

INTRODUCTION



The fact that men and women are different by design is no surprise to those who are committed to reality or familiar with the Bible. It is a great surprise, however, to many who, over several decades, have engineered, vigorously endorsed, or passively succumbed to the social experiments that deny or attempt to alter that design. The experiments have failed, and have destroyed our culture in the process. A plethora of astute, honest, and brave observers in this closing decade of our century have begun to speak up.

- **ITEM:** In the former Soviet Union, where radical social experimentation on male-female roles has occurred since the early part of this century, “many Russian women see true freedom as the ability to be full-time wives and mothers,” according to a front-page story in an issue of the *Los Angeles Times*.¹ That traditional option has long been denied them, and both men and women are beginning to sense that this denial was never right.

Public opinion polls show that many Russians, men and women, feel that if they could have the choice, most women would not work outside the home while raising their children....

Lyudmila is one girl who has already decided that she does not want to repeat the double-duty life of her mother, who has toiled full time for 20 years in a candy factory while, like many other Russian women, being solely responsible for the household. “She gets no satisfaction from her work,” said Lyudmila.... “I don’t want to work after I am married. It takes too much time from your family. Most of my girlfriends feel the same way....” “The majority of younger women think it’s better if women are at home,” said Valentina V. Bodrova, a sociologist at the All-Russian Center of Public Opinion and Market Research, a leading polling organization.²

- **ITEM:** The cover of the January 20, 1992 issue of *Time* magazine reads, “Why are men and women different? It isn’t just upbringing. New studies show they are born that way.” That title has the aura of a shocking revelation, but it really is common sense to objective people—as demonstrated by the opening illustration of the lead article:

Many scientists rely on elaborately complex and costly equipment to probe the mysteries confronting humankind. Not Melissa Hines. The UCLA behavioral scientist is hoping to solve one of life’s oldest riddles with a toy box full of police cars, Lincoln Logs, and Barbie dolls.... Hines and her colleagues have tried to determine the origins of gender differences by capturing on videotape the squeals of delight, furrows of concentration and myriad decisions that children from 2 ½ to 8 make while

playing. Although both sexes play with all the toys available in Hines' laboratory, *her work confirms what most parents (and more than a few aunts, uncles and nursery-school teachers) already know*. As a group, the boys favor sports cars, fire trucks, and Lincoln Logs, while the girls are drawn more often to dolls and kitchen toys....³

During the feminist revolution of the 1970s, talk of inborn differences in the behavior of men and women was distinctly unfashionable, even taboo.... Once sexism was abolished, so the argument ran, the world would become a perfectly equitable, androgynous place, aside from a few anatomical details. But biology has a funny way of confounding expectations. Rather than disappear, the evidence for innate sexual differences only began to mount....

Another generation of parents discovered that, despite their best efforts to give baseballs to their daughters and sewing kits to their sons, girls still flocked to dollhouses while boys clambered into tree forts.⁴

• **ITEM:** A book on brain physiology, provocatively titled *Brain Sex: The Real Difference Between Men and Women* by Anne Moir and David Jessel, details the empirical evidence for innate differences between the sexes. Moir acquired her interest in the topic as a postgraduate student working for her doctorate in genetics at Oxford University amid the radical feminist atmosphere of the '70s. She noticed that some scientists seemed afraid of their discoveries about male-female differences, downplaying their significance over concern about what was politically correct. But Dr. Moir followed the mounting evidence through the years, and shared her findings with a reporter. The book that emerged from their joint effort has this significant introduction:

Men are different from women. They are equal only in their common membership of the same species, humankind. To maintain that they are the same in aptitude, skill or behaviour is to build a society based on a biological and scientific lie.

The sexes are different because their brains are different. The brain, the chief administrative and emotional organ of life, is differently constructed in men and in women; it processes information in a different way, which results in different perceptions, priorities and behaviour.

In the past ten years there has been an explosion of scientific research into what makes the sexes different. Doctors, scientists, psychologists and sociologists, working apart, have produced a body of findings which, taken together, paints a remarkably consistent picture. And the picture is one of startling sexual asymmetry...

