



TIME OF GRACE®

God & Gender: God's Design for Men & Women (Parts 1 and 2)

Study Notes

Summary

In the beginning, when everything was perfect, God created people. Not only did he create Adam and Eve “in his image”; he also “created them male and female.” This message lays the foundation for our faith when it comes to gender, a faith in the Father who loves everyone of the children he has created.

- **Big Idea:** God made men and women _____ and _____.

UNIQUE

UNITED

- **Genesis 1:27,28:** ²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

- United: _____

- United: _____

- Unique: _____

- Unique: _____

- **Genesis 2:20-22:** ²⁰ But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.
 - Unique: _____

- **Genesis 3:1-6:** ¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” ² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” ⁴ “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.
 - Unique: _____
 - United: _____
 - Unique: _____
 - United: _____

- **Genesis 3:15:** “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”
 - United: _____

Points to Ponder

1. Think of men from your past (father, brothers, friends, boyfriends, husband, etc) and consider how safe they made you feel. Were the best protectors the best men?

2. Read Philippians 2:5-11. Why is Jesus the greatest man of all time?

3. Challenge: Men, how could you better protect, emotionally and physically, the people God has put in your life? Women, in what ways could you imitate God, the ultimate Helper, and help those in your circle of influence?

Homework for Next Week

Read 1 Corinthians chapters 11-14.

Time of Grace Ministry
God & Gender: God's Design for Men & Women (Part 1)
Genesis 1:27, 28, 2:20-22, 3:6
June 7, 2020

Pastor Mike Novotny

It seems like more than ever we are in the middle of a gender crisis.

Do you care about God and gender as much as I do? To be honest, I hadn't given it that much thought until just over 10 years ago when the gender of my child was revealed; my wife Kim and I had decided to make it a surprise. So on that incredible day, July 7th, 2008, she started to push, I held her leg, that little head started coming out, and then I found out I wasn't just a father; I was a father with a daughter. And I thought to myself how does this work? I knew what it was to be a boy and to become a man but how was I going to raise a little girl?

Then six months later, my wife got pregnant; I don't know how that happened. Well, okay, I kind of know how that happened, but again, it was a surprise and again, God repeated the miracle and now I was raising two little girls and I thought about that. What does God want them to be? What do these two little kids have in common with their dad? What makes them unique and different? How can I raise them right? How can I disciple them? And what is God calling me to do as a man to model for them?

It made me think not just about their lives but about maybe the boys that they would date and the men that they would marry. My girls don't have to get married and I'm okay if they take a while until they start dating but what does it mean to be a man? What does God call a young man to be and to do? These are questions I hadn't thought deeply about until God blessed me with those two precious little girls.

I wonder if some of you care about those same questions? Maybe you think about your own identity - what does God want you to do with your life as a man or a woman; someone uniquely and wonderfully made? How does God want you to raise up, to train, to influence and disciple your sons, your daughters, your grandsons or daughters, your nieces, your nephews; what does it mean? Because we're trying to balance between these two really dangerous things in our world. In the past, we had some rigid stereotypes of what a man is and what a woman is. I mean, even I grew up with that in the 80's and 90's. I was a kid who liked to sing, played soccer, was in the show choir, I've never worn anything camouflage, I don't hunt, I don't fish, I have no clue how to use tools. Did that make me less of a man? According to the old stereotypes, some would say yeah.

Today, we've gotten away from all that. There is no box to be put in. Everyone can be exactly what they want to be but without guidance, without direction, without goals and values, so many of us feel lost. What is God calling us to be? What did he make us?

And that's why I'm so excited you're here today because today we're going to launch a pretty long journey diving into the Scriptures and exploring the topic of God and gender. Today in the message you're about to see, I'm going to lay that foundation from the very first pages of the Bible because God doesn't want us to feel lost or confused; he doesn't want us just to give in to cultural stereotypes or norms. He wants to tell us exactly how he made us to be; that's unique about men and women and what brings them together and makes them united.

Now as you listen for the weeks to come, there's one special idea I want to call to your attention because someone told me how powerful it was: It's the idea of making people feel safe and helped. Just as God made the first woman out of a man's rib and that made her feel safe and loved, God calls men to do the same thing today. So for all you guys watching, I want you to pay special attention to that point and I want you to think about the strong protecting influence that God wants you to be. And for you ladies out there, I want you to notice that God gives you one of the most sacred beautiful titles in the entire Bible; a title he normally reserves for himself. Today, God is going to blow our minds, open our eyes to the high holy callings that we have, as men and women in his kingdom. He's going to tell us exactly what he wants us to do and to be and most importantly, he's going to remind us who Jesus was and what he did for us.

