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gender matters

M

Most of us have learned (the hard way!?) that you need to follow the manufacturer's instructions, if you want to put things together right. Recently I (Mary) bought and assembled a large wall unit for my husband's office. It was packaged in about a dozen boxes and contained hundreds of pieces of hardware.

I followed the directions step-by-step. Each piece had a specific purpose that became apparent as the unit came together. The process was complex and took several hours. I made some mistakes, and had to go back and pore over the pattern a few times, but I finally got it put together right. And it looks beautiful!

I'm so glad the manufacturer of that wall unit included instructions. The designer of a product is the one who knows that product best. The manufacturer is the one who knows why and how it's made, how to put it together, and how it's supposed to work.

The same principle applies to our lives. Our Creator knows us best. He's the one who knows how and why He created us male and female. As the Designer, He knows the proper way to order and fit together our lives and relationships—according to their intended design.

Jesus was once confronted with a question about male-female relationships. The Pharisees wanted to discuss cultural customs and practices about divorce, and have Jesus endorse one of two popular views (Matt. 19:3–9). But Jesus took the discussion to an entirely different level.



Jesus indicated that in order to get their thinking right, they needed to look beyond all their cultural customs and social conventions, as well as the distortions that had been introduced by sin. They couldn't hope to get things right by arguing over personal opinions or a list of human "dos" and "don'ts."

In order to think and behave correctly, they needed to understand God's original and highest intention for man and woman. And to do this, they needed to look back to creation—to God's pattern—to understand the intent of His original design.

It isn't possible to understand the Bible's teaching on men and women without first understanding God's purpose in creating them. So that's where we're going to start. We're going to lay the foundation of True Womanhood by going back to the first few chapters of Genesis. We'll have a look at what God had in mind, and what things were like between man and woman in the paradise of Eden, before sin marred our relationships.

As you walk through this week's lessons, try to do what Jesus challenged the Pharisees to do. First, look beyond the customs, social conventions, and distortions of male and female of which you are no doubt painfully aware. Second, remember that God's original design for male and female is good. In fact, God's assessment is that it's better than good . . . it's *very* good (Gen. 1:31)!

Regardless of what you may have been told by our culture, regardless of the pain you may have experienced due to the brokenness and twisting of sin, His plan for womanhood—and His plan for you—is beautiful and it is good!

As we look into the Designer's manual together, we think you'll see just how important your womanhood is, and how much gender really does matter!

As obvious as it may be that it's important to follow the designer's directions when it comes to assembling shelves, it's a point so many women (and men) miss when it comes to "assembling" their lives and relationships. The fact is, any time we fail to consult the Designer and follow the directions He has provided, we're going to end up with a mess!

Perhaps you relate—you've tried to build your life and relationships on your own, without the guidance of your Designer, and the result is chaos. Maybe it's time for you to go back and pore over the pattern to find out what your womanhood is all about.

The good news is that Jesus Christ can change you, rearrange the pieces of your life, and put things together the way He intended, so your life can become a thing of beauty and usefulness! →



“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Genesis 1:26–27

Have you ever found yourself pausing as you were on the verge of doing something really important? Last summer, I (Mary) sewed a dress for my son’s wedding. I had checked all the measurements, made all the necessary adjustments, and carefully pinned the pattern pieces to the material.

I picked up my scissors and positioned the sharp blades along the first cut line. But then, just before shearing the costly fabric, I took a deep breath and momentarily paused.

It’s not that I was uncertain. I knew I had gotten everything right. It’s just that I knew that my next action was significant in the pursuit of my goal — and the feeling caught my attention. I imagine it’s a bit like the moment before a surgeon makes the first incision, or an artist lays hammer and chisel to an exquisite piece of marble, or a gemologist cuts the first facet of a weighty diamond.

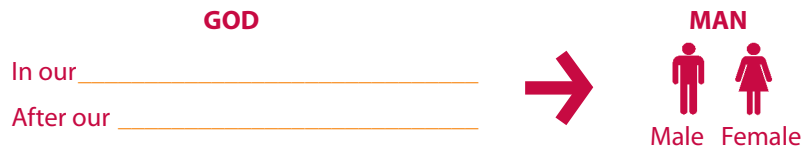
In the first chapter of Genesis, we see the Creator reflectively pause before His final and greatest creative act—the language introducing this act (“Let us make man in our image”) indicates an upcoming deliberative action with forethought. There was no question in God’s mind about what He was going to do. No. He had settled on His plan long before the foundation of the world. It was already in motion. At His word, the galaxies and planets, the sun and moon had all been formed and aligned. The earth had ripened with life: the ground had sprouted vegetation; the sky, sea, and land now teemed with every sort of living creature.

Everything was in place. Everything was ready. It all led up to this moment —and, as we will see, this moment pointed to another moment far off in time but eternally present in the mind of God. THE moment. The significance of what God was about to do was deeper and more profound than even the angels could fathom. He was about to make man—and to make him male and female.



Genesis 1:26–27 describes God’s “reflective moment.”

Read the verses in the margin and fill in the blanks of the diagram below.



Who do you think the dialogue in Genesis 1:26 was between?

