in those two places. They are actors in a play in which tremendous heavenly mysteries are being enacted on stage.³⁴

The casting of the characters in this drama was done by God. Men, He decided, were to lead and hold positions of authority. Adam's fulfillment of his masculine leadership role in caring for Eve points to Jesus, the second Adam, the Redeemer who would one day come to redeem Adam's fallen posterity from their sin. Jesus' eternal love for His bride, the Church, is to be displayed by Christ-followers through loving their wives sacrificially. Let's examine four parts to God's design of godly masculinity.

A. Adam Is Placed in the Garden to Cause It and Its Inhabitants to Flourish

In Genesis 2:15, we are told that Adam is placed in the garden to *work it* (ESV). The Hebrew word for “work it” is *avad*, which is also translated *cultivate* (NASB). In this context, it means to *make fruitful*, to **cause to flourish**, to *produce*, to *build*, and to *shape*. Adam is to make the garden (which includes its inhabitants) fruitful—to provide what the garden needs to thrive, to help it and its inhabitants reach their fullest potential.

This core concept of masculinity is that we spend our lives (energy and time) devoted to helping those under our care develop to their fullest potential. We sacrifice our greatest assets, time and energy, so that the garden (or civilization) as well as our wives and children (also in the garden) flourish, prosper. Under this broad heading of *avad*, we discern four sub-headings:

- 1. Men are to provide what is needed to flourish physically.** It is true that *both* Adam and Eve are called to develop the potential that God has built into the garden (world). God wants iron to become steel and bridges to be built, the principles of harmonics employed to create beautiful music, and the relationships brought about by the diversification of labor to be regulated by his moral law. Both Adam and Eve are involved in this process of developing culture. However, Adam is more specifically assigned to *provide* from one part of the garden what another part needs (e.g., water in the garden to irrigate the pear tree, pears from the garden to feed humans, etc.) That is what “cultivating the garden” means. *Avad* includes *providing*. Men tend to feel it their responsibility to be the material providers of their families for a reason. Their calling is described by the word *avad*.
- 2. Men are to provide what their wives need to flourish spiritually.** The masculine call *to cause those under our care to flourish* also makes a confusing part of Paul’s teaching to husbands clearer. After telling husbands to follow Jesus’ example of sacrifice, Paul explains the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice with words that seem to set forth a puzzling parallel: “that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). This seems confusing, since we don’t wash our wives’ sins away by shedding our blood. Here is the parallel: Jesus’ *goal* for us, His bride, is to make us beautiful. Of course! That is what men do—they help those under their care reach their fullest potential as followers of God. Jesus’ love for us means helping us, His bride, become more and more inwardly beautiful—more sanctified. Christian husbands, then, are called to help their wives thrive spiritually, becoming more and more holy. We are to follow the

example of Jesus, the ultimate Husband. A man's job is to cause those under his care to reach their full potential in Christ.

- 3. Men are to provide what their children need to flourish spiritually.** The masculine call to help those in the garden flourish assigns to Adam the responsibility to help his sons and daughters thrive *spiritually*, as well. A father's role in the spiritual development of his children is clear in Genesis 18:19 when God says, "For I have chosen him [Abraham], that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice." In Colossians 3:21 and Ephesians 6:4, fathers are challenged to raise their children "in the nurture and instruction of the Lord." That is masculinity. Our job is *to impact and shape those around us, so they prosper and reach their fullest potential as followers of God*. The training and discipline of our children accomplishes this masculine mission.
- 4. The calling to help others flourish requires unselfish servanthood.** The masculine calling *to cause those under our care to flourish* requires a life of sacrifice. We die to ourselves, sacrificially providing whatever it takes so that those under our care flourish physically, emotionally, and spiritually. This is the masculine calling of a man—to put the welfare and prosperity of those entrusted to him before his own needs and desires. The masculinity that Christianity restores Christian men to display is not the selfish abuse of authority but *self-giving* manhood. Our authority and headship are assigned to us so that we can cause those under our care to thrive. Wives and children need men who will "man up" and lead this way!

B. Adam Is Placed in the Garden to Protect It

Genesis 2:15 continues, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and *keep it*." The Hebrew word that is translated "keep it" is *shamar*, which also means to *guard, watch-over, and protect*. The word is used of soldiers, shepherds, priests, custodians, and government officials. Rick Phillips writes, "This calling to *keep* rounds out the Masculine Mandate of the Bible. A man is not only to wield the plow but also to bear the sword. Being God's deputy lord in the garden, Adam was not only to make it fruitful but to keep it safe."³⁵

To fully appreciate this aspect of Adam's calling, we Westerners need to think outside our own culture, where birth control is widespread and infant mortality is low. In God's perfect complementary design, the female in this male/female union is the one to bear children. If she were continually pregnant in her childbearing years, how perfect, in God's design, for her partner to have the calling and capacity to be her *provider (avad)* and protector (*shamar*), when her special calling to motherhood makes her especially vulnerable.

In most cultures worldwide, males have had the role of protecting their families. I believe this is an unconscious recognition by men and women of God's creation design. A striking example of this understanding of manhood is found in the title of William Randolph Hearst's April 19, 1912, article about the sinking of the Titanic: *Towering Iceberg Is Fleeting Monument to 1500 Heroes Who Died So That Women and Children Might Be Saved.*³⁶

It seems unlikely that such a headline would appear in our current, gender-confused Western culture. How it must grieve God that, today, His perfect design is despised by some who see the masculine role of protector to be an insulting way to brand females as *helpless* or an unfair way to keep women from combat roles in the military.

Adam failed to *protect* the garden and Eve from Satan. The ESV Study Bible points out: "The man's role is to be not only a gardener but also a guardian. As a priest, he is to maintain the sanctity of the garden."³⁷ Adam was with Eve when she ate from the forbidden tree. He should have protected the garden temple. "Adam's sin was both an act of conscious rebellion against God and a failure to carry out his divinely ordained responsibility to guard or 'keep' (Gen. 2:15) both the garden and the woman created as a 'helper fit for him.'"³⁸

Larry Crabb, in his book, *The Silence of Adam*, tells us what perhaps Adam should have said:

"Now, wait just one minute here! Honey, this snake is up to no good. I can see right through his devilish cunning. He's deceiving you into thinking you have more to gain from disobeying God than by remaining faithful to him. That's a lie! Let me tell you exactly what God said to me before he made you. And look around us. This is Paradise. God made it and gave it all to us. We have no reason to doubt his goodness." And then, turning away from Eve: "Snake this conversation is over. TAKE OFF."³⁹

Instead, Adam remained silent, passive. The first Adam failed. Jesus, the Second Adam, did not. He defeated Satan—not only in the temptation before He began His ministry—but also in deciding at Gethsemane that He would go to the cross.

The call to be the head of our homes and churches requires us to protect those under our care, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32a). Prayerful intercession by men for those under their care is a key part of our calling to be godly men!

Another example of masculine protection comes to us in the example of Boaz in the story of Ruth (Ruth 2:1-3:18). Sam Andreades points out the numerous ways Boaz *protected* Ruth and Naomi:

Righteous Boaz goes outside of norms to make sure the women of his concern, Naomi and Ruth, are secure in their greatest needs. To keep her from

being molested was the first matter of security (Ruth 2:9, 22). His discreet solution to their financial insecurity is to instruct his men to let Ruth glean among the sheaves and even to pull out some barley from the bundles to leave for her to find (2:15-16). But Boaz provided things for them far more important than money. After Ruth makes her pass at him, Boaz protects her reputation (3:14) and makes both daughter and mother-in-law secure as their kinsman-redeemer (3:9, 12-13).⁴⁰

At the core of godly masculinity is a predisposition to protect those under our care and those who are vulnerable.

C. A Man Is Called to Leave His Home to Pursue His Wife

Genesis (the book of origins) continues in the second chapter with the origin of marriage:

“Therefore, a man shall *leave his father and his mother and hold fast* to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:24-25). Moses, the author of Genesis, reveals the universal principle that when it comes to the dance of man with woman, the man is the initiator. He is the one who leaves his father and mother to find and *pursue* her. He asks her to dance.

When we combine Genesis 2:24 with New Testament teaching for husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the Church, we see that the man *takes the initiative to pursue the woman to give her his love, to enjoy her, and to partner with him as the leader* in their joint calling to “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). Let’s examine each of these parts.

- 1. The man takes the initiative to pursue the woman.** At the heart of masculinity is the concept of taking initiative. C.S. Lewis once made the statement, “God is so masculine that all of creation is feminine in comparison.”⁴¹ What he meant was that when God speaks (*initiates* action), creation *responds*. In the Genesis 2 establishment of the institution of marriage, the process is initiated by the man, not by the woman. Moreover, the perfect husband, Jesus, leaves His place in heaven as God’s equal, and comes into the world, taking on the form of a servant, sacrificing Himself for His bride at the cross, and then drawing her to Himself with the cords of love.⁴² Jesus initiates, we respond. We belong to Him because He *pursued* us.
- 2. The man is to give her his love.** “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25). The Greek word for love is *agape*, which describes, sacrificial, loyal, fierce, undeterred devotion. This is the call to man-

hood—the sacrifice of ourselves for others. We die to our desires, sacrificially providing whatever it takes so that those under our care flourish physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We put others’ needs ahead of our own desires. When we do this for our wives, the world sees Jesus.

