

The Rightly Ordered Church:
Men and Women: Different By Design (1 Timothy 2:13; Genesis 1-3)
Preached by Pastor Jason Tarn at HCC on March 4, 2018

Introduction

- ❖ We may be living in the 21st century and in an open, progressive society very different from our patriarchal past where women were relegated to their homes, where they couldn't vote or hold public office, and basically were treated as second class citizens. **But in many ways there is still a war on women being waged in our society.** According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap report in 2015, the average woman's annual earnings is not even half a man's. Women hold less than a quarter of public office positions and a fraction of other executive corporate positions.
 - And not only are there economic disparities, women are commonly the victims of assault and violence. More than one in three women in the U.S. regularly fears being sexually assaulted, according to a 2016 Gallup poll. In a 2015 survey across 27 American universities, 23 percent of female undergraduates reported having experienced sexual assault or misconduct. And according to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, one out of every six American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime.
 - Now that I'm a husband and the father of a young daughter, these figures weigh on me like a ton of bricks. **It breaks my heart to know my daughter is growing up in such a broken, dangerous world, especially for women.**

- ❖ The Church cannot abide the status quo. We must detest all forms of male chauvinism. We must vehemently oppose the evils of sexual discrimination, of sexual assault and violence. **But listen, Church – in our zeal to right the wrongs of these violations against women, let's be careful not to violate the truth of God's Word.** Yes, let's oppose all forms of ignorance that lead to the suppression of women, but as people of the Book we must not ignore what it teaches. **Particularly about the unique differences between men and women that exist by design.** By the good design of their good God and Creator.
 - I raise this point because we're going through the book of 1 Timothy, and we've arrived at an extremely controversial text. If you're new to Christianity and if you've never read 1 Timothy before, I get it if you were shocked. When you read those words in v11 *"¹¹Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet."* I'm not surprised if some of you are confused – embarrassed or appalled – at what appears to be a blatant form of sexual discrimination endorsed by the Bible.

- ❖ But this is what I mean about being careful not to ignore God's Word in a quest to rid the world of ignorance. As Christians, we believe that Jesus is Lord. So what *he* says determines right and wrong. **Jesus gets to define what sexual discrimination is, and he gets to decide what is a good, healthy distinction between men and women.** As Christians, we believe Jesus defines the categories. Not secular society. Not the culture-at-large.
 - No one can deny that we live in a gender-confused world where women usually end up with the short-end of the stick. There *is* real injustice going on. **But I'll contend that the truth of God's Word is the solution and *not* the source of the problem.**

- ❖ My goal is to show *not* just the truthfulness of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 but its goodness and beauty which go hand in hand. Now I think it's wise to tackle this text in two parts. I'm going to wait until next week to get into the meat of our passage. That's where I'll try to help you interpret and apply Paul's teaching on a woman's role in the church. **But I think it'll benefit us to first consider Paul's rationale. To consider the theological foundation to his argument.** If we can understand the theological principles in play and trace them out to the specific instructions in our text, then we're in a much better position to receive his word as binding (and beneficial) for the church today.
 - So this morning I want to focus on v13. Notice how it begins with the word "*for*". **That suggests what Paul is going to say next is the foundation, the grounding, the rationale for whatever he just said.** So he just commanded in vv11-12 for a woman to learn quietly with all submissiveness, to not teach or exercise authority over a man – now in v13 he says, "¹³*For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.*" Those are obvious references to events that took place in Genesis 2-3.

- ❖ So if Paul's teaching regarding the role of women in the church is theologically rooted in the beginning – in a literal Genesis beginning – then it'll benefit us to study those passage. **And in so doing, I'm going to argue that, in God's very good design, men and women were created both equal *and* different.** There is a very fundamental sense in which we are *equal* that needs to be shouted from the mountain top. But there's another sense in which we are *different* (pertaining to our roles in two realms) that must be carefully delineated. **And I'm also going to argue that men and women are both guilty parties in a perpetual battle due to our fallenness that will only find peace and redemption at the cross.** I want to end our message at the foot of the cross where the ground is level for us all.

Men and Women Created to be Equals

- ❖ Let's begin by considering God's design in creation. Turn with me to Genesis 1:27. **We're going to focus particularly in the way God created men and women to be equals.** Now I realize that's *not* a controversial statement for anyone here, but in ancient times or just a century ago and in some cultures around the globe today – some people *would be* confused or offended by the Bible's clear affirmation of equality between men and women.
 - That's not surprising. **If the Bible is truly the Word of a God who transcends all time and cultures, then you'd expect the Bible to never fit comfortably in any given culture without offending some deeply-held value or ideal.** So in this case, our culture isn't offended by talk of equality between the sexes, but we *are* when you speak of differences. But then other cultures are offended in the exact opposite way. **The point is to be careful *not* to view your own culture as normative.** If this is the Word of a culturally-transcendent Creator God, then what he says is normative.
 - Now I understand if some of you are not convinced this actually is God's Word. But I hope you can at least understand where Bible-believing Christians are coming from, and why we would embrace biblical teaching that seems to run so contrary to the cultural norms that we live under.