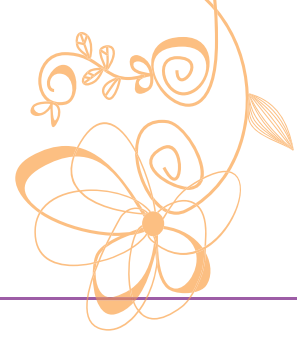
To whom does “us” and “our” refer?

The discussion about creating man and woman took place among members of the Godhead. It may have been among all three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But at the very least, it involved the Father and His Son, as Scripture draws parallels between that relationship and the relationship of the man and the woman (see 1 Cor. 11:3). We’ll talk more about that later, but for now, just think about this: *When God created male and female, He had the dynamic of His own relationship in mind.*

The Lord created the two sexes to reflect something about God. He patterned the male-female relationship (“them”) after the “us/our” relationship that exists within God. He designed the two sexes to put God on display.

Why do you think God created two different sexes, and not just one?





displaying His image

I (Nancy) have several photos of friends and family displayed on a wall outside of my study. On one occasion, I hosted Mary and several other women in my home for dinner. While I was showing my guests around the house, Mary pointed to a photo and asked, “Is this your father?” I affirmed that it was—but she and I both knew that what we were looking at was actually an image of my father, and not my father himself.

Just as the photo of my dad provides a snapshot of what he looked like, so mankind provides a glimpse of what God is like. Humans were the only creatures that God created “in His image” and “after His likeness.”

The word “cloud” contains words closely associated with the concept of “image” and “likeness.” Cross out the three words that do not belong:

compare model correlate mirror
hide reflect imitate picture display
represent copy shadow emulate
resemble conceal disregard

What are some ways you can think of that humans resemble/reflect the image of God?

Being created in God’s image includes the ability to think and make moral choices. It means that we share in God’s nature. Humans have personality; they have the capacity for creativity, truth, wisdom, love, holiness, and justice.



“What is man that you are mindful of him, . . . you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.”

Psalm 8:4–6

“Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

Colossians 3:10

“Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Ephesians 4:24



Scripture also indicates that being made in the image of God gives man capacity for spiritual fellowship with Him. What's more, it allows man to have dominion over the work of God's hands—to govern creation as God's representative.

How does the truth that mankind is created in the image of God speak to the chronic feelings of inferiority and worthlessness that many women experience?

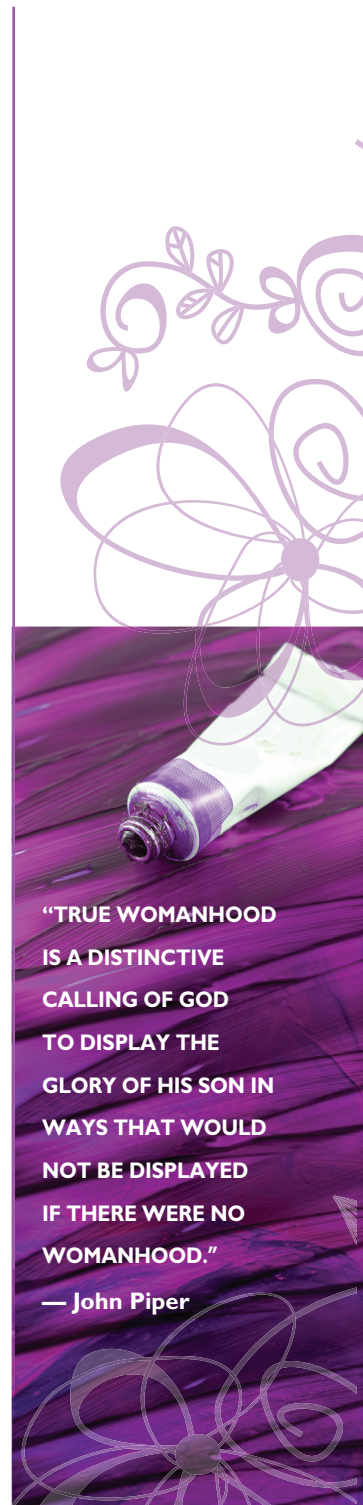
The photo of my dad in my hallway puts my dad on display for everyone who comes into my house to see. Likewise, God want us to put Him on display, so that everyone who looks at us sees the beauty of His image. It's a profound honor and responsibility to bear the image of God.

Read Isaiah 43:6–7 in your Bible. For what purpose does God say He created “sons” and “daughters”?

Scripture teaches that womanhood isn't about prettying ourselves up and putting ourselves on display. Our purpose in life is to put God on display—to reflect His glory in ways we as women were uniquely created to do.

Do you feel that your womanhood displays God's glory? Explain why or why not.

→ **Close today's lesson by praying and asking** the Lord to deepen your understanding of what it means to display His glory as a woman.



“TRUE WOMANHOOD IS A DISTINCTIVE CALLING OF GOD TO DISPLAY THE GLORY OF HIS SON IN WAYS THAT WOULD NOT BE DISPLAYED IF THERE WERE NO WOMANHOOD.”

— John Piper



“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.”