3. **The man is to enjoy her.** It is hard to miss the exuberance in Adam’s words, when he first meets Eve. *At last!* “This at last is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man” (Gen. 2:23). The reason we know a husband pursues a wife to enjoy her is because that is what Jesus does with His bride. He died to remove all the guilt and sin that came between Him and His bride. He wants union with us. He wants fellowship with us. We are His delight. Isaiah foretells the love of Christ for His bride: “As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Is. 62:5). A husband pursues his wife to enjoy her. She is a delight to him!
4. **The woman is to partner with him as the leader.** Both Adam and Eve are commissioned by God: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). Together, Adam and Eve use their gifts to develop the potential built into the earth, exercising dominion over their family and shaping the emerging culture *for* God. **Exercise dominion** means to rule, but they are not to rule *for themselves*. They are to rule as deputy lords *for God*—shaping every sphere of their lives according to what pleases God. Adam is to lead the way in this accomplishment of the cultural mandate. However, in the biblical design, a man is incomplete by himself. Unless he has the gift of being single, he needs a wife to complete him. She brings enormous resources (e.g., intuition, discernment, wisdom, perspective) he needs to navigate through life making good decisions. The biblical concept of marriage is **interdependence**—*needing each other to be complete*. Adam and Eve’s roles are not interchangeable, however. He is to lead, but a wise leader invests heavily in his relationship with those he leads, especially his right-hand partner.

D. Men Are Called to Strength

At the end of King David’s life, he summoned his son, Solomon to his bedside and said,

*I am about to go the way of all the earth. **Be strong, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn . . .*** (1 Kings 2:2-3).

At the close of Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth he wrote, “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, *act like men, be strong*” (1 Cor. 16:13).

The Apostle John, in his first letter, addresses subgroups of people in the church praising the young men for their strength. “I write to you, *young men*, because *you are strong*, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one” (1 John 2:14b).

Scripture, in these three places, identifies manliness with strength. But neither David, Paul, nor John is talking about muscular prowess. They refer to inner strength of character and fighting a spiritual battle. Solomon is challenged by his father to faithful, diligent obedience to God’s Word. Paul challenges the men in the Corinthian church to be strong warriors in the spiritual battle, being watchful and unrelenting in raising the shield of faith. John commends the young men for being strong spiritual warriors against the evil one.

All healthy males want to be strong. David, Paul, and John recognize this fact. The liberating truth is that no matter what his body size or muscle mass, every male can aspire to strength of character. By stepping out in faith often, a man develops a muscular faith. By devoting himself to the study of Scripture, a young man will gain a powerful grip on biblical truth. Saying “yes” to God when he doesn’t feel like it will develop a disciplined obedience in him. His enormous masculine capacity for loyalty to a Commander in Chief has no greater fulfillment than fierce allegiance to Jesus Christ his Lord. That is real strength!

Please recognize that no boy wants to be weak. So, why not seek to steer his desire to prove his strength into the same channels that Scripture does!

Before closing this chapter on godly manhood, there is a caveat. In calling men to be warriors and to strength, it is important to note that Scripture does not call men to independent, self-reliance. America is the home of John Wayne, rugged individualism, and men pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps. Such autonomous self-reliance is not the godly, masculine strength portrayed in Scripture.

The ageless teaching of Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 has always renounced autonomy:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Furthermore, Jesus, the ultimate portrait of godly manhood, does not model autonomous independence, but connection to His brothers. A close examination of Jesus’ life reveals that He had three friends He was closer to than the rest of the twelve—Peter, James and John. His friendship with the “inner three” was especially noticeable on the night before He died.

And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be

greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch” (Mark 14:32-34).

Instead of wrestling with temptation alone, the strongest spiritual warrior who ever lived—the archetype of masculinity—wanted His closest brothers with Him as He stared the ordeal of the cross in the face. Godly masculinity refuses to fight spiritual battles alone. Called to be strong protectors—yes. Called to be isolated and self-reliant—no.

This brief examination of the biblical call to manhood shows that godly masculinity matters to God. It is a picture to the world of Christ’s love for His Church. This glorious view of manhood is one we need to intentionally teach our sons and daughters, our grandsons and granddaughters. We must pray that the Holy Spirit will help us win their hearts—helping them celebrate our Creator’s wonderful design of male/female relationships. Their feelings of being alone, ashamed, or defensive about Christianity’s view of gender should be put to rest as we lead by example and biblical teaching. Contrary to today’s thinking, God’s call to Christian husbands is to exhibit *self-giving masculinity* and is a great opportunity to step into the void of our culture’s understanding of gender—and point others to Jesus and His love for His bride.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you see men portrayed in our culture? Can you give any examples of men from movies or television that portray biblical manhood?
2. How does biblical manhood differ from manhood as the world defines it?
3. Part of Adam's masculine call was to *provide what is needed for those under his care to flourish*. What part of this section stood out most to you?
4. What do you think is the most challenging part of Adam's masculine call to *protect those under his care, physically, emotionally, and spiritually*?
5. Do you think our culture encourages young boys to be strong and seek to exercise their strength or berates them for doing so?
6. What stood out to you in the statement: the man *takes the initiative to pursue the woman to give her his love, to enjoy her, and to partner with him*?
7. Are the young men you know encouraged to take the initiative in the pursuit of girls in dating, or do you see young girls taking the initiative? Is the issue of who initiates the date important?
8. Do you agree that no boy wants to be weak? How can we appeal to our sons' desires to be strong and steer them toward godly masculinity?



Anchoring Your Child to God's Truth

IN A
GENDER-CONFUSED
CULTURE

Chapter 4: Eve's Distinct Calling as a Woman

Mark Twain is reputed to have said, “It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you in trouble. It’s what you know for sure that *just ain’t so*.”⁴³ It is widely believed in Western culture that biblical Christianity’s teaching of complementarianism is misogynous—a worldview with prejudice towards women at its core. Such patriarchal systems are said to empower husbands with the authority to abuse women and generate an unjust, unequal division of power in the home and in the church. However, this idea that Christianity mistreats women *just ain’t so*.

To be sure, some men, claiming to follow the Bible, have used their positions and power to horribly abuse women. Many wives, often holding a mistaken view of biblical submission, stay enslaved in codependent relationships with abusive husbands, but such treatment of women is the opposite of what Jesus modeled and what Christianity teaches.

Contrary to the sexism that biblical Christians are often accused of exhibiting, Jesus modeled a revolutionary treatment of women with countercultural respect and dignity. From Jesus’ healing of the woman with an issue of blood, to the raising of the widow’s son from the dead, to His protecting of the woman caught in adultery, to His affirmation of the woman who washed His feet with her hair, Jesus was radical in the way He treated women as the full equals of men—having intrinsic value because they, like men, are fully made in God’s image. Such treatment took place in a culture where the Rabbinic prayer based on the Talmud was, “Blessed art thou who has not made me a woman.”⁴⁴ Sam Andreades also observes:

One should also not gloss over the invitation to education by Rabbi Jesus when He welcomes Mary to “sit at his feet,” along with his other disciples. The phrase, “sit at the feet of” was sometimes a technical term for admitting a student to formal spiritual training. Again, Jesus’ policy on teaching women... stands in contradistinction to the Jewish norm of his time.⁴⁵

In fact, according to the Jerusalem Talmud, Rabbi Eliezer the Great famously said angrily to his son that he would rather burn the Torah than teach it to a woman.⁴⁶

In contrast, Christianity has always affirmed that women are full members of the Body of Christ. Galatians 3:28 states: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Any discussion of the complementary roles that men and women have in marriage and in the church must begin by affirming the equal status of men and women in Christ.

It is also important to remember that the context for assigning different roles to men and women in marriage and in the church is a call to *mutual submission*. Paul’s passage on roles in marriage is part of the “family codes” found in Ephesians 5. It begins, in verse 21, with “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” He then gives specific instruction about what this submissive spirit should look like in relationships: “to both wives *and* husbands, to both children *and* parents, and to both slaves *and* masters.” A deference to each other’s roles is required of all believers.

It is out of reverence for Christ that a wife submits to her husband and out of reverence for Christ that a Christian husband denies himself to sacrifice for his wife. The glory of the gospel is that Christ has come to redeem our marriages from the devastation of our sin. That is why a godly husband unreservedly and unashamedly embraces Christ’s command to lead his home and love his wife sacrificially. It is why a godly woman embraces wholeheartedly and without apology her calling to be submissive to her husband. It’s for Jesus’ honor!

The truth is Christianity bestows enormous value on women. It is a fact of history that the spread of Christianity improved the plight of countless women worldwide. Think about the impact on a relationship when a man who converts to Christianity obeys the biblical command to love his wife, sacrificing whatever is necessary to meet her needs, just as Jesus did for His bride. Let’s refuse to let our daughters ever be on the defensive about Christianity’s view of women. God’s design of male and female to complete each other is perfect!

A. God Reveals His Purpose for Eve in the Story of Her Creation

*Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a **helper fit for him**.” Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a **helper fit for him**. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,*

“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (Gen. 2:18-24).

Why was Eve specifically created? She was a “helper fit for him.” This was the unique role given by God to Eve. Adam was not created as a helper for Eve. Their roles are not interchangeable.

God created Eve because the Garden of Eden would have been a prison of loneliness for Adam without her: “It was not good that the man should be alone” (v. 18). To release Adam from this prison and bring him joy and companionship, God created a woman and brought her to Adam. *Eve’s joy and fulfillment was in being Adam’s complement.* Adam needed someone to help him complete the commission to be fruitful and multiply and rule over the creation. Eve was created to help him do this as his right-hand woman and by producing children with him, filling the earth with God’s image-bearers.