It is time to explode the social myth that men and women are virtually interchangeable, all things being equal. All things are not equal.⁵

• **ITEM:** Another popular book on this general topic, which spent over two years on the *New York Times* bestseller list, is *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* by Dr. Deborah Tannen. A previous book Tannen wrote had just one chapter out of ten on gender differences, but 90 percent of the requests she received for interviews, articles, and lectures were from people wanting to know more about male-female differences. She decided she also wanted to learn more. Tannen writes:

I am joining the growing dialogue on gender and language because the risk of ignoring differences is greater than the danger of naming them. Sweeping something big under the rug doesn't make it go away; it trips you up and sends you sprawling....

Pretending that women and men are the same hurts women, because the ways they are treated are based on the norms for men. It also hurts men who, with good intentions, speak to women as they would to men, and are nonplussed when their words don't work as they expected, or even spark resentment and anger.... If we recognize and understand the differences between us, we can take them into account, adjust to, and learn from each other's styles.⁶

• **ITEM:** One young single mother wrote a book asserting that the feminist movement has, first of all, failed women and children—with men not far behind. She points out that

riffling through the pages of your daughters' [public] school books, what you won't see ... is a single image celebrating the work women do as wives and mothers. That information ... is carefully and systematically expunged from the official cultural record. Sexual equality is our culture's rationale for denying the existence of specifically female contributions, an excuse for withdrawing social approval and protection when women refuse to behave just like men.... When a culture begins to promote false conceptions of sex, gender, and family, the reverberations are felt immediately, penetrating deep into the least public and most intimate realms of our daily lives.⁷

An article in the *Atlantic Monthly* described those reverberations in chilling detail. Its conclusion? That “over the past two and a half decades Americans have been conducting what is tantamount to a vast natural experiment in family life.... This is the first generation in the nation's history to do worse psychologically, socially, and economically than its parents.”⁸

• **ITEM:** During our nation's 1992 presidential election, we received a moving reminder that many sensible people resisted the family experiments being foisted on society. Marilyn Quayle, wife of former vice president Dan Quayle, said in a featured speech:

Not everyone believed that the family was so oppressive that women could only thrive apart from it.... I sometimes think ... liberals are ... angry because they believed the grandiose promises of the liberation movements.

They're disappointed because most women do not wish to be liberated from their essential natures as women. Most of us love being mothers and wives, which gives our lives a richness that few men or women get from professional accomplishment alone.... Nor has it made for a better society to liberate men from their obligations as husbands and fathers.⁹

Christians all along have objected to intentional or unintentional obscuring of gender distinctives, writing many books of their own on the topic—and long before it became popular to do so. Some of those books focus exclusively on women and feminism; others discuss what the Bible teaches about both men and women, going into great detail about what life was like in ancient times, but falling a little short in providing guidelines on how that applies to contemporary life.

The approach of this book is not to provide you with an intimidating tome, but to explain simply and directly all the key biblical passages describing what it means to be a man or a woman from God's perspective. I want you to have a comprehensive picture, but not one that is overwhelming. I will also endeavor to be practical so you know how God's Word applies to your particular situation.

At the same time, you need to be aware of current trends threatening the clear biblical instruction on male-female roles. As is often the case, the church eventually catches the world's diseases

and adopts the spirit of the age. Some leaders and writers, in the name of Christianity, teach principles that attempt to redefine, or even alter, biblical truths to accommodate the standards of contemporary thinking. When appropriate, we'll examine what they are teaching.

Part one will examine the various attacks against God's design for men and women, beginning with Satan's initial corruption of God's glorious creation and including some of the more contemporary assaults on specific biblical doctrines, like the principle of authority and submission. In part two we'll review God's design for marriage, particularly how life in Christ and being filled with His Spirit can bring fulfillment to any marriage. We'll also consider the specific problems wives face in a society that elevates self-fulfillment above family responsibility. I've also included one chapter for those of you who are either married to unbelievers, widowed, divorced, or single. Finally, part three examines God's design for the roles of men and women in the church, including the specific biblical qualifications for leading or serving.

To narrow our scope, one area of male-female interaction we won't consider in depth is family life, a topic I have covered extensively in other books (*The Fulfilled Family* and *What the Bible Says About Parenting*).¹⁰ Pushing past the failed social experiments we will endeavor to rediscover what God's timeless Word says about our differences as men and women, and the grand design and fulfillment that await those who embrace the truth.

CREATION TO CORRUPTION



As our country prepared to enter a new decade, the cover of the December 4, 1989 issue of *Time* magazine declared, “Women Face the ’90s: In the ’80s they tried to have it all. Now they’ve just plain had it. Is there a future for feminism?” In the cover article the author, Claudia Wallis, asked, “Is the feminist movement—one of the great social revolutions of contemporary history—truly dead? Or is it merely stalled and in need of a little consciousness raising?”¹ Wallis claims it isn’t dead, just in transition.