Ephesians 5:23

“The head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.”

I Corinthians 11:3

“We are members of [Christ’s] body. ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

Ephesians 5:30–32

Yesterday, we learned that male and female were created in the image of God, to reflect the glory of God. We were each designed to be “image-bearers”—to display the likeness of our Creator.

The responsibility to reflect God’s image, however, wasn’t just given to us as individuals. Mankind was created as male and female—in relationship—to display something about the divine relationship that exists within the triune God. Our relationships were created to tell the incredible story of God.

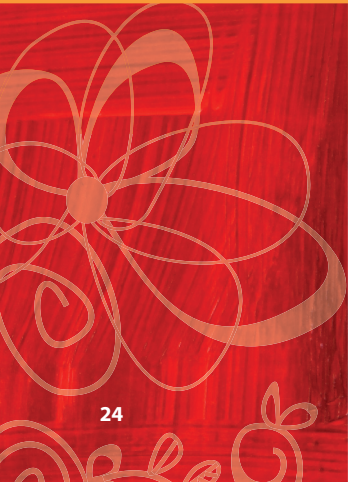
Describe some ways in which you think a male-female relationship could put God on display.

Would you say that most male-female relationships today are doing a good job of displaying the glory of God? Why or why not?

We can’t fully understand what the image of God is all about, but two things are clear. First, being created in His image gives us enormous dignity, privilege, and responsibility. He has crowned us with honor and glory and given us authority over the earth.

It’s a breathtaking charge to go about the business of daily life and all the while reflect the image of the Almighty. And that leads to the second thing: What a mess we’ve made of this awesome dignity!—especially in male-female relationships.

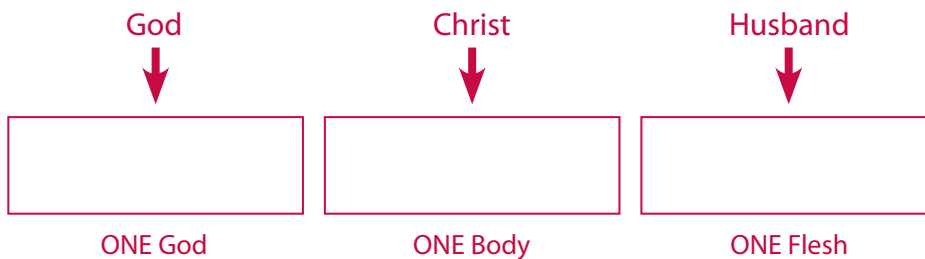
The image of God in man has been badly marred, sometimes even beyond recognition. It begs for redemption. Transformation. A type of re-creation. And



stunningly enough, before sin ever entered the world, God gave us a picture of His redemptive plan, in the creation of man as male and female.

God knew from the beginning that sin would distort and destroy the male-female relationship. Amazingly, He patterned the first couple's relationship to correspond with the amazing relationship that would one day counter all of the horrible, tragic consequences of sin.

The chart below maps out some corresponding relationships. The arrows represent the headship structure established by God in His Word. Refer to the verses on page 24 to fill in the boxes under the arrows.

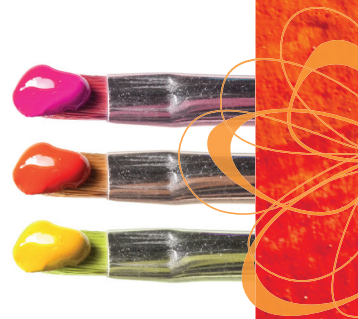


Did you write "Christ" in the first box? God is the head of Christ. Christ is the head of the church, and the husband is the head of his wife.

There's a clear and corresponding pattern evident in all three relationships. For the moment, don't get distracted thinking about what this all means, how it works out in marriage, or its implication for male-female relationships in general. We'll explore some of those questions later. For now, we just want you to see the pattern and note the biblical parallel between these three relationships.

We want you to grasp that God created male and female and instituted marriage for a specific reason. That reason was revealed and can only be understood in and through Jesus Christ. God created male and female to tell the incredible story of Christ.

Reread Ephesians 5:30-32 in the margin of the previous page. Circle the words "mystery" and "profound." What is the profound mystery?





the mystery revealed

MMy (Mary's) youngest son, Jonathan, is studying English literature and history at a university in Canada. Jonathan could tell you that good stories often use a literary device called foreshadowing. Foreshadowing is a technique in which an event is hinted at before it happens.

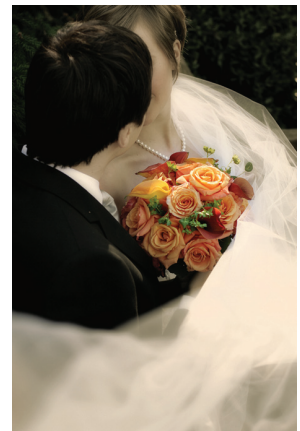
Think back to the last movie you watched. How did the story line forecast the outcome? If it was a good story, it undoubtedly contained subtle hints about how it would end. Even if you were surprised at the ending, you could go back and rewatch the movie and clearly see the hints and clues that pointed toward the ending.