In English, the word *helper* sounds demeaning, like a low-wage earner who sweeps the floors. The Hebrew, however, has no such negative connotation. The word for “helper” is *ezer*. This word does not imply inferiority, as feminists argue, since *God Himself is called our Ezer*. The concept is *to supply what is lacking*—to be the perfect partner for Adam that none of the animals could be. Her partnership was *necessary* to complete him.

For this reason, Aimee Byrd, in her book, *No Little Women*,⁴⁷ suggests that *ezer* would be better translated, “necessary ally” than “helper.” She traces this idea to John McKinley who argues,

She is to be for the man as an ally to benefit him in the work they were given to do. Just as *ezer* tells of God’s relatedness to Israel as the necessary support for survival and military perils, the woman is the ally to the man without which he cannot succeed or survive. Unlike “helper” which could seem optional and allow the man to think he’s otherwise adequate for his task without the woman, the distinction of ally marks the man’s dependence upon her contribution. The dependence is plain when we consider Israel’s need for God’s contribution as her ally.

What sort of ally is the woman to the man? She is a *necessary* ally, the sort without which he cannot fulfill humanity’s mission.⁴⁸

“Fit for him” or “matching him” could also be translated “corresponding to” him. This is not the same as being identical to him. A wife is not her husband’s clone, but she *complements* him.

Eve is the only creature that is made from another creature. Whereas Adam is made from the ground, and his natural orientation has to do with cultivating the ground (his vocation), Eve is made from Adam, so her natural orientation is him. She is designed to be his *perfect*

partner. Being created to be a human partner would explain why women are often more relational than men. She is designed *for* him, specifically as his *necessary ally*.

Women who love the Lord will find tremendous freedom, hope, and purpose in embracing the wise plan of God for women. This is no inferior life that the Creator offers Eve's sisters. This is the good life, the Godward life, the life that brings happiness through obedience.⁴⁹

Being created to complement another is freeing. It shatters our culture's stereotypes. Men are supposed to be tough, but in many ways my wife is tougher than I am. I need a tough partner because we have five kids, and I served twenty years as a church planter. Sandy brings strength, gifts and abilities to our home that would have been missing without her.

Neither my mother nor my one daughter fits the stereotypical "girly" mold. Neither one has liked frilly clothes, the color pink, or playing house as much as they have loved sports. Yet both were created by God to be wonderfully feminine as *necessary allies*, perfectly designed with the unique strengths and aptitudes their husbands needed to complete them.

B. The Essence of Femininity Is to Be a Giver of Life, a Nurturer

The man called his wife's name, Eve, because she was the mother of all living (Gen. 3:20).

"Eve" sounds like Hebrew for *life-giver* and resembles the word for *living*. Strachen and Peacock point out:

For their part, women are life-givers. Women give physical life to humanity, a task so great and so significant that it cannot be quantified. God has highly esteemed women by making the survival of the human race hang on their care and nurture. There is immense fulfillment and meaning for women in this truth.⁵⁰

Since creation matters so much to God, we might expect the woman's physical body to give clues to femininity. She is designed to receive her husband and surround him with love. Her breasts are made to nurture, and her life-giving womb nourishes and surrounds her developing child. These suggest the call of femininity is to provide life-giving nurture.

The love of a husband calls him to help his wife flourish by providing whatever she needs *from the garden*. A woman's love is giving *herself*—surrounding loved ones with her personal attention and care. Although Western culture has greatly devalued the feminine calling to motherhood and to a nurturing role, in God's economy, giving personal care and love to those who surround her life is the highest of callings. "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Speaking as a man, it is frightening to consider what the world would be like without the caring, nurturing love that the daughters of Eve supply so well to those around them.

C. The Virtuous Woman of Proverbs 31 Manages Her Home Well

This wisdom poem is an acrostic in which each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which would have made it easy for young girls to memorize. The poem begins and ends with the woman's excellence. Here (verses 10-31) is the divine picture of a godly woman:

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

The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.

She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.

She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands.

She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar.

She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.

She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong.

She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night.

She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.

She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.

She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.

She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.

She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant.

Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

“Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.”

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

Her focus is her home. It is those she serves there—her husband and children—who are urged to praise this woman of virtue. Nevertheless, as she looks to the well-being of her household, she is quite engaged in economic concerns outside her home (verses 14, 16, 18, 24). Her outward focus is also to be seen in her compassion for the poor and needy to whom she opens her hand.

The breadth of this description seems overwhelming, but I believe that when understood, that breadth is actually freeing. The list of womanly virtues is so thorough that every woman will find several that describe her! In my view, this list is not intended to be *exhaustive* (which would require every woman to be Super Homemaker Woman), but *inclusive*, showing very different women that they each have feminine gifts and motivations that, when cultivated, greatly honor God.

What if a wife doesn't like to cook and her husband does? Is she less feminine or virtuous if he does the cooking? Is he effeminate for doing so? No! God creates every woman to be wonderfully unique. Most women have some things on this list which they don't like and at which they do not excel. However, there are other tasks that do capture her heart and at which she can become proficient.

Western culture devalues what Proverbs 31 teaches. The idea that central to a married woman's identity is being a homemaker has been relentlessly deconstructed by the feminist movement since the second wave of feminism began. Feminism argues that a woman's fulfillment comes in having a successful career, *outside the home*.

The Christian view of complementarity does not limit a wife's opportunities. To the contrary, the biblical view of male and female recognizes that the husband's role *is seeking to enable the development of all his wife's potential gifts*. She has far more than the ability to change diapers, cook dinner, and do the laundry. A godly husband is committed to helping her discover and utilize the full array of her talents and is commanded by God to share the household tasks as joint heirs with her of the grace of life.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the primary calling of a married woman and the key to her fulfillment is fulfilling her God-assigned role at home. This does not mean it is wrong for her to have a job outside the home. The Proverbs 31 woman was extremely economically productive. The dichotomy of the workplace and home is a modern phenomenon. In ancient times, the home *was* the workplace. We must give freedom to couples to manage the arranging of their gifts and economic productivity as they are led by God.

The woman of virtue is a picture of competence, prudence, wisdom, diligence, and productivity in managing her home, her highest priority. There is nothing whatsoever about this role that suggests inferiority.

D. She Is Called to Inner Beauty

Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

Just as Scripture challenges men to be strong, it calls women to beauty. In both cases, the focus is on inner character. In these verses, Peter calls women to two virtues: *gentleness*, which is also translated *meekness*, and having a *quiet spirit*.

The Greek word for *meekness* is *prautes*, which means “strength under control.” In the ancient world, this word was used to describe a beautiful, spirited horse that was totally under the control of its master. Mary, the mother of Jesus provides a great example of this virtue:

Mary is the archetype of human self-giving. When told of the awesome privilege which was to be hers as the mother of the Most High, her response was total acceptance. “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.” She might have hesitated because she didn’t want to go through life being known as somebody’s mother. She might have had her own dreams of fulfillment. But she embraced at once the will of God. Her “Be it unto me” ought to be the response of every man or woman to that will.⁵²

God designed males who are married to initiate, lead, and rule. Their glorious complement, females, are made to be joint-heirs,⁵³ full partners with them—but who welcome their husbands’ leadership. At the core of this womanly meekness, this gentleness of spirit is *surrender to the Lord*. Writing to her daughter on the subject of Christian womanhood, Elisabeth Elliot says,

We are called to be women. 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. For I have accepted God’s idea of me, and my whole life is an offering back to Him of all that I am and all that He wants me to be.⁵⁴

Besides a gentle spirit, Peter calls Christian women to have a quiet spirit. A quiet spirit means a woman who is at rest inside. She *trusts God* to work out the details of her life. Her confidence in God to work out everything for her ultimate good is the key to her contentment. Her trust in God’s goodness makes her content with the circumstances over which she has

no control. She is content with her calling to be a woman, trusting in the goodness of God's order and design for marriage and womanhood.

Her unwavering trust in her God is the foundation for overcoming worry. She takes the details of her worry to God:

Don't worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7, J.B. Phillips translation).

She has a quietness about her inner spirit. She is at peace, resting, confident in God's sovereignty and goodness. Dr. James Coffield, one of my RTS Orlando Biblical Counseling professors, taught us, "In counseling, men typically are passive—they need to get moving. In contrast, women are often restless—moving too much and need to relax and trust God to work."⁵⁵

The woman who has developed a quiet spirit trusts God's character, resulting in a quiet reverence for God. He is Creator, she is creature. She may not always understand God's ways, but she believes in the core of her being that He knows and does what is best.

Knowing that women are created to be beautiful and to make their world beautiful,⁵⁶ Peter calls them wisely to invest in a beauty that age can never take away—"the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit" (I Pet. 3:4).

E. Unmarried Women Are Still Called to Godly Femininity

The whole concept of a woman finding her identity in being created as a *necessary ally for her husband* can be extremely frustrating and painful for a single woman. She may deeply desire to be married and feel rejected because she is not. Then alcohol is poured on her open wound by her family—the church—when she is assaulted with the concept that her feminine identity comes from being married. It is easy to see why a single woman might hate biblical discussions of femininity.