I hope you enjoy these messages, I hope they clarify God and gender, and I hope it's a blessing to you and those that you love.

Back in early 2019, Gillette released a commercial that challenged men in America to be better. To be better than we're all too often; female belittling, woman harassing, sexually groping, and one another bullying past. They asked the haunting question: "Is that really the best a man can get?"

And after the commercial was released it blew up. Within four months, the commercial had over 30 million views on YouTube and over 700,000 likes. And the video had more than 1.4 million dislikes. In four months, it had become the 24th most disliked video in YouTube history because Gillette had walked right into the middle of the tension and the controversy.

A colleague of mine runs a podcast for men and he often asks young men that question: "What does it mean that God made you a man?" Like what's distinct and what's unique of the way that God himself created you? And do you know what the boys say to him in reply? Nothing. They have no clue; they have no clue what a man even is. In America, when it comes to the role of the man and the goals of a man, we're working without a script and unfortunately, the consequences are severe. But it's not just the men that have the issue, it's women who are struggling, too. In the last 100 years, thank God, so many things have changed for women in America; so many doors have been opened. We have come to treasure God's daughters perhaps more than ever before in our culture. And yet, the bar for some has been raised so high and has become so unattainable that the average American woman is left feeling overwhelmed, anxious, and never enough.

I mean, think about what it takes for a woman to get respect from other women in our culture. She probably has to go to college and maybe grad school. She has to establish herself in her career and compete with the men in her field. She has to devote herself to paying off her college

loans and becoming something in her career, while at the same time, watching her biological clock tick down. She has to find a guy and meet a guy and get the guy to commit. She has to start a family and raise cute looking kids on Instagram. She has to find a daycare and practice self-care and stay connected to her tribe and, and, and - she can admit that she's a mess and that she's overwhelmed; that's okay in America. But do you know what adjective Americans most often put before the mess? "Hot." Because you can be overwhelmed, ladies, and you can be a mess but you should probably look really good while you do it. And at shocking levels, women are feeling insecure and not enough; they can't keep up with the Instagram world. They're anxious, they feel bad about their bodies, themselves. They're trying to do everything and they feel like they can't do anything very well. And if I asked you, ladies, what it meant to be a woman - not by our culture's definition but by your heavenly Father's definition - would you have an answer? What's a win for him for womanhood? What are his goals for you and the way he has uniquely put you together in your mother's womb?

Now if all that weren't a crisis enough, then men and women get together in homes, relationships, marriages, and churches. A hundred years ago, there used to be a script for what a husband and a wife would do. It was very clear and it was all too often unfair. And so we tore up the script and now we're struggling to find our place. What should a husband do at home? And a woman? Who should take care of this or that? Are spouses interchangeable in the eyes of God? And is it true that there's a passage in the Bible that says the husband, like every husband, is the head of his wife? And if that's true, how is that not a slow pitch for toxic men to walk all over women and treat them as inferior? Like why would the Bible say that and what does it mean?

And what about church? When brothers and sisters gather together to worship our one and only God, does Jesus care about your gender? Does what we do - does who sings, who prays, who leads, who preaches - is it just about gifts and talents or is there something unique that God has wired within us? And if there is, as one of my pastor friends asked, why do about zero people think it's a beautiful design and all the people wish they could change it? If God is good and he cares about every one of his sons and daughters more than any of us ever have, why is this so difficult?

And if all that weren't enough, then there's the question of gender identity. When a person feels like they're stuck in the wrong body, when the way that they're wired externally isn't the way that their brain thinks about their gender identity. And when those stories aren't Bruce Jenner on the cover of Vanity Fair magazine or I Am Jazz, the reality show from TLC, when it's your story or someone you love, when you're wondering about your gender identity, when your little sister is thinking about a new name or your cousin wants you to use new pronouns or someone is thinking about new hormones or a new surgery to give themselves a new body, what do we do? And what would Jesus do? What does it look like to be a Christian who is full of both grace and truth at the same time when transgender becomes our story, too? What is a man? What's a woman? What's a marriage, what's a church, how do we answer the tough questions about gender identity? That is what we're going to try to answer in this series. And man, more than ever, that means we need to pray. Not because this is difficult but because if we get this wrong, everything falls apart. If our homes don't work, if our churches don't work, if our world doesn't

work, everything falls apart. But if we can get this right, if we can answer these questions the way our loving Father in heaven would, it is so good.