Before time began, before male and female were ever created, God had a splendid plan that He kept a mystery. Throughout the Old Testament, that plan was foreshadowed but hidden from plain view (1 Cor. 2:7; Col. 1:26). It wasn't until Christ died that the mystery of God's eternal purpose—and the ultimate purpose of manhood, womanhood, and marriage—became clear.

Paul connects the dots for us and reveals the stunning beauty of this mystery in the book of Ephesians. In chapter 3 he explains that God's eternal, mysterious plan finally came to light through the work of Jesus Christ (v. 9–10). Then, in chapter 5, he ties the mystery of Christ loving the church to the earthly picture of male-female sexuality and marriage.

According to Scripture, the relationship between a husband and wife is powerfully linked to the story of Christ and His church-bride (see Eph. 5:25–33). God created male and female to foreshadow and testify about THAT amazing relationship and event. That's one of the main reasons why He made us male and female and why He created marriage.

In the opening chapter of his epistle to the Romans, Paul addresses sexual relationships and conduct. In that context, he explains what God wanted to "make plain" through creation—including the apex of His creation, male and female.



"But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages . . ."

1 Corinthians 2:7

"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world... according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

Ephesians 1:4–6



Read Romans 1:19–20 in the margin. What two invisible things did God want to display through His creation?

1. _____
2. _____

God’s eternal power and His divine nature find their ultimate expression in Christ. Together, male and female (gender) testify to the character of God and portray the greater reality of Christ and the church. This spiritual truth is so magnificent that God chose to put it on prominent display throughout the entire world. He stamped the trailer for His story on every human being who has ever lived.

Men were created to reflect the strength, love, and self-sacrifice of Christ. Women were created to reflect the responsiveness, grace, and beauty of the bride He redeemed. And marriage was created to reflect the covenant union of Christ and His bride.

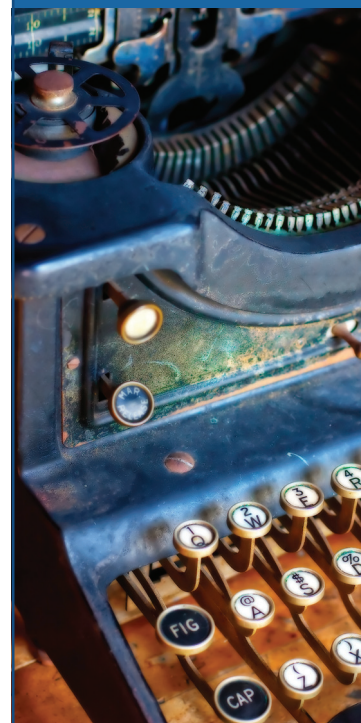
Scripture is emphatic that the story line of male and female (and male-female relationships) has little to do with us, and much to do with God. Your womanhood is ultimately not about you. It’s about displaying the glory of God and His powerful redemptive plan.

If gender was created to tell the story of God, how important is it that we understand a biblical perspective on womanhood? Put an “X” on the gradient to indicate how important it is:



→ **Can you think of any examples** of how your life and relationships as a woman have—or have not—displayed the image of God and His redemptive story?

“FOR WHAT CAN BE KNOWN ABOUT GOD IS PLAIN TO THEM, BECAUSE GOD HAS SHOWN IT TO THEM. FOR HIS INVISIBLE ATTRIBUTES, NAMELY, HIS ETERNAL POWER AND DIVINE NATURE [GODHEAD, NKJV], HAVE BEEN CLEARLY PERCEIVED, EVER SINCE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD, IN THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE. SO THEY ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE.”
Romans 1:19–20





Nicole is a young woman who attended a True Woman conference. She came out of curiosity, and with quite a bit of skepticism. She couldn't understand why it was important to have a conference about womanhood. She hated the thought of the "woman's role" being different than the "man's role"—as if she couldn't do everything a man could do (and better!).

Nicole said her "aha" moment came when she realized that manhood and womanhood exist to display deep, spiritual truths about God.

When I approached the topic of gender roles from a human perspective, the whole discussion just seemed silly. But then it "clicked" that God wants my womanhood to tell HIS story! And everything started to make sense. I was so wrapped up in thinking my womanhood was about me, my relationships, and what I wanted out of life. I was missing the big picture. Ultimately, my womanhood is not about me. It's about telling the story of Jesus.

Prior to attending the True Woman event, Nicole couldn't see the forest for the trees. "Can't see the forest for the trees!" is an expression used of people who get so wrapped up in the specifics, that they fail to see the big picture. And sadly, this often happens in discussions about manhood and womanhood. People focus on the specifics of gender roles and relationships but lose sight of the greater realities to which they point.



The "can't see the forest for the trees" expression brings to mind the dense conifer forests that cover the slopes of the Rockies and other ranges in the Pacific Northwest. A couple of years ago, we vacationed together in Colorado with a group of friends, and had the thrill of riding an old steam train through a magnificent forest of conifers. The majority of these evergreen forests are populated by two types of trees: ponderosa pine and Douglas fir.