- ❖ It's because we believe God's Word is the ultimate norm. It defines our reality. So let's see how it defines the relationship between men and women. Listen to Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." In my translation, that verse is in three stanzas. **The first stanza makes the point that humanity is unique in that we're the only ones created in God's own image.** The Hebrew for "man" can be translated generally as *mankind* or *humanity*. **The second stanza makes a parallel point.** It uses the male pronoun, but again it's referring to mankind.
 - Now in the third stanza, the singular pronoun shifts to the plural. We're told that the *mankind* created in God's image is comprised of both male and female. **Men and women both bear the image of God.** The *imago dei* is stamped equally on both.

- ❖ Think about what that means: **That means God is not gendered.** Yes, he's referred to with the male pronoun, and two of the three persons of the Trinity are revealed as Father and Son. And there are good reasons for why that's the case. **But it does not imply that God more closely identifies with men.** It does *not* mean that males more closely resemble or reflect God compared to females.
 - Genesis 1:27 makes it clear that they equally bear the image of God. Men don't bear it more than women. **We're created as equals – equal in value, in dignity, and in worth.** This biblical, theological principle is called male-female equality. And it's affirmed throughout Scripture.

- ❖ **But we have to be careful and not confuse male-female equality with sameness.** Equality and sameness are not synonymous. If equality requires sameness, then that means two people of two different ethnicities could never be equal. That's called racism. I assume we all realize the error of that thinking – of assuming that equality requires sameness.
 - Just think of God himself. **In the very Godhead, there is equality but there is not sameness.** There is not just one Father that makes up the Godhead and neither are there three Fathers. There is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (three different persons) and yet there is a deep fundamental unity and equality between them.
 - I belabor this because I'm about to move on and emphasize our differences – the fact that men and women are *not* the same. But I hope you understand that I still mean to affirm that we are equal in value, dignity, and worth.

Men and Women Created to be Different

- ❖ Let's move to our second point and see in what sense did God create men and women to be different, and I'm going to argue it has to do with our roles. **God assigned different roles to men and women – making us equal in worth yet different in role by design.**
 - Now I emphasize the phrase "*by design*" because I want to distinguish between two theological positions on the relationship between men and women. Everyone agrees that throughout history and in most cultures there has *not* been a sameness in gender roles but a difference – with leadership tilted towards men. **What distinguishes these two camps is deciding whether differences in gender roles are a result of the Fall or if they existed in the Garden prior to the Fall as part of God's good design.**

- ❖ The first is called **the egalitarian position** (or evangelical feminism). Egalitarians would read Scripture as teaching no distinction in role between men and women in the Garden, pre-Fall. So male leadership is considered a result of the Fall and viewed synonymously with male domination. **They would interpret the penalty imposed on Eve, for her part in Fall, as a curse to have to live in a fallen world where male leadership/ domination prevails.**
 - Now as Christians who believe in the renewing power of the gospel, egalitarians teach that, in Christ, women are redeemed. **So the community of the redeemed (the Church) should return to a state where there are no role distinctions between men and women.** Where leadership in the church is not dominated by men. That's egalitarianism.

- ❖ The other camp is called **the complementarian position**. Complementarians believe that men and women are equal in value, dignity and worth but are called to different roles in the home and in the church. These roles are meant to complement each other, hence the term.
 - **Complementarians insist that male leadership stands on the opposite end of the spectrum from male domination.** They're not the same. They're antitheses of each another. Male domination is the assertion of a man over a woman with no regard to their equality. Complementarians reject that and hold to both theological principles of male-female equality and male leadership. Specifically they teach that men bear the primary responsibility to lead within the realms of the home and church.

- ❖ Now unlike egalitarians, complementarians see gender roles within God's good design before the Fall. **So they believe redemption doesn't eradicate role distinctions between men and women, but it does certainly transform them.**
 - Complementarians insist that, due to the Fall, there has been a twisting (a distortion) of God's good design, so that nowadays men tend to either dominate women with their strength or aggression or they shirk their responsibility to lead with their passivity or apathy. **But Jesus came to redeem and restore God's good design starting in Christian homes and churches.** That's complementarianism.