You know, when a man and a woman start a relationship and they know what God made them to do and they live out that calling with joy, when there is love and respect and selflessness and sacrifice, a relationship that looks like Jesus' relationship with the church, it is so good. I would have 10 extra hours a week from the counseling that I didn't have to do if that would happen at our church. And if we as a congregation walked in as male and female, brothers and sisters, and we saw the beauty of this calling, when no one felt inferior or left out, when there was not a competition for position or the microphone but we were so grateful to be the family that God designed, how unique would that be? How bright of a light in a dark, dark world! And if every kid in our church who's questioning their own gender identity would not have to keep a secret and not have to carry that cross and not have to plan how they're going to end their own life like 40 percent of trans kids in America will attempt, but if they can be real and we would be relational, if we responded like Jesus would with grace and truth at the same time, how great would that be? And so, more than ever, we pray and we ask and we beg God to bless what we're about to tackle. Give us answers, Lord, we ask when it comes to your will and our lives.

So with all that on the table, where would we start? Well, how about this: How about we start in the beginning. Did you know in the book of Genesis, we find almost all the answers to our questions about gender? In fact, before the first three pages are done, we will find a foundation that answers 80 percent of the questions that pop into our mind about male and female and gender and God. And just in case you had a long day and I'm about to lose you to a couple of sleepy times in church, I'm going to give you my answer right up front today. The big idea that we're about to learn - if you have a pen in your hand, why don't you write this down - that in the beginning, we're about to learn God made men and women unique and united. Before there was sin, before there was chauvinism, before there was sexism, before there was struggle, before there was strife, God himself made men and women unique and united.

So here's what it says in the very first chapter of the Bible, Genesis chapter one, starting with verse twenty-seven: "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God, he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"

Now in those two short verses, I find four answers - two unique and two united - and here's the first one. In the beginning, God made men and women united in his image. You caught that? In the image of God, he created - not him, not her - in the image of God, he created them. And that phrase, ladies, is the most important thing anyone will ever tell you. And guys, the same is true for you. When God made people, he made them in his image. And because God is a spirit, he doesn't have flesh and bones, we didn't inherit our heavenly Father's height or his hair color. What you got in the beginning was his holiness, his sinlessness, and his perfection. And through Jesus, that's exactly what we have even today. This is why like a sexless Christian should be a contradiction in terms because how could you ever look at someone who looks a lot like God and degrade them or devalue them? What we need for self-esteem and self-worth more than anything else is not some pep talk, looking ourselves in the mirror, and telling ourselves we're so

strong. It's to remember simply what God said in the beginning; that we have been created in his image. How could we possibly degrade someone who has been made in the A+ image of a perfect God?

But he didn't just make them, he also sent them. The second truth I see in this text is that they were united in God's mission. God spoke to them, he blessed them, and he said to them, "Rule the earth, fill it and subdue it." Back when you were a kid in grade school, you ladies when you were like on the playground with your girlfriends and a group of boys came up to play kickball, did you ever say, "Girls rule," and but yeah, I was the only one who, "Girls rule" and "Boys rule." You know, boys would say the same thing back. That's half true. In the beginning, boys did rule and girls did, too. God said to them, the male and the female, rule over the earth and subdue it. A man and woman would join in this incredible mission to rule over that little square inch of creation that God gave to them. It doesn't matter if you're a man, a woman, a boy, a girl, whatever God puts in your care - your property, your body, your family, your neighborhood, the place where you work, the school hallway - our job is to rule that in the image of God.

And yet at the same time, there's some uniques in this text. The most obvious is that God created us physically in different ways. You probably heard that in Genesis one, male and female, he created them. And science, more than ever, is telling us what Scripture said is true; that men and women are different. From the XX verses the XY in our chromosomes, to the amount of estrogen or testosterone that naturally flows through our bodies, to the way our brains work and think and function, we are different. And it's not just the Bible that says that. Did you know in 2017 the Stanford School of Medicine wrote these words? They said that compared to men, "Women excel in several measures of verbal ability, pretty much all of them. Women's reading comprehension and writing ability consistently exceed that of men." The way women speak and think, it's unique. I notice this with the women in my life with how they can multitask in shocking ways that I simply don't get. Like when I'm lost on the road, everyone needs to be quiet and the radio needs to be turned off so I can think about one thing. But my wife can juggle a thousand things at the same time and it's an incredible gift that God has given to many women.