However, a woman does not become a biblical one, or increase her femininity quotient, by getting married any more than marriage makes a male more of a man. Every godly woman, single or married, is defined by her God-given womanhood, not her marital status. The picture of godly womanhood described above, i.e., being a servant (necessary ally), being self-giving (giver of life), managing her home well (Prov. 31), and having a meek and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3) portrays a virtuous woman, whether she is called to marry or not.

A single woman is also a member of the church, the household of God. All the femininity

described in the creation of Eve, in Proverbs 31, and in Paul's letters can be fully lived out within a single woman's extended family and church home. It is important, also, to remember that the living out of femininity in the church is not defined solely by the marriage relationship. Paul commands Timothy: "Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as *brothers*, older women as mothers, younger women as *sisters*, in all purity" (1 Tim. 5:1-3).

The truth is that brother-sister relationships in the body of Christ are eternal. They will be part of being the Church—the Bride of Christ—for all eternity, whereas husband-wife relationships will not (Mark 12:25).

Paul has one further encouraging statement to make to single women:

Let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. . . . And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband (1 Cor. 7:17, 34).

This passage might lead to the conclusion that a woman who is unmarried cannot major in femininity. After all, she has no husband to please. This is not true; the Apostle Paul viewed earthly marriage as a type of our ultimate union to Christ, our true Bridegroom. Paul teaches that the single person doesn't just get the *type*, she gets the *real deal*. She is free to concentrate on pleasing her true, eternal Lover—Jesus Christ, her Bridegroom (Eph. 5:31-32). This is not to say that the single life is easy, but that it is a biblical calling that in no way undermines a woman's femininity.

The biblical view of woman is that she is a magnificent, glorious creation. As parents, we should teach our daughters, from an early age, to have confidence in the glory of God's design of them to be wonderfully feminine. That is the truth we want our daughters to believe about themselves, but as their teen years approach, peer pressure can steer them to adopt a false, destructive personal identity script. We'll examine this problem in the next chapter.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the world's portrayal of womanhood differ from that of the Bible?
2. Do you see any positive examples of the complementary nature of manhood and womanhood in television or movies?
3. What stood out to you about Eve's calling to be a suitable helper? How is this understanding of femininity countercultural? Why might *necessary ally* be a better translation than *helper*?
4. How does our culture value motherhood? Do you see being a mother elevated or its importance diminished in education, media, or as girls are encouraged to choose role models? Why is that important to a woman's call to be a life-giver?
5. Proverbs 31 tells us that, in God's eyes, the virtuous woman is an excellent homemaker. Do you think daughters raised in Christian homes today believe that a great homemaker is "far more precious than jewels" as Scripture teaches? If not, why not? What can we do to help our daughters think more biblically about this aspect of their call to godly womanhood?
6. How does the world define beauty? Does our culture value a gentle and quiet spirit, or does it see silence as weakness?
7. How can we best help single women understand and believe that they do not have to be married to be fully, beautifully feminine?
8. How can we assist our daughters to recover biblical femininity as a noble calling?
9. How does the biblical model for womanhood require dependence on Christ to both understand it and also to live it?



Anchoring Your Child to God's Truth
IN A
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Chapter 5: Guide Your Teen to Adopt a Biblical Sexual Identity

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind
(Rom 12:1-2).

Out of gratefulness to God for His mercy displayed in the gospel (explained by Paul in Romans, chapters 1-11), Christ-followers are to offer their bodies, including their sexuality, to God as a living sacrifice. They do this, in part, by refusing to be squeezed into the culture's view of sexuality; instead, they embrace the biblical understanding that has been called *complementarianism*.

This transformed perspective which we have been examining can be summarized: *Proper sexual attraction, gender identity, and gender roles are inextricably bound to a person's created male or female anatomy, which makes his gender identity either male or female.* God's wonderful design of a feminine body and soul to complement the male body and soul perfectly fits them both for their different roles in the home and the church, also generating the sexual attraction they need to fulfill their call to love one another and procreate. As Solomon wrote, "Too amazing for me to understand . . . is the way of a man with a young woman" (Proverbs 30:18-19). *Christ-followers honor Christ by obeying His call to show the world redeemed masculinity and femininity.*

Imparting such a perspective to our preteens and teens is a vital goal in loving them well. Our children, however, will only embrace this *view if they resist being squeezed into the culture's mold—into its view of sexuality.* This chapter is written to show how the world's fragmented "**five separate parts**" view of sexuality may be directly affecting your teen's view of his or her own sexual identity.

A. Destructive Messages to Teens About Their Identity

At age 15, Rich Yates came to the conclusion that his identity was being gay. Here is his heartbreaking story. It began through his friendship with his high school music teacher:

Here was a man different from Dad or my brothers—he was gentle, soft-spoken, and warm towards me. He invited me into conversation. He told me of his world of teaching, ballet, music, and artist friends. I told him about my family, thoughts, hurts, and fears. He listened and encouraged me to confide in him.

On a snowy evening, he escorted me to the Academy of Music to see *Swan Lake*. I was so excited. I had never been to the theater. . . . After the ballet, my teacher called my parents and suggested that I stay with him for the night since the roads were unsafe. They agreed, not suspecting that he would unleash his lust on their son before dawn. He did.

Sunrise witnessed my tear-stained face attempting to resume its self-protective mask of stoicism as my teacher cautioned me to keep our secret. He explained to me the “truth” that I was gay like him. He promised to help me but said I needed to keep our special relationship under cover. I didn’t believe I had a choice.⁵⁷

Rich concluded that he must be a homosexual, but that never was his true sexual identity.⁵⁸ He always was what his Creator shaped him to be—a man—one who had been horribly abused as a child and who later struggled with same-sex attraction. Years afterwards, Rich would come to faith in Christ and discover an even fuller identity—that of being God’s son.

The lies of Rich’s abuser are just one example of the false messages about gender that confuse Christian teens about their sexual identity. The gender-fractured portrait of sexual personhood (discussed earlier) is being proclaimed by loud voices heard through the social media every day. *Our teens* are especially vulnerable to these false ideas because one of the key developmental tasks for adolescents is adopting their own *sexual identity*.⁵⁹

Teens seek their own distinctiveness as they move through adolescence to adulthood. This process results in accomplishing their developmental task of breaking away from Mom and Dad to become responsible adults. Teens attempt to find their true selves through peer groups, clubs, church, the social media, political movements, and their youth group. “These groups provide opportunity to try out new roles much in the same way the youth tries on jackets in a store until he finds one that fits.”⁶⁰ Because of this, explains Christian psychologist Mark Yarhouse, “Adolescence is a time of asking, ‘Who am I?’ ‘Where do I belong?’ and ‘In what community do I belong?’ Young people are trying on different roles and identities in various contexts to see what fits well with their emerging sense of self.”⁶¹

As teens seek to understand their identity, you might say they are looking for a script to follow that explains who they are, why they feel the sexual attraction they do, and what their appropriate gender role should be. But the right script is hard to find. Peacock and Strachan observe:

In 2016, the sexes have lost the script for their lives, and so many of us don't know what role to play in life. Try asking a male friend at a coffee shop, "What is your manhood *for*? What is the purpose of being a man?" Or try querying a young woman at the local university, "What meaning does womanhood have? Does it matter at all?" . . . Outside of affirming feminism, transgender identity, and shape-shifting sexual orientation, it's taboo today to speak of manhood and womanhood in any fixed way. This is true in secular circles and it's increasingly true even in Christian circles.⁶²

As teens seek to find the identity script that fits them, they hear the culture broadcast gender blending messages that confuse them in three areas: **sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender roles.**

1. Messages About Sexual Orientation. The prevalence of pornography in today's culture almost guarantees that Christian preteens or teens will stumble across same-sex pornography. Such explicit nakedness will likely cause a response of sexual arousal. That may lead the teen to conclude that he or she is gay. Since the nature of pornography is to addict, such teens may find themselves returning to the site, further convincing them they must be gay. Other teens develop same-sex attraction because peers urged them to experiment with same-sex sex. Still others experience same-sex attraction simply because it is one manifestation of our race's fall into sin.

When a teen experiences same-sex attraction he or she asks questions such as:

- "Why do I feel attraction toward others of the same sex?"
- "How did I develop a homosexual orientation?"
- "How do I make sense of my same-sex sexuality?"
- "What do my attractions mean?"
- "Who am I in light of what I am feeling?"⁶³

When *Christian* teens experience same-sex attraction, they also ask:

- "How do I reconcile my same-sex sexuality in light of my Christian faith?"
- "Where is God in all of this?"
- "Why doesn't God heal me?"
- "I believe God loves everyone, but why don't I feel loved by God right now?"⁶⁴

If a Christian teen experiencing same-sex attraction gets no answers to these questions from his spiritual leaders, the “*I’m Gay*” identity script supplied by the LGBTQ movement is very likely to resonate with him and make him feel like he *belongs* with those in the LGBTQ lifestyle. The LGBTQ identity script reads:

- Same-sex attractions reflect *real differences* between people, not just behavior choices.
- These attractions accurately signal *who you are* as a person.
- Your attractions reside at the *core of your identity*, your sense of self.
- If you are Gay (as the sexual orientation part of your identity), it makes sense to follow through and act on what you feel (your attractions)—because you are expressing and enjoying who you are.
- You are born Gay—it’s just a matter of discovering this about yourself.
- If you have same-sex attractions but don’t identify as Gay, then you are in denial or not yet ready to be honest with yourself about who you are.⁶⁵

Let me say this again. **When parents and churches don’t help teens with biblical explanations of same-sex attraction and related gender questions, Christian teens who experience same-sex attraction are likely to adopt this LGBTQ identity script.**

Our research has shown that most youth who opt for the Gay-identity script, find it more emotionally compelling than the identity script they are receiving from their local church. A “Gay identity” provides meaning, purpose, and dignity to a person who would otherwise live in shame.⁶⁶

Christian parents and church leaders must provide for teens who experience same-sex attraction an entirely different and biblical identity script. Same-sex attraction might be a life-long struggle, but they are not alone. Christ promises to walk with us through any struggle we face, and He can use the struggle to give us a greater understanding of God’s power, God’s love, and our need to rely on the Holy Spirit.