- ❖ **So what I want to do now is to demonstrate the strength of that position by showing how differences in roles between men and women were established as part of God's good design.** There are at least nine observations in Genesis 2-3 that point in this direction, but for the sake of time I'll just identify the three strongest ones that relate to men taking the primary responsibility to lead in the home and church.

- ❖ **The first observation relates to the order of creation and how God created man first.** In Genesis 2:7, God creates Adam, but it's not until v22 that he creates Eve for Adam. Now we should pause and ask why this is so. Why not create Eve first? Or why not create them out of the same handful of dust at the same time? Wouldn't that demonstrate male-female equality?
 - Sure, it definitely would reenforce the biblical point that was already taught in chapter 1. **But Genesis 2 wants to stress something different, namely, that in creating the man first God was giving him the primary responsibility to lead.**

- ❖ There is a *firstness* to Adam. Now in our culture, to be first means to be the best. But that's not how the Bible treats it. **In ancient cultures, to be first simply means to be given a responsibility not given to the second.** That's why the firstborn son, by virtue of being born first, had the primary responsibility to lead the family once the father dies. It was not because he's better or smarter than his siblings, but simply because he was born first.
- ❖ But I know some would insist that the order of creation is arbitrary. That we're making too big a deal out of Adam being created first. But then they should tell that to the Apostle Paul. **Remember in 1 Timothy 2:13 he makes his argument for distinct gender roles in the church based on creation order, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve".**
 - So for Paul, the fact that Adam was created first has implications for leadership that apply not just to the first couple and their household but for all households and all churches, which he describes later on in chapter 3:15 as the household of God.
- ❖ **The second observation that points to gender roles in the Garden is the fact that the woman and not the man was called a helper.** This identification of Eve as Adam's helper relates to this idea of being equal in worth but different in role. Look Genesis 2:18, *"¹⁸Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ²⁰The 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."*
 - It's only until God puts Adam to sleep, takes a rib from his body, and makes it into a woman. 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."* (2:23)
- ❖ So we see that Eve's equal with Adam in that there's no other creature fit for him. **Eve alone is Adam's equal.** In a wife, a man finds his equal. She is a helper *"fit for him"*. Now you don't see it described the other way around. Adam is not called Eve's helper. They're not described as mutual helpers to one another. Instead we see a differentiation in roles.
 - **By virtue of being a man, Adam was called to lead. By virtue of being a woman, Eve was called to help.** That shouldn't be interpreted as an insult to Eve or to any other woman because in all that matters for value, dignity and worth, she is his equal.
 - But I realize some will still react strongly to calling women *helpers*. **Because, to them, the role implies inferiority. Helpers are considered inferior to leaders.** Now that may be the way the world sees it, but Scripture has a very different view of helpers.
- ❖ **In her book *Radical Womanhood*, Carolyn McCulley rightly points out that this word 'helper' is used in Scripture to refer to God acting as our helper.** Consider Psalm 54:4, *"Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life."* (cf. Ps. 33:20, 70:5, 146:5) She then writes, "If God who is obviously and infinitely superior to us, unblushingly refers to Himself as our helper, we should be proud to use the same term."¹

¹ Carolyn McCulley, *Radical Womanhood*, pg 80.

- **So by calling himself our ‘helper’ God is challenging any condescending notions we might have towards the act of helping, and he's restoring the role of helper to its rightful position of dignity.**

- ❖ Sisters, if God is neither offended nor ashamed to bear the name 'helper', then neither should you be. **The point is this: You can be equal to men while performing a different role than men because your worth doesn't come from the role you play – but from the image of God in you.** One of the great evils of our society is the way we devalue people based on their role. We evaluate a person's worth based on the significance of the role they play in society. Do you see how inhumane that is? **Sisters, don't buy the societal lie that says your worth and value is tied to your role.** No, it's tied to the *imago dei* in you. You are priceless because you were made, like all men, in God's image.

- ❖ **The third observation suggesting gender roles existed pre-Fall is the way in which God held Adam, and not Eve, primarily accountable for the Fall.** If you recall Genesis 3, the serpent deceives Eve into eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then she shared it with her husband. Who sinned first? Eve. But who did God summon first? Adam.
 - Let me read to you Genesis 3:9, "*But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"*". So even though Eve sinned first, when God confronts them he summons Adam to give an account. **The husband bears the primary responsibility for the direction of his family.** That's called leadership.

- ❖ **Brothers, if you have a wife, if you have a family, the burden is on you to lead.** God will call you to account. He will summon you first and ask you the tough questions. He'll get to your wife. He'll get to your kids. But he'll go to you first because he expects you to lead.
 - **To be honest, I'm surprised that men aren't the ones leading the complaint against the Bible teaching male leadership.** Some would call it unfair. Why should Adam be summoned first? Why not Eve if she sinned first? It's because Adam bears a unique responsibility for both of them. He is called by God to lead his family.