Faced with a myriad of setbacks in the 1980s, including the defeat of the equal rights amendment, the more radical elements of the women’s movement lost their voice, and others were forced to moderate their position. Even Betty Friedan, the movement’s leading advocate, was pressured to declare herself in favor of the nuclear family.

While the extremists of the movement and their more outlandish positions—such as the abolition of marriage and the

exaltation of lesbianism—no longer command the attention they once did; the damage to our society has been done. George Gilder, author of *Men and Marriage*, writes,

Though rejecting feminist politics and lesbian posturing, American culture has absorbed the underlying ideology like a sponge. The principle tenets of sexual liberation or sexual liberalism—the obsolescence of masculinity and femininity, of sex roles, and of heterosexual monogamy as the moral norm—have diffused through the system and become part of America’s conventional wisdom.

Taught in most of the nation’s schools and colleges and proclaimed insistently in the media, sexual liberalism prevails even where feminism—at least in its anti-male rhetoric—seems increasingly irrelevant.²

Unfortunately, the church is in the process of soaking up some of the same ideology. More and more undiscerning believers are falling prey to the feminist agenda. I am amazed at how many evangelical churches, schools, and even seminaries are jettisoning doctrines they once defended as biblical truths. Within evangelical Christianity there is an organizational counterpart to the feminist movement called Christians for Biblical Equality that opposes any unique leadership role for men in the family and the church. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, in the introduction of *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, describe the supporters of this organization:

These authors differ from secular feminists because they do not reject the Bible’s authority or truthfulness, but rather give new interpretations of the Bible to support their claims. We may call them “evangelical feminists” because by personal commitment to Jesus Christ and by profession of belief in the total truthfulness of Scripture they still identify themselves very

clearly with evangelicalism. Their arguments have been detailed, earnest, and persuasive to many Christians.

What has been the result? Great uncertainty among evangelicals. Men and women simply are not sure what their roles should be....

The controversy shows signs of intensifying, not subsiding. Before the struggle ends, probably no Christian family and no evangelical church will remain untouched.³

While many in our culture are attempting to remove feminist ideals from the mainstream of society, the church has allowed access to those same ideals within her hallowed walls. But we shouldn't be surprised, because the feminist attack on the people of God is as old as man. Feminism began in the garden when Eve, who we could call the first feminist, listened to Satan's lies, stepped out from under Adam's authority, acted independently, and led the human race into sin.

Satan's goal from the start has been to overthrow God's design for His elect. That's why it's so tragic when the church is duped into helping him carry out his assault on God. What ought to be the strongest bastion of the truth of God is falling fast to the march of the feminist army. Those of us who hold to the integrity of God's Word cannot let it fall victim to the warped society around us.

Scripture is very clear about the place God has designed for men and women in society, in the family, and in the church. And it is to Scripture we must turn to reaffirm the wonders of God's design.

GOD'S PERFECT DESIGN

Any examination of the role of men and women in God's design must begin with an understanding of Genesis 1—3. The key verses in those chapters provide a foundation for the texts we will examine in future chapters.

GOD'S IMAGE-BEARERS AS COREGENTS

Genesis 1:27–28 gives the account of the creation of man and woman:

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Notice two important things in that account. First, God created *both* man and woman in His image. Not just man, but woman also was made in God’s image. Like God, each has a rational personality. Men and women alike possess intellect, emotion, and will, by which they are able to think, feel, and choose. Humanity was not, however, created in God’s image as perfectly holy and unable to sin. Nor were man and woman created in His image essentially. They have never possessed His supernatural attributes, such as omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, or omnipresence. People are only human, not at all divine.

Author J. David Pawson reminds us that the male-female equality of creation in God’s image also “does not mean interchangeability. A cylinder head and a crankcase may be of the same material, size, weight, and cost—but they cannot be exchanged.”⁴

Second, God blessed them as man and woman in verse 28: “God said to *them*, ‘Be fruitful and multiply ... fill the earth ... subdue it; and rule.’” The man and woman were coregents: God gave both Adam and Eve the task to rule *together* over the lower creation.

THE PERFECT RELATIONSHIP

Genesis 2:7 describes the creation of man in greater detail: “The LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” This