The ponderosa pine has intricately grooved orangey-brown bark, long slender needles, and a faint vanilla smell. The bark of the Douglas fir is dark and deeply furrowed. Its flat, pointy needles spiral around each twig. The smell is distinctively strong and earthy. Each type of tree is beautiful in and of itself. But when viewed together—as a forest surrounded by peaks and

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

Genesis 1:27



valleys, sparkling rivers, and a vast expanse of cornflower blue sky—the rich green carpet of trees is absolutely gorgeous!

We hope you caught a glimpse of the “big picture” in yesterday’s lesson. It’s as though we stood at a high vantage point and took a look at how male and female, like fir and pine, are part of the same forest—and how this one forest fits into the overall landscape of the plans and purposes of God.

Today, we’re going to zoom in a bit, so only the forest is in view. We’re going to have a look at male and female as members of the human race—and see that both have equal worth, value, and dignity as bearers of God’s image. Male and female are equally part of the creation that He called “man.”

Read Genesis 1:26–31 in your Bible. In verse 27, who does it say God created in His own image? man him male and female

In an effort to be inclusive (and supposedly less offensive), some modern translations of the Bible have obscured the gender imagery found in the original Hebrew text. They have substituted “human beings” or “humankind” for the word “man,” and “them” for the word “him.” But in Hebrew, this verse clearly communicates that “*man*” equals “*him*” equals “*male and female*.” (Make sure to check all the boxes in the question above.)

You may wonder: Isn’t it sexist, discriminatory, and out-of-date to use the generic word “man” for all humans (male and female)? Why does the Bible call humankind “him”? Shouldn’t we update the words of the Bible so it doesn’t use male pronouns when it speaks of men and women as a group?

How do you feel when the Bible uses male-gendered words like “man” or “brothers” to refer to men and women as a group? Why?

There is an important reason why God uses the word “man” to refer to the human race as a whole. Today’s discussion is going to get a bit technical, but please bear with us. Understanding this concept will help you understand the Bible’s overall teaching on gender, and also why God often uses male pronouns inclusive of women. Hang in there, and you’ll see that this really does matter!

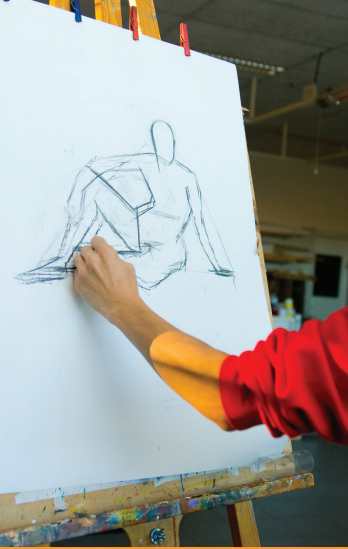
Genesis 1:27 heralds the stunning truth that all humans bear the divine image—men and women bear it equally. But it also states and restates the fact that God refers to us collectively with a singular male pronoun.



“MALE AND FEMALE
HE CREATED THEM,
AND HE BLESSED
THEM AND NAMED
THEM MAN WHEN
THEY WERE
CREATED.”

Genesis 5:2





In Genesis 5:2 in the margin, circle the phrase “named them Man.” Why do you think God chose this common name for male and female?

We’ve been taught that using the word “man” to refer to the human race demeans women. But a closer look reveals that the exact opposite is true. In choosing the word “man” as the common name for male and female, God indicated that male and female would share a common condition for which He would provide a common solution.

When God called male and female “man,” He actually underlined the profound unity and equality that exist between us. This common name shows that woman comes from man and is not independent of him. It shows that both sexes exist to tell the story of God, and that this story is told together—with male and female as parts of a unified whole. The common name “man” demonstrates that in the end, the story line of gender isn’t about male *or* female—it’s not about us at all—it’s about *the* Man, Jesus Christ, whose redemptive work applies to both sexes equally.

You see, the Hebrew word for “man” is *’adam*. It’s closely related to the word for ground, *adamah*. It’s a generic term that refers to all human beings, whether male or female. After the fall, “Adam” (capital “A”) becomes the proper name of the first male. And much later, Jesus Christ comes as “the last Adam” to redeem *’adam* (mankind) and bring many sons and daughters of God to glory. The connection between these words can be illustrated like this:



Circle the part of the chart above that refers to Jesus Christ. Put a box around the part that refers to male and female.

In God’s eyes, the female is as much a part and expression of *’adam* as the male. If you take a moment to think about it, the implications are staggering. This means that both male and female can trace their beginnings to the dirt of the ground. It means that both bear God’s image fully and individually. It means that God values both equally.

“Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.”

Genesis 5:2

“The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”

I Corinthians 15:45

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”

I Corinthians 15:22

Because both are *'adam*, both are equally represented by the first man, Adam. Both are fallen and in need of a Savior. The good news of the gospel is that both are also equally represented by the second Man—the last Adam—Jesus Christ. Together, redeemed men and women make up the church He loves, the bride He sacrificed His life to redeem. Male and female are indivisibly connected. Together—united as a whole—they tell the story of the gospel.

Using the analogy of the conifer forest, we can say that although man and woman—like pine and fir—are different, we are equally part of the forest, equally evergreen, and equally important to the forest's ecosystem.