One of the reasons the LGBTQ’s script is so effective is that it promises community. It also takes sinful impulses that cause shame and celebrates them in a way that affirms those impulses. Christians must be honest with those struggling with same sex attraction. It is hard. The struggle is real. If they profess faith in Christ, their identity is to be a child of God, and they must be warmly welcomed into the community of fellow-strugglers with sin.

2. Messages About Gender Identity. Teens who experience same-sex attraction are not the only ones at risk for reaching the wrong conclusion about themselves. Christian teens and preteens are also confused by the prevalence of the transgender identity script and apparent increase in the number of their peers who experience gender dysphoria.

At base, in increasing measure societally, boys want to be girls and girls want to be boys. Boys and girls adopt the traits, appearance, and traditional behaviors of the opposite sex. They do all the same things, address one another in the same colloquial language, and observe precious few customs and manners that distinguish one sex from the other. Society encourages this shift and punishes those who push back against it. Our children, shockingly, are the ones who must bear the brunt of this push to neutralize the sexes. Adults by their very station in life should protect children in all ways and at all costs. But adults are precisely the ones who are engineering school systems, for example, to accept transgender ideology, a move that sets little ones up for confusion, fear, and even harm.⁶⁷

Often teens see traits in themselves that don't fit the stereotype they have built in their own minds about their gender. The transgender worldview seems to explain why they have those traits: *their gender identity is located somewhere between the two poles of being either male or female*. With the compassion of Christ, we must realize that for some teens there is real, isolating, internal turmoil when they don't feel that they fit their birth gender stereotype. To feel like you don't *belong* with those of your birth gender is deeply troubling, and often associated with depression and anxiety.⁶⁸

The solution to gender dysphoria, however, is not abandoning the truth that God designs all humans to be male or female. *It is realizing that God is so creative that no two portraits of masculinity or femininity ever look the same*. God does not want teens to be confused about their sexual identity. He wants girls to find motivation by wanting to be a *virtuous woman* (Prov. 31:10) and boys to be challenged to “*act like men*” (1 Cor. 16:13). They need reassurance about their created gender identity, not doubt.

Yarhouse observes that the growing acceptance of gay marriage “represents a broader cultural opinion that extends to transgender issues and gender variant persons.”⁶⁹ As we shepherd our preteens and teens in this environment, we need to be sure that battling for truth in our culture doesn't distract us from seeing that many of our own children need support navigating this troublesome, confusing, cultural terrain.

3. Messages About Gender Roles. Besides being misled by wrong explanations of same-sex attraction or uneasiness about whether they fit their biological sexual identity, teens in today's culture are further confused by the loss of gender role distinctions in their world.

There is an unbiblical instinct in our thinking today that is perhaps more prevalent and causing more confusion than we realize. . . . Though we might not be aware of it, perhaps this mentality falls prey to the gender-blurring impulse of our secular age. Unless everything is the same, and everyone fills the same role, we're told things are fundamentally unjust. We're in an age, after all, when people push for the rights of a girl to play on a boys' sports

team and vice versa; when schools open up washrooms of the opposite sex to children who identify as transgender; when public universities demand that the campus community do away with male and female pronouns, or the words “father” and “mother.”⁷⁰

The lack of cultural support for biblical gender roles in marriage and the church makes our teens more vulnerable to their own doubts about their masculinity or femininity. Their usually misguided stereotypes of masculinity or femininity—and the way parts of themselves don't fit that stereotype—are leading many to reject the God-designed roles He has assigned to men and women in the home and church. The breakdown of the traditional family has further confused our teens. Many children today grow up with a parent assuming the role of both mother and father, and the church has failed to fill the void.

In summary, Christian parents and leaders need to ask themselves, “Are we supplying a biblical identity script for those who experience same-sex attraction? Are we giving biblical guidance to those who are confused about their gender identity/role because of their own misguided stereotypes and the culture's deconstruction of female/male differences?” Today's Christian teens desperately need adult help adopting a biblical identity script that enables them to understand who they are as a young adult man or woman. Below are the components that such a script should contain.

B. Components of the Biblical Sexual Identity Script Your Teen Needs

1. It must be rooted in gospel grace, so teens know that the community to which they belong is the Church, the Body of Christ. Adults who guide children into their God-given identity must be those who believe they personally need the gospel of grace for their life every single day. Sexuality is deeply personal. Feelings of same-sex attraction or doubts about one's manliness or femininity trigger shame. Teens will only open up about these struggles to adults who exhibit brokenness over their own sin and a continual recognition of their own spiritual poverty. Christian teens must deeply believe that Christianity is for the prodigal in Luke 15. If they experience same-sex attraction, they will feel like their inner struggle is too shameful for them to find community inside the fellowship of the church. We must convince them otherwise!

2. It recognizes that as believers, their truest identity is to be in Christ and, through Him, the adopted children of God. Paul writes to the Colossians, “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him” (2:6-7a). Paul prays that the Ephesians, “being rooted and grounded in love might be able to grasp the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:17-19). The Apostle John marvels at the new identity that belongs to those who come to faith in Christ: “Consider the incredible love that the Father has

shown us in allowing us to be called ‘children of God’—and that is not just what we are called, but what we are” (1 John 3:1, J.B. Phillips). We must help teens find their identity in belonging to Christ and in being the beloved son or daughter of their heavenly Father.

3. It explains why they don’t fit in to the secular world around them. In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter challenges his readers to consider their special identity in the world: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” The fracturing of the human person into sex assigned at birth, physical attraction, emotional attraction, gender identity, and gender roles comes from the world of darkness. *That darkness fiercely opposes the biblical worldview of sexuality.* For example, if your daughter were to mention that she believes that God’s command for Christian wives to submit to their husbands reflects His good design for marriage, she would likely be mercilessly scorned by her friends. But just as Abraham’s posterity was chosen not to fit in to the fallen world but to be a blessing to it, Christians, the spiritual seed of Abraham, are *to be a blessing to the world*, which is still shrouded in the darkness of sin. Jesus said,

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:14-16).

4. It emphasizes that they are uniquely designed by God. God is glorified by making no two portraits of femininity or masculinity the same, but gloriously different. That is why males have many traits that are thought to be feminine, and females often have traits usually associated with masculinity. Teens measuring their manliness or femininity by comparing themselves to their friends is folly. Psalm 139 tells them that God fashioned them in the womb, and Ephesians 2:10 reads, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Helping teens explore their unique design (spiritual gifts, natural abilities, personality strengths, etc.) must be part of helping them grow into adulthood.

5. It motivates boys to pursue godly manhood and girls to pursue godly womanhood. Though male/female role distinctions in Scripture are specific to the spheres of marriage, the home, and the church, we see the biblical writers appealing to the broader desire of men to be strong protectors and women to be beautiful nurturers. We need to steer the natural motivation of boys to be masculine towards godly manhood, and the natural desire of girls to become beautiful women towards developing the inner beauty of godly femininity.

C. What Parents Can Do to Help Their Children Avoid Gender Confusion

In the *nature/nurture* debate over the cause of same-sex attraction or various forms of gender dysphoria, we have acknowledged that the cause may be *nature*—some are born with same-sex attraction and some seem to be born with an innate inclination to gender dysphoria. Having acknowledged that *nature* does sometimes play a big part, we must also recognize that *nurture* (the environment) has a significant role as well. As Harvest USA explains:

Experts realize that very few psycho-social conditions can be attributed to cultural or parental or genetic factors, but rather to a complex interaction of all three. . . . Why are some persons prone to anger? To depression? To chemical dependence? To domineering and defensive behavior? The answer is this: we do not choose the temptations that bring about our besetting sins! They develop in us through an interaction of our inborn temperament and the influence of our environment.⁷¹

As we have seen, same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria originate from the sinful nature, which, as Paul tells us, wars against the new nature that believers are given in Christ.⁷² When it comes to this battle between the desires of the Spirit and the flesh, the winner is often the nature that has been fed the most. The environment can reinforce the gender dysphoria or same-sex attraction that arise from the sinful nature. On the other hand, the environment we as spiritual leaders provide our teens can reinforce the call of their new nature to godly manhood or womanhood.