And he's given other incredible gifts to many men. In the way that we think, the way that we speak, the way that we're wired, and probably most notably is the way that we're built physically; that we're just different. I was doing some really deep academic research on that point and I typed into YouTube "top 10 dunks for male and female." And do you know what I found? I found that women are not very good at dunking a basketball. Ladies, I mean no disrespect, have you ever heard of Brittney Griner before? She's one of the top female basketball stars. Her wingspan is seven feet, two inches. She has some of the best dunks that I could find a female could do and do you know what she can do? Like barely get the ball with two hands over the rim. Compare that to Milwaukee Bucks star Giannis - I can never pronounce his last name - Giannis. Do you know his wingspan is only one inch more but do you know what he can do with a basketball? Like if the NBA rim was made out of Old Spice deodorant, Giannis could apply every time he goes up for a dunk. I mean, the man is a beast. He murders the rim and why is it? You know, it's not just him with some unique gift. There are a thousand, probably literally 10,000 American men, who can dunk better than the best worldwide woman. Why is that? Not because we're sexist or chauvinist but because we're unique. Physically, mentally, verbally, God made us unique. Male and female, it says, he created them.

And then what you probably know, sexually, we're made unique. Don't worry, parents, there are no pictures for this part of the message. But if you had a little boy and a little girl, you're raising two kids and you put them in the bathtub together, they figure this out pretty quickly. We don't have the same parts and God said that in the beginning. He said be fruitful and increase in number. You know, it doesn't matter how masculine or how feminine you think you are, you really need two unique people to carry out that command. It takes a male sperm and a female egg to unite and create a new baby. And actually, our words say that. Did you ever notice that the word "gender" is associated with the word "generation?" And if I could use a PG-13 church word, it's because God made each gender with different genitals so they could have progeny and create new generations and fill the earth. In the beginning, God made us unique and if we had more time, we could talk a ton about how sexually men and women are so different; the physical and the emotional is often switched around in the way they connect, why pornography affects, you know, four times more men than women because of the way that they're wired. Why women often need a commitment to experience maximum pleasure in a sexual experience. We're different and God said it was good. He got to the end of Genesis chapter one, he looked at man and woman united in his image, in their mission, unique physically, sexually, and he said, "This is good."

And then he kept going. Flip one page to Genesis chapter two and you find my favorite thing about the callings of men and women. It says this in verse 20: "But for Adam, no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man and he brought her to the man." Now that, I will totally admit, is pretty weird. Why God decided like to create people in the way he did, I don't really get, but I love this passage because I think more than any passage in the Bible, it tells us what it means in God's eyes to be a man and to be a woman. If you're taking notes, I'd put it this way. That in Genesis chapter two, God gave us a unique calling.

Guys, the calling that God gave you is in an incredible picture of a rib. Men, do me a favor for a second. Put your pens down and I want you to touch your ribs for a second. I want you to think about how it feels, how it's made, and what it does. I'll tell you this - a rib is strong, it's unyielding, it's consistent, it's stable, it's reliable, and it protects - catch this - the vital things beneath it from the outside threats next to it. And that's what it means to be a man. A man is strong, he's reliable, and he is committed to stand in a position that is vital so people that God puts in his life are not hurt by the threats of the outside world. The Bible has zero to say about the truck you drive, about the animals that you kill, about the beer that you can brew or the beard that you can grow. That's not a man to God. In fact, you can have all of that and be a man's man by our culture and be nothing like a man in the eyes of God. But you are a man if you walk into a place, a school, a family, a relationship, a church, and your commitment and strength makes people feel safe. If the people in your life, like a set of lungs, can breathe and they don't have to be afraid and hold their breath because you walked into the room, you're a man. If the people in your life, the woman that you're dating, the one that you're married to, the kids that you're raising can do their job like a heart, and beat; that vital organ that God put within us without having to fear that something unsafe is going to get them, you're a man. And guys, that is the identity that we're going to unpack in the weeks to come.

Well, I hope today's message was a huge blessing to you. I hope it reminded you of your identity, as male or female, in the kingdom of God. And I hope it really equipped you to train the boys and girls, the young men and women, that you know to live up to that calling, too. There's so much more for us to explore so I hope you can join us next week as we continue our journey on God and gender.