When God named male and female *'adam*, He had the last Adam in mind. So when, in order to appease modern sensibilities, we change "man" to something we think is more "inclusive," we diminish the true meaning of the word. If woman is not part of "man," then how can she be represented by the first man, Adam? What's more, how can she be represented by the second Man, the last Adam, Jesus Christ?



That may all be a bit difficult to grasp, but here's the point we want you to get: It is foolish to think that we can improve on the Bible's teaching on gender or the gender language it uses. The big picture informs us that from the very beginning, God's plan for gender has little to do with us and everything to do with Jesus. And we need to trust that even if we don't fully understand them, the words, images, and means He has chosen to display His glory are not only right, they are also good. Very good!

In your Bible, read 1 Corinthians 15:45–49. Summarize why God groups males and females together and calls them "man."

→ **Do you agree** that woman being identified as part of "man" is not only right but good? Thank Him for the wisdom and greatness of His plan!





We hope you're starting to see that God had an important, specific reason in mind for creating male and female, and that the reason had little to do with men or women, and much to do with God. He created the sexes to put important truths about the gospel on display. He wanted male and female to tell the same story in different ways.

Males display the glory of God in a uniquely masculine way. Females display the glory of God in a uniquely feminine way. Each sex bears the image of God; but together, they display deep, important truths about God in relationship—God the Father in relationship with the Son of God, and the Son of God in relationship with His bride.

Remember the pine and fir? Each is green, and a conifer in its own right. But the presence of two types of trees brings greater depth of color and texture to the forest. A forest with a mix of pine and fir has a different look to it than one with only pine or only fir. When both are present, the splendor of the whole forest is enhanced.

Wouldn't it be silly for the ponderosa pine and the Douglas fir to get into a debate about which type of tree is more vital to the forest? Wouldn't it be foolish for the ponderosa to insist that the fir ought to give off a pleasant vanilla smell instead of a strong, earthy one? Or for the fir to argue that its flat, pointy needles are better than the long, slender needles of the ponderosa?



A debate like this would be absolutely ridiculous! It's obvious that though the trees are different, they are both beautiful. Both are significant to the forest's ecosystem. They are different AND equal. Neither is better than the other. It would be absurd for them to play the comparison game, criticize each other, and put each

other down on account of their differences. But sadly, this is what often happens between male and female.

When God stamped His image on us, He crowned us with unsurpassed dignity and worth. Because of this, men and women ought to treat each other with deep respect. As theologian Wayne Grudem says,

Every time we look at each other or talk to each other as men and women, we should remember that the person we are talking to is a creature of God who is more like God than anything else in the universe, and men and women share that status equally.¹

Sadly, however, since sin entered the picture, men and women do not always treat each other with the respect that ought to flow out of our equal standing as image-bearers of God.

It breaks our hearts when we see men treating women, or women treating men, as inferior beings. It also breaks God's heart. One-upmanship, manipulation, words that belittle or demean, abusive behavior—these are an attack on the very image of God. The book of James addresses the issue of “[cursing] people who are made in the likeness of God” and concludes: “these things ought not to be so” (James 3:9–10)!

profound significance and worth

The first chapter of Genesis contains twelve indicators that confirm the profound significance and the equal worth of male and female. They remind us that God does not favor or value one sex over the other. He loves and values men and women equally.

Read Genesis 1:26–31 in your Bible, and note the twelve “equality indicators” below:

Twelve Equality Indicators

1. Both are created for God's **glory** (1:26; Isa. 43:7).
2. Both are **named** 'adam' (1:26–27; Gen. 5:2).
3. Both are **created** by the hand of God (1:27).
4. Both are created in the **image** of God (1:26–27).
5. Both are made after God's **likeness** (1:26).
6. Both are **blessed** by God (1:28).
7. Both are charged to be **fruitful** and multiply (1:28).
8. Both are given **dominion** over the earth (1:26, 28).
9. Both are recipients of God's **provision** (1:29).
10. Both have a personal **relationship** with God (1:28; Gen. 3:8–13).
11. Both are **accountable** to God (1:28; Gen. 3:11–13).
12. Both are **heirs** of the grace of life (1:27; Gen. 3:15; 1 Peter 3:7).





Based on the equality indicators in Genesis, do you think the Lord would approve of one sex claiming superiority or putting the other down? Why or why not?

Have you ever been guilty of putting someone down because of their sex—or of treating them with less than the respect they deserve as a creation of God and a bearer of His image?

“What is man that you are mindful of him, . . . you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.”

Psalm 8:4–6

Created in the image of the infinite God, the significance of both man and woman is beyond measure.

We hope you don’t just agree to this truth intellectually but that you also feel it personally and deeply. It’s a mind-blowing wonder that the Maker stamped His image equally on every human being who has ever lived—including you! That attaches profound significance to your life!

Read Psalm 8:4–6 in the margin. How do you feel about the fact that you have been created in the image of God—that He is “mindful” of you and has crowned you with glory and honor?