In a child's journey from childhood to his God-designed adult sexual identity, **there are four environmental factors we can influence.**

1. How well our child bonds with his same-sex parent. It appears that children grow into their sexual identity largely by identifying with their parent of the same sex. Although there are exceptions, men in the homosexual life usually have not bonded well with their fathers. Joe Pugh, a former member of Harvest USA's staff, writes:

My childhood was typical of many men who struggle with homosexuality. My father and I were never close. He reserved his praise for my older brother, who was more masculine, tougher, and more independent than I was. If the truth be told, he was also harder working. I became used to their contempt. . . . In particular, my father became the object of my contempt. Gradually other circumstances led me to the unhappy conclusion that all fathers were insensitive and threatening.⁷³

The lack of bonding with the same-sex parent tends to show up in the experience of lesbians and their mothers as well. In telling her story of coming out of her lesbian lifestyle, a woman named Carol writes:

My dad moved out when I was ten; still there were times when I felt that he loved me. I never felt that my mother loved me. She never came to any of my varsity volleyball games. She laughed when I started my first period and didn't want me to have a bra when everyone else in my class had one. In short, I never felt encouraged and supported in areas that nurtured my femininity.⁷⁴

Our culture's confusing messages about gender can easily lead some children to conclude that their sexual identity is to be gay or transgender. In such an environment, Christian dads must build close bonds with, and affirm the masculinity of, their sons—especially a son who does not fit masculine stereotypes. Christian moms must do the same with their daughters.

2. How we respond if a child adopts behavior of the opposite sex. A child who occasionally cross dresses, pretends he or she is the opposite sex, or a boy who puts on his mother's makeup is showing normal behavior between ages two and four. If this behavior persists, however, it is time to take action. Researcher, Dr. Joseph Nicolosi writes, "The fact is that there is a high correlation between feminine behavior in boyhood and adult homosexuality."⁷⁵ In his testimony of coming out of the gay life, one Christian leader looks back on his early childhood and writes, "I could never remember feeling comfortable as a male when I was young, even when I was three or four. I'm still not certain what went on during those early years, but I remember feeling much safer staying away from boys and doing typically 'girly' things."⁷⁶

Early signs of trouble in our children's assumption of their God-given sexual identity include:

1. Repeatedly stated desire to be, or insistence that he or she is, the other sex.
2. In boys, preference for cross-dressing, or simulating female attire. In girls, insistence on wearing only stereotypical masculine clothing.
3. Strong and persistent preference for cross-sexual roles in make-believe play, or persistent fantasies of being the other sex.
4. Intense desire to participate in stereotypical games and pastimes of the other sex.
5. Strong preference for playmates of the other sex.⁷⁷

There are no magic formulas to prevent same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria. *Parents can, however, make it easier for confused children to adopt their God-given sexual identity.* Realize that some identification with their opposite-sex parent is normal between ages two and four. Recognize that to some degree, transgenderism is a fad, and young teens who may pursue it will outgrow that phase. Nevertheless, gently extinguishing ongoing cross-sexual behavior in your child without shaming him is a good idea. On this subject our biblical worldview radically departs from the world's.

Emphasize the truth that God created all humans to be male or female, but that *God is so*

creative that no two pictures of godly manhood or womanhood look alike. Continually seek ways to affirm your son's masculinity and your daughter's femininity. If you sense ongoing gender confusion, be alert to the possibility that, upon reaching adolescence, he or she may experience same-sex attraction.

3. How a child bonds with same-sex friends. In the process of forming our sexual identity, we look at others and compare ourselves to them. A look into the past of many homosexual men reveals that, in comparing themselves to others, they did not *identify* with males, but more with females. Since they bond better in friendship with females, confusion about their sexual identity arises. Psychologist Joseph Nicolosi points out this common experience among gay men:

Most of my homosexual clients were not explicitly feminine when they were children. More often they displayed a "non-masculinity" *that set them painfully apart from other boys.* Non-athletic—somewhat passive, unaggressive, and uninterested in rough and tumble play. A number of them had traits that could be considered gifts: bright, precocious, social and relational and artistically talented. These characteristics had one common tendency: *they set them apart from their male peers and contributed to a distortion in the development of their normal gender identity.*⁷⁸

Gay men often indicate that in childhood, they had a preference for playmates of the other sex.

Girls were my only real friends. The boys at school never stopped picking on me, calling me, "gay," "sissy," or "faggot." At the age of six I had absolutely no clue what "gay" was—except that it meant I was somehow different from all the other boys. So it became easier to put as much distance between me and them as I could. I became more and more isolated and self-focused as I grew up.⁷⁹

When it comes to girls who are drawn into the lesbian lifestyle, the problem tends to be the opposite—over-bonding with another girl or woman. Mark Yarhouse reports from his research:

Females tend to report that their attractions, sexual contacts, and adoption of a gay identity label are more of an emotional experience born out of an existing relationship with a female. When reflecting on their early memories of same-sex attractions, female youths typically recalled crushes on friends; intense best friendships; and emotional infatuations with camp counselors, coaches, and teachers.⁸⁰

When a woman named Sarah tells her story, which ultimately ended in trusting Christ and turning away from the lesbian lifestyle, she describes the stage that was set for her to enter life in the lesbian world:

My fantasy life began around age seven. I was drawn to other girls who had

qualities I thought would meet my desire to be nurtured, admired, and looked up to. I wanted to be the most important thing in her life and for her to share an intimate and intense connection with me. I wanted to be able to trust her with everything and have her trust me totally in return. I deeply desired her to be the source of my comfort, my security, and my status. I wanted my comfort to be found in her mothering and nurturing. I wanted my security to be found in her loyalty and our intimate bond. I wanted to have status in her eyes by being her protector and source of strength, and ultimately the most important person in her life. When adolescence began, my emotional fantasies became eroticized. Being sexual, I believed, would create the ultimate bond.⁸¹

Parents, be alert to what is happening with your teen's and pre-teen's friendships. Is your son over-isolated? Watch your daughter's friendships—look for same-sex infatuation that becomes enmeshed—having an unhealthy, overly possessive make-up.

If there is a chance your child is experiencing same-sex attraction during adolescence, beware of how difficult it is for him or her to connect in the Christian world. Remember, a teen is looking for the group to which he *belongs*. You must help him *experience* the truth that, despite his same-sex attraction and the world's relentless message that such attraction “makes him gay,” *the youth group* is the place where he will experience the greatest sense of belonging. He belongs with other Christ-followers who are struggling to overcome their sinful natures. (For more information about shepherding a child who says he/she is gay, check out the resources of Harvest USA, www.harvestusa.org.)

4. How much affirmation of his God-given sexual identity he receives from his parents and leaders. In a rather surprising study, when teens themselves were asked to name the most powerful forces shaping their characters, they overwhelmingly cited their parents (86%), then their grandparents (56%), and then houses of worship (55%).⁸² Despite their children's widespread and constant exposure to the social media, parents have enormous power to influence their kids—especially with words of encouragement.

The power of praise became obvious to me some years ago in an incident with my second-born son. One morning, four-year-old Tim got up before the rest of the family, went down to the kitchen, and proceeded to set the table for breakfast. He pulled the chair over to the cabinet, got down the bowls, found the boxes of cereal, and climbed up to the top refrigerator shelf to get the milk. When I arrived in the kitchen and saw what Tim had done, I raved about it, saying, “Tim, you've just shown a godly character trait called *initiative*—recognizing and doing what needs to be done before you are asked to do it.” He answered, “Yeah . . . aniffitiff!” When each of the other five family members arrived at the breakfast table, I praised Tim to them. Guess what I found Tim doing the next morning? Yes, setting the table again. Verbal affirmation is powerful!

Words of praise are like a glass of cool water on a scorching afternoon, refreshing our thirsty, insecure souls with the truth that we have worth. Ever since our race's sin broke our fellowship with God, we have been unsure of ourselves. Our self-doubts spill over to uncertainty about our manliness or whether we are doing what we are supposed to do as women. The cultural confusion about gender causes the rising generation to no longer know how to perform the glorious dance of man with woman. The script has been lost, causing even more insecurity.

Words from parents or spiritual leaders such as, "You have what it takes to be a man," are enormously reassuring to sons. Such words build confidence in a way that nothing else can. Saying to a daughter, "God has made you marvelously feminine. Don't ever try to be someone else," are vitally needed today to fill the hearts of our daughters with self-assurance. The power of affirmation from parents and spiritual leaders is so important that the final chapter of this mini-book is devoted to helping you provide these life-giving words of praise specifically to those under your care.

Discussion Questions

1. Of the destructive messages our teens are getting today about their sexual identity, which messages worry you the most?
2. What do you think it is about today's culture that causes Christian teens who experience same-sex attraction to become convinced that their identity is *being gay* instead of *being a Christian whose particular struggles with sin include same-sex attraction*?
3. Potential shame prevents our covenant children from ever acknowledging it if they struggle with same-sex attraction. What can parents and church leaders do to change this reality?
4. Some voices in today's culture say that *regardless of your anatomy, your gender identity is how you subjectively experience yourself as male or female or somewhere in between*. How does this idea add to Christian kids' confusion about themselves?
5. How is the key developmental task of teens—to *adopt their own identity*—made more difficult by the culture's deconstruction of male/female differences? What can Christian parents and church leaders do to make it easier?
6. We've seen that a biblical sexual identity script must have five components (p.52-53). Which of these components stood out most to you? Which are the most important? How might parents or youth leaders help their teens adopt this five-point sexual identity script for their own lives?
7. We've observed that in a child's journey from childhood to his God-designed adult sexual identity, there are four environmental factors we can influence (p. 54-57). Look back at these factors. Moving forward, which of these four do you most want to remember? Why?

(Note: If studying this book in a class or with a group, be sure you go through the exercises in the next chapter prior to the next meeting, so you can be prepared for discussion.)



Anchoring Your Child to God's Truth
IN A
GENDER-CONFUSED
CULTURE

Chapter 6: Inspire Your Children to Embrace Their Call to Godly Manhood or Womanhood

For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you . . . (1 Thes. 2:11-12a).