Men and Women Fallen and at War with Each Other

- ❖ So we've seen how men and women were created to be equals and at the same time created to be different, particularly in their roles. But as we read on in Genesis 3, **we see that men and women are fallen and at war with each other.** Now under the curse of sin, their God-assigned gender roles have been twisted. **Instead of complementing one another, husbands and wives are at war with each other.** There's a proverbial battle of the sexes.

- ❖ Listen to the curse that befalls the first couple. This is Genesis 3:16-17, "*16To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."* *17And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life"*.

- ❖ **Notice how there are three parts to this curse, and notice how the curse keeps distorting something that previously existed.** First, Adam's God-given role was to raise food from the ground, but now that role is distorted in that the ground won't yield food without pain. Second, Eve's God-given role of bearing children is distorted in that childbirth won't happen anymore without pain.
- ❖ There's a third aspect of the curse. **There's a distortion in how they relate to each other.** And again, the curse didn't introduce something new but rather distorted what was already there and made it painful. **On the woman's part, we see that her God-given role of submission to her husband is distorted.** The word for "*desire*" in v16 refers not to a romantic desire but an aggressive desire – a desire to rule over her husband and control him. Genesis 4:7 uses the same word where God says to Cain, "*sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.*"
 - In the Hebrew the exact same six words are found in the same order in both verses. There's an obvious connection. **With chapter 4:7 we can better interpret chapter 3:16 to mean that, under the curse, the woman will have an aggressive desire to rule over her husband.** But then God says, "*but he shall rule over you.*" That word means to rule by greater power, force, or strength. It has a negative connotation. It doesn't refer to someone leading among equals but someone ruling by virtue of power and strength, usually harshly and selfishly.
- ❖ **Before the Fall, Adam led his wife in a loving, considerate way, and Eve gave her willing submission and functioned as his helper in a complementary fashion.** But after the Fall, Eve will seek to dominate and control her husband perhaps with her words or with her sexuality. And Adam will respond by trying to dominate his wife with his strength or he'll clam up and abdicate his role in the home (which is a form of passive aggression).
 - **But the point is the Fall brought about a distortion of previous roles, not the introduction of new roles.** In God's original design, husbands lead their wives and wives help their husbands. Sin has sadly twisted and distorted this good design.

Men and Women Humbled and with Each Other at the Cross

- ❖ But this leads to our last point. Let's talk about men and women humbled and with each other at the cross. The first Adam failed to exercise his God-given duty to lead, and that has led to so much pain and division between men and women. **But according to the gospel, God sent a Second Adam who submitted himself under God and did not drop the ball. He exercised a loving, sacrificial leadership that led him to the cross.**
 - And there at the foot of the cross, the ground is level. Men and women are equal – equal in guilt and equal in need of a Redeemer. At the cross, Jesus died for our divisiveness, for our sinful efforts to dominate each other. So at the cross we're finally restored to God and to his good designs.

- ❖ If we've been mistaken in our reading Genesis – if gender roles are only the result of the Fall, if they're part of the curse – then you'd expect the New Testament to reverse the curse. You'd expect to find passages repudiating male leadership. But of course, you don't. You won't.
- ❖ **Now if we've been reading Genesis correctly, what you'd expect to find is the New Testament trying to reverse the curse by calling wives to support their husband's leadership and exhorting husbands to not lead their wives harshly.** And that's exactly what you do find. Listen to Colossians 3:18-19, "¹⁸*Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.*"
 - In Christ, free of the curse, women can willingly and joyfully submit to their husband's leadership, and men can lovingly and considerately lead their wives, lead their households, and lead the household of God, which is the church (1 Tim. 3:15).
- ❖ Next week we'll see how the theological principles of male-female equality and male leadership play out in the local church. We'll study 1 Timothy 2:11-15, and **I hope to show the truthfulness, the goodness, and beauty of God's establishment of male leadership in the church in form of male eldership.** I know that sounds strange to Western ears, but I hope we've laid enough of a theological foundation for you to receive God's instructions for the church in all its fullness.
 - So we have that to look forward to, but let me conclude with a few application questions. **Husbands**, what is one practical way you can lead your wife (or kids) this week to honor God? Maybe it's leading them to read something edifying together, to pray together, to serve someone in need together? **Wives**, what is one practical way you can help your husband lead (or to encourage him to lead) you and your family this week to honor God?
 - And **to the unmarried**, what does God want you to be praying for regarding your own heart and working on regarding your own character – as most of you hope to take up the role of husband or wife someday? How will a better understanding of God's good design shape what you pray for this week?