So many women struggle with their sense of worth. The world tries to convince us that we need to enhance our sense of self-worth. It encourages women to draw their worth from looks, education, careers, possessions, relationships, and their individual personalities and abilities.

The Bible’s view on worth is much different than that of popular culture. It teaches that we don’t need a greater sense of “self-worth” . . . what we desperately need is a greater sense of “His-worth.”



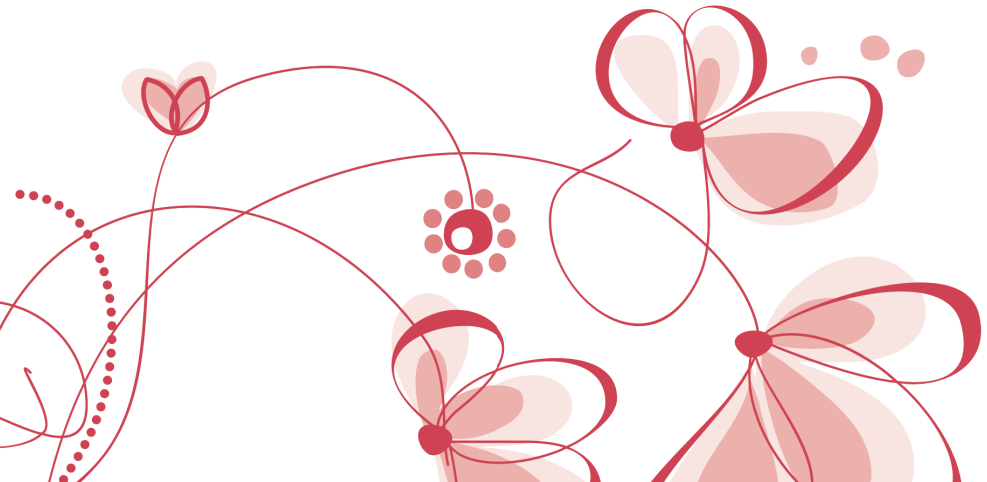


When we see God as He is—in His awesome greatness, majesty, goodness, and love—we will have a proper perspective on ourselves. We will marvel at what it means to be created in His likeness and to be loved by Him. And we will be motivated to treat others with respect and grace, recognizing that even the most depraved sinner is a bearer of His image, distorted as that image may be.

What are some of the places you look to find your sense of value and worth?

Explain how you think your life would change if you were to more fully grasp the truth that God created you in His image—to display His glory—and that THAT is what gives you worth and significance?

How could the truth that every person is created in the image of God change your attitude or behavior toward a difficult person in your life?



Between the two of us, we’ve been to scores of women’s events over the years. At many of these, attendees received canvas tote bags of free stuff like books, hand cream, Kleenex, trinkets, chocolates, promo items . . . (you know the routine—gotta love those tote bags!). We figure we’ve seen just about all there is to see when it comes to the contents of these bags. But the tote bags at True Woman conferences include an item we’ve never received at another conference: a white cloth handkerchief.

Now I (Mary) am not much for women’s hankies. I remember receiving several lacy embroidered ones from my grandmother, who thought I’d appreciate their dainty feminine look. But I was a tomboy. I hated them. They did come in handy when I needed to polish my rock collection. In my mind, that’s the only thing they were good for.

My five brothers would have mocked me relentlessly had I ever pulled a lace hankie from my jeans. So, as you can well imagine, I wasn’t initially impressed by this tote-bag treasure. Though it wasn’t lacy, it was white . . . and was embroidered with the True Woman logo and the motto “Yes, Lord!”

At the first True Woman conference, when Nancy encouraged us to wave our white hankies in the air before the Lord as a symbol of surrender, I must confess that “Hooray!” wasn’t the first thought that came to mind. Quite honestly, the idea sounded a bit silly. But then I began to ponder why I emotionally resisted this simple symbolic act.

I concluded that it’s one thing to say “Yes, Lord” with my mouth—and quite another thing to say “Yes, Lord” with my actions. Participating in such a visible symbol was just so . . . visible. Others would see. And therein lay the rub. Was I willing to stand and say “Yes, Lord” when doing so was uncomfortable or challenged my pride? Was I, like David, willing to “become even more undignified than this” in worship of the God I love (2 Sam. 6:22 NIV)?

The hankie embroidered with the words “Yes, Lord” symbolizes the central message of the True Woman movement. Being a True Woman means



saying yes to Jesus—and yes to the things God says about womanhood and the way we ought to live our lives. And that means saying no to the other voices that clamor for our attention—those voices on TV, the Internet, magazines, ads, and a thousand other places that tell us what women should be—how we should think, dress, and act, what we should aspire to, and how to conduct ourselves in our relationships with men.

Having a heart and life that say “Yes, Lord!” is a hallmark of what it means to be a Christian. Jesus said that those who love Him would keep His commandments (John 14:15). Obedience is an evidence that we are truly children of God (1 Peter 1:14; see also Heb. 5:9; 11:8). In fact, according to Scripture, those who persistently disobey His Word, those who have no inclination to obey Him, have no basis for assurance that they belong to Him.

Read 1 John 2:3–5 in your Bible. What are the implications of this passage as we consider what God’s Word has to say about womanhood?