Confusing, errant messages about gender sent through the social media find their way into your child's soul every day, tearing down the building blocks your child needs to have healthy sexual self-understanding. He or she needs that foundation rebuilt with words from you that articulate a biblical worldview of sexuality. Your child's sexual self-image must be built up and strengthened with your words, affirming your son's masculine traits and your daughter's feminine ones. This chapter gives you the tools to affirm and inspire your children as they pursue godly manhood and womanhood. It gives you a series of questions to ask yourself about your child. The answers to these questions will provide a stockpile of "verbal vitamins" with which to strengthen your child's sexual self-esteem.

Affirming Your Son's Masculinity

(Parents may find this exercise valuable to do together.)

A. Adam Is Placed in the Garden to Cause It and Its Inhabitants to Flourish

1. In what ways do you see your son being a servant who wants to help others prosper?
2. How do you see him caring well for things and people entrusted to him?
3. How do you see him wanting to build, shape, or order his surroundings?

Helping Our Children Embrace Their Calling to Godly Manhood or Womanhood

4. Do you need to help him see that using his creative, artistic, or musical skills is an expression of true masculinity, i.e., fulfilling Adam's call to develop the earth's potential by turning sound waves into beautiful music and light waves into attractive art?
5. In what ways do you see him measuring his impact by wanting to win—wanting to succeed?

B. Adam Is Placed into the Garden to *Protect It*

1. In what ways does your son show courage?
2. How do you see him trying to protect those around him?
3. What are examples of him defending the helpless and weak?
4. In what ways do you see him having a warrior's heart?
5. How can you bring out his instinct to protect and defend those who can't care for themselves?
6. What do you need to teach your son about spiritual danger?

C. A Man Is Called to Leave His Home to *Pursue His Wife*

1. How do you see your son taking initiative, in general?
2. In what ways do you see him making sacrifices for someone else?
3. What are some examples of your son being generous?
4. Do you see ways your son is thoughtful of others' needs?
5. What are some examples of him putting others ahead of himself?
6. How is he treating his sister(s) and mother with respect?
7. Does he need help understanding that he should take the initiative when it comes time to pursue a young lady? (One wise mother I know let her teenage son know that *he was going to date*, even though he said he didn't want to.)

D. Men Are Called to *Strength*

1. How do you see your son demonstrating inner strength?
2. How have you seen your son show determination to be faithful to God as David challenged Solomon to be?

3. In what ways does he show inner determination to be obedient to God's Word?
4. How have you seen him demonstrating strong faith?
5. In what ways do you see your son's loyalty to Jesus, his Commander in Chief?
6. Dad, how well do you model the truth that Christ never intended men to fight their spiritual battles alone?
7. Does your son seem to develop friendships with other boys well or not so well?
8. Do you need to encourage or help him build friendships with Christian guys from his youth group or school?
9. At key transition times (such as beginning middle school, starting high school, or leaving to go to college), do you need to explain to him how important it is for him to be a part of a spiritual band of brothers?

Affirming Your Daughter's Femininity

A. God Reveals His Purpose for Eve: *Being a Necessary Ally*

1. Are you sure that the biblical teaching of complementarianism has not caused her in any way to feel inferior to males? If she does, help her see that such a view misunderstands God's design.
2. What are your daughter's greatest strengths?
3. What other traits do you see in your daughter that would enable her to be a great "right-hand woman" to someone in a leadership role?
4. How do you see her exhibiting a servant's heart?
5. What are some examples of your daughter demonstrating loyalty to her friends or family members?
6. What are examples of ways she shows respect for those in authority?
7. In what ways do you see your daughter helping others succeed?
8. If your daughter doesn't marry, how can you see her fulfill her feminine calling to help others?

B. The Essence of Femininity Is to Be a Giver of Life, a Nurturer

1. In what ways do you see your daughter unselfishly caring for others?
2. What are some examples of her ability to affirm other people?
3. What examples do you see of her ability to nurture others?
4. How does she support other people?
5. Give examples of ways you've seen her encourage others.

C. The Virtuous Woman of Proverbs 31 Has the Character and Skills for Awesome Home Management

Read back over the portrait of the virtuous woman (p. 41-42). Ask yourself what these virtuous traits look like in the twenty-first century. Then put a star next to the attributes that describe your daughter and a double star next to those that are her strongest. Find an opportunity to praise her for these virtues.

D. She is Called to Inner Beauty

1. How does your daughter demonstrate a surrender to Christ's lordship as a spirited horse responds to its rider (meekness)?
2. In what ways do you see your daughter responding to God the way Mary did—*I am yours. Do with me what you will?*
3. Have you seen her quietly trust the Lord with some hard things?
4. In what ways have you seen your daughter overcome worry with her faith?
5. What are some of your daughter's other character traits that make her beautiful on the inside?
6. In what ways do you see her being a caring sister in her family or sister in the Body of Christ?

Final Thoughts

The plague of gender confusion has come upon Western culture. **Its victims are our children.** It is **our** emasculated sons whose confidence to lead—to pursue a young lady—is being

undermined. They are uncertain of their own masculinity and confused about how to relate to the opposite sex in today's world. It is **our** daughters who feel the subtle but constant pressure to compete with males and each other. They put themselves down instead of seeing in themselves the capacity for true, glorious, feminine beauty of soul that will never fade. It is some of **our** covenant children who daily live with the terrifying, inner fear that their true identity might be gay or transgender. They are therefore susceptible to being drawn into destructive lifestyles. It is **our** children's marriages that are being built upon flimsy, precarious foundations when the indispensable design for marriage roles is disregarded or not understood.

My prayer is that we Christian adults will not fail our children in their time of need.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the strongest two or three masculine attributes of your son?
2. Name two or three feminine attributes of your daughter.
3. List some key thoughts you want to remember so that you can both model and inspire your children to treat those in the LGBTQ lifestyle with gospel grace and dignity.
4. How best can you help your teen *be inspired* by the greatness of God's design of male and female to complement each other?
5. What one thing do you want to impart to your son about godly manhood?
6. Name one thing you want to impart to your daughter about godly womanhood.
7. How can you reach out more effectively to the sexually broken friends and relatives God has placed in your life to point them to Christ?

About the Author

Dr. Gary Yagel served twenty years as a PCA church planter before beginning his present ministry as the Executive Director of *Forging Bonds of Brotherhood* (www.forgingbonds.org), and the Men's Ministry Advisor of the Presbyterian Church in America. He has served on the speaking faculty of *Man in the Mirror* and spends his weekends speaking to men and coaching churches in men's discipleship. He received his DMin from RTS Orlando, where his dissertation was on the topic, *Discipling the Hearts of Men*. He serves occasionally as visiting professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, DC where he teaches, "*Making Missional Disciples*." He would love to speak to your men or provide free consulting for your men's ministry gyagel@forgingbonds.org 301.570.5097.

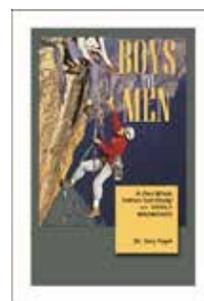
Gary loves teens, having begun his ministry as a volunteer Young Life leader, serving four years as a youth pastor, and having recently immersed from a twenty-year span of seeking to shepherd (with his wife, Sandy) each of his five children through their turbulent teen years. Gary and Sandy have been married 36 years and reside in Olney, MD.

Additional Resources



Harvest USA www.harvestusa.org. With roots going back to Tenth Presbyterian Church, this biblical ministry's focus is "Caring for sexually hurting people in Jesus' name." I am especially grateful to Dan Wilson the head of the Student Outreach Division (www.thestudentoutreach.org) for his help with this project. I highly recommend their seminar, *Gospel Sexuality: Raising Sexually Healthy Kids*. This entire ministry is a treasure trove of biblical resources on sexuality.

Boys to Men: A Five Week Father/Son Study on Godly Manhood. This is a study for fathers to go through with their 11-14 year-old sons. The goals are to help your son 1) form a biblical view of masculinity, 2) commit to godliness in his male/female relationships, 3) see Jesus as the model of true manhood, 4) see that allegiance to Jesus is what his masculine heart was made for, 5) forge an even deeper relationship with you. This study is available at www.forgingbonds.org/products/.



Recovering the Call to Biblical Manhood Saturday morning seminar. Take a fresh look at the glory of God's male/female design. Learn how a husband's pursuit of godly manhood helps his wife be more responsive to him. See why it is important in this culture for young dads to continually reinforce their child's birth gender identity and receive the tools to do so. Be challenged to put a biblical lens over your own stereotypes. Be inspired by a fresh look at Jesus, God's portrait of true manhood. Leave with a renewed passion to show our broken world the glory of grace-centered, Christ-empowered, redeemed manhood. This seminar is intended to mix generations—from pre-teens through seniors. For the stories of churches who have hosted it, and for more info go to www.forgingbonds.org/speaking.