Put a mark on the scale to indicate how you feel about saying yes to what the Bible says about womanhood:



Explain why you feel this way:

If you say yes to the Lord, you will often find yourself swimming upstream against popular culture—and in many cases, even against the culture of womanhood prevalent among Christians.

But discovering and embracing God’s design for your life will bring incredible blessing and joy. You will discover your true identity and purpose. You will become more “you”—more of whom He created you to be. In addition, your relationships





will grow and be strengthened, and your life will point others to Christ and encourage them to say “Yes, Lord” as well.

That was the experience of a group of over a hundred women who flew all the way from the Dominican Republic to attend the first True Woman conference in Chicago. These women were unusually hungry-hearted—eager to receive and respond to God’s truth. Along with thousands of other participants, they waved their white hankies throughout the conference, as a symbolic way of saying “Yes, Lord!”

They returned home committed to live out the implications of that surrender. They began seeking His “divine design” in relation to every area of their lives—their values, priorities, relationships, families, careers—everything! Many experienced newfound gratitude for their calling as women; they embraced the challenge to pass the baton of truth on to the next generation (one woman expressed that she had always thought mentoring younger women was for *other* women, not for her!).

For many of those women, saying “Yes, Lord” required adjustments that proved to be countercultural and costly. One woman, for example, felt led to make drastic cuts in her hours at her successful dental practice, so she could more effectively meet the needs of her husband and children. Two women, upon learning that their husbands had been unfaithful in the past, found grace to truly forgive for Christ’s sake, and to restore their marriages.

Over the next few months, the transformation in the lives of these Dominican women had a profound effect, as many of their husbands, along with others in their churches, began to take the Lord more seriously and to deal with issues in their own lives. To this day, the Spirit is moving in a significant way in and through the lives of those women.

What kind of impact do you think might be made if multitudes of Christian women were to say “Yes, Lord!” to His biblical design for their lives as women?

womanhood matters

WWe’re so glad you’ve decided to join us on this journey of discovering what True Womanhood is about. You may be eager to discover more about this divine design. But you may be among those who are not so sure how they feel about this thing called “biblical womanhood.” It may help you to know that there was a time when we both felt the same way.

I (Nancy) will confess that I have not always been enthused about the fact that God made me a woman. As a younger woman who earnestly wanted to

To see a video clip showing the impact of the True Woman movement in the Dominican Republic, go to www.TrueWoman.com/DominicanRepublic.

serve the Lord and have a life that “counts,” I had an underlying, unvoiced feeling that if I had been a man, I could have been more useful to His kingdom. I lacked a clear vision of God’s distinctive mission and calling for women.

However, in my late twenties and early thirties, as I began to discover what His Word has to say about why He created male and female, what the distinctions mean and why they matter, and how He wants to use both men and women in His redemptive plan, I began to develop a sense of genuine joy and gratitude for the privilege of being a woman.

I (Mary) can echo some of Nancy’s sentiments. We both grew up as the women’s movement was really taking off and long-held traditional views of



womanhood were being challenged. I’m the only girl in a family with five boys—the only one of all my siblings who got a university degree and embarked on a professional career. The Lord has given me many capabilities. What’s more, I have a strong, independent personality. The pull for me to embrace the world’s ideas about womanhood has been intense at times.

Discovering God’s divine design for womanhood, and figuring out how to live that out as a wife and mom (Mary) and a single woman (Nancy), has been an ongoing journey. It will be a journey for you too. But we can assure you it will be worth every bit of the time and effort!

We hope you’ve discovered, in this first week, why womanhood is important, and why it’s vital that you explore and wrestle with the meaning and implications of True Womanhood from God’s perspective.

In the space below, summarize what you’ve learned this week about God’s plan for womanhood, and why womanhood is important:

→ **Conclude this week’s lessons** by writing out a prayer, asking Him to teach you more about what womanhood means, and to help you grow to be a True Woman of God.



drawing it out,
drawing it in...



gender matters

process

The video for Week One will help you process this week's lessons. You'll find this week's video, a downloadable outline/listening guide, and many more resources at www.TrueWoman101.com/week1.

ponder:

Think about the following questions. Discuss them with your friends, family, and/or small group:

1. Does gender matter, or are we free to define it as we wish?
2. What does Scripture's account of creation indicate about God's design for male and female? (See Gen. 1:26–2:25.)
3. What did God hope to accomplish with His design for gender?
4. How is it possible that the two sexes are different yet equal?
5. What are some ways in which a male-female relationship might put God on display?
6. How important is it that women understand God's design for womanhood? Why?
7. Do you feel that God's design for manhood and womanhood is "very good"? Explain.
8. Have you wholeheartedly said yes to God's design? Is there any part of your heart that feels reluctant or is holding back?

personalize:

Use the following lined page to journal. Write down what you learned this week. Record your comments, a favorite verse, or a concept or quote that was particularly helpful or meaningful to you. Compose a prayer, letter, or poem. Jot down notes from the video or your small group session. Express your heart response to what you have studied. Personalize this week's lessons in the way that will best help you apply them to your life.