EndNotes

- ¹David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity And Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 93-95.
- ²Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer. This is a term those in this life use to describe their movement.
- ³This story is recorded in Rosaria's book, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown and Covenant Publications, 2015), 8-21.
- ⁴Mark Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic), 58.
- ⁵Yarhouse, 19.
- ⁶American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013), 451-459.
- ⁷My friend is John Freeman, the founder and head of Harvest USA.
- ⁸TSER created The Gender Unicorn in 2014 to describe what they view as spectrums of gender and sexuality. It was quickly picked up by schools, colleges, and universities across the world and has been translated into over a dozen languages. Here is the link to their website: www.transstudent.org.
- ⁹Owen Strachen and Gavin Peacock, *The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, Ltd., 2016), 13.
- ¹⁰Strachen and Peacock, 14-15.
- ¹¹Paul Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 75.
- ¹²Strachen and Peacock, *The Grand Design*, 29.
- ¹³Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics Vol 2* Translated by John Vriend, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 406.
- ¹⁴Strachan and Peacock, *The Grand Design*, 12.
- ¹⁵Mike Mason, *The Mystery of Marriage* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1985), 117.
- ¹⁶See also Leviticus 20:13.

¹⁷See also Romans 1:24-27.

¹⁸<http://www.ligonier.org/blog/tulip-and-reformed-theology-total-depravity/>.

¹⁹Westminster Confession of Faith 6. I. “Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptations of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory. II. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion, with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body. III. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation. IV. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.”

²⁰See Romans 8:15-16.

²¹Mark Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 17.

²²Yarhouse, 41.

²³Imelda Whelehan, *Modern Feminist thought: From the Second Wave to ‘Post-Feminism’* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 25-43.

²⁴Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 464.

²⁵“We organize to initiate or support action, nationally, or in any part of this nation, by individuals or organizations, to break through the silken curtain of prejudice and discrimination against women in government, industry, the professions, the churches. . . .” The National Organization for Women’s 1966 Statement of Purpose, www.now.org/about.

²⁶The issue of male/female generalizations must be handled with wisdom and care. On the one hand, making generalizations is the way humans think; it is called inductive reasoning—reasoning from particulars back to a general principle. A two-year-old notices that furry creatures with pointed ears and long tails who say “meow” are called “cats.” There is nothing wrong with making that generalization. It is how they learn. Nor is there anything wrong with making a generalization that most women are more emotional than men. The presence of estrogen makes a difference in the female makeup.

²⁹ This generalization can be used positively or negatively. It is often used to demean women. However, it can be used to help husbands better love their wives. (One of the seminars I lead for men helps them better understand and meet a wife’s need for emotional intimacy.) It is not the generalization that is evil; it is the way it is used—whether to ridicule or better understand and love.

In a culture that claims that generalizations about masculinity and femininity are sexist, we respond: “No, they are not. They reflect the fact that our Creator made the sexes to be *complementary!*” Nevertheless, we must be cautious about generalizations regarding masculinity and femininity for several reasons. As this mini-book observes, gender stereotypes are responsible for raising huge doubts in children’s minds about their sexual identity. We want to tear down these false stereotypes, not erect new barriers for children to stumble over. Stereotypes have also regularly been used to demean women and unfairly slam shut doors of opportunity to them.

In proclaiming our God’s grand design of male and female as complementary, we must, therefore, strive hard to press back to the biblical understanding of masculinity and femininity—being always willing to rethink our assumptions and cultural biases about what godly gender differences look like. We must also recognize that our God is glorified by variety. Let’s celebrate both God’s glorious diversity in creating unique human beings and His glorious wisdom in designing men and women to complement each other.

²⁷This mini-book is written primarily to *prevent the culture from shaping our children’s views* of sexuality and help *them*, instead, to *shape the culture’s view* of sexuality. At times, however, God has used the culture to stir the conscience of the Church on such issues as slavery and segregation. Perhaps the egalitarianism of the current culture (though unbiblical) provides a good incentive to make sure that adherents to the complementarian view *proactively insure that the Church seeks every proper way to employ women’s gifts in ministry*. My own denomination, The Presbyterian Church in America, unashamedly holds to complementarianism. However, in its 2017 Report on Women Serving in the Ministry of the Church, one of the recommendations was to pro-actively “strive to develop, recognize, and utilize the gifts, skills, knowledge, and wisdom of women” as well as unordained men in the church. PCA Study Report: *Report of The Ad Interim Committee on Women Serving in the Ministry of the Church to the Forty-Fifth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church In America*, 2459.

²⁸See 1 Timothy 3:14-15.

²⁹“The early church was taught to model its worship on the template of Jewish synagogue worship. Neither synagogues nor early church gatherings had permanent, trained clergy, but the occasional traveling Rabbi or teacher who was invited to speak . . . The elders of the synagogue were tasked with reviewing the remarks of the guest preacher of the day and judging them as true and to be received, or false and to be rejected. They sat in front of the congregation, and if a true word was spoken, they were the ones meant to pronounce, ‘Amen, Amen’ at the end of it. The early church adopted this same practice as the Jewish synagogue—and for the same reason. Without a resident, trained clergy and an authoritative compilation of ‘the deposit of truth’ left by Jesus, traveling apostles, messengers of apostles, and apostle-wannabes could show up at any worship event and speak.” Kathy Keller, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles: A Case for Gender Roles in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 16-17.

³⁰C.S. Lewis, *Priestesses in the Church* originally published under the title *Notes on the Way in Time and Tide*, Vol. XXIX (August 14, 1948). It was subsequently reprinted with the above title in the posthumous *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1970).

³¹Elisabeth Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman: Notes on Womanhood for Valerie* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1976), 141.

³²See Matthew 18:15-20.

³³Leadership is listed by Paul in Romans 12:6-8 as one of seven spiritual gifts that Christians have been given.

³⁴Elisabeth Elliot, *The Mark of a Man: Following Christ's Example of Masculinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1981), 75.

³⁵Richard Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate: God's Calling to Men* (Stanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2010), 15.

³⁶William Randolph Hearst, "Towering Iceberg Is Fleeting Monument to 1500 Heroes Who Died So That Women and Children Might Be Saved," *The Denver Post*, April 19, 1912.

³⁷ESV Study Bible, 52.

³⁸ESV Study Bible, 55.

³⁹Larry Crabb, *The Silence of Adam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 11.

⁴⁰Sam Andreades, *Engendered: God's Gift of Gender Difference in Relationship* (Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Co., 2015), 90.

⁴¹C.S. Lewis as quoted in Elisabeth Elliot, *The Mark of a Man*, 54.

⁴²See Hosea 11:3 and John 15:16.

⁴³<https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/marktwain109624.html> There is some dispute as to whether Mark Twain actually said this.

⁴⁴James Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1981), 62.

⁴⁵Andreades, *Engendered*, 46.

⁴⁶Andreades, 46.

⁴⁷Aimee Byrd, *No Little Women: Equipping All Women in the Household of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2016), 25.

⁴⁸See John McKinley, "Necessary Allies: God as *Ezer*, Woman as *Ezer*," lecture, Hilton

Atlanta, November 17, 2015, mp3 download 38:35, <http://www.wordmp3.com/details.aspx?id=20759>. Cited by Aimee Byrd in *No Little Women*.

⁴⁹Strachen and Peacock, *The Grand Design*, 71-72.

⁵⁰Strachen and Peacock, 73.

⁵¹See 1 Peter 3:7.

⁵²Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman*, 64.

⁵³See 1 Peter 3:7.

⁵⁴Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman*, p. 52.

⁵⁵Doctor of Ministry Counseling class at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando.

⁵⁶This seems obvious both from general revelation and from the appeals made by scriptural authors.

⁵⁷David Longacre, *Gay...Such Were Some of Us: Stories of Transformation and Change* (Boone, NC: L'Edge Press, 2009), 103.

⁵⁸I am using the term “sexual identity” in the broad sense to include one’s perception of his sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender role.

⁵⁹For a much fuller discussion of how preteens and teens adopt their sexual identity, see Mark Yarhouse, *Understanding Sexual Identity: A Resource for Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013).

⁶⁰ Erik Erikson as quoted in Mark Yarhouse, *Understanding Sexual Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 47.

⁶¹Yarhouse, 47.

⁶²Strachan and Peacock, *The Grand Design*, 13-14.

⁶³Yarhouse, *Understanding Sexual Identity*, 36.

⁶⁴Yarhouse, 37.

⁶⁵Yarhouse, 70.

⁶⁶Yarhouse, 77.

⁶⁷Strachen and Peacock, *The Grand Design*, 125-126.

⁶⁸Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 22.

⁶⁹Yarhouse, 24.

⁷⁰Yarhouse, 113-114.

⁷¹*How Can Homosexuals Change*, produced by Harvest USA, 3901B Main St., Suite 304, Philadelphia, PA.

⁷²See Galatians 5:17.

⁷³Longacre, *GAY...Such Were Some of Us*, 61.

⁷⁴Longacre, 19.

⁷⁵James Dobson, *Bringing Up Boys: Practical Advice and Encouragement for Those Shaping the Next Generation of Men* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), Citing the research of Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, 119.

⁷⁶Longacre, *GAY...Such Were Some of Us*, 12.

⁷⁷Dobson, *Bringing Up Boys*, 118.

⁷⁸Dobson, 119. Note: Dr. Joseph Nicolosi's observations about his client's past are accepted as reliable in this paper, but his Reparative Therapy is not.

⁷⁹Longacre, *GAY...Such Were Some of Us*, 12.

⁸⁰Yarhouse, *Understanding Sexual Identity*, 19.

⁸¹Longacre, *GAY...Such Were Some of Us: Stories of Transformation and Change*, 70.

⁸²Robert Hamrin, *Great Dads Seminar Leadership Notebook* (Fairfax Station, VA: Great Dads, 2005), 9.

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