Made In God’s Image: Gender Roles

(Luke Moyer)

We spend a lot of time talking about the value of human life because it is made in God’s image. This is right. This is wholesome. Now let us continue to think about the implications to gender. Much of this modern world has skewed what they perceive the image of God to be, not only in how they treat themselves and others, but in roles and responsibilities. We are very often dangerously generic in applying things we learn in order to appeal to the broader audience. But do not let it be so generic that it does not change your every behavior! Let us narrow down the application here to the roles of men and women.

Both man and woman are made equally in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27; Gal 3:28, Acts 5:14). Many misunderstandings about women’s and men’s roles do not recognize equality. There is no male or female when it comes to eternal life. But there is a second vital and distinct point: man was made *male and female*, that is: God chose to create two distinct genders with *different characteristics*. Not recognizing designed, intentional differences causes additional misunderstandings. God did not intend for men and women to be exactly the same nor have the same function and role.

So how are we as Christians (trying to emulate Christ) supposed to view role conflicts that the world poses to us? The world throws violent language at those who support gender roles. To this current society “equality” means “no differences.” The teachings within the Bible, however, celebrate gender differences and give higher value to each sex. We are taught from Scripture that humility of self and a true respect for God and who He is will inspire righteous conduct. In the same way, if we view the obligation of our gender in light of God’s plan then we will appreciate our roles. This takes us back to being made in the image of God.

**Men are made in the image of God.** God has called men to lead their families as He, the Father, leads His. The man is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph 5:25). Jesus became one with His family as God expects man to be one with his (Heb 2:14; Mark 10:8). He is the head of the body: not separated but unified (Eph 5:23, 1 Cor 12:12). Jesus did not think of Himself more highly than of His own creation (Phil 2:3-8). Man must not view himself as higher than the woman. But he is the head, and has a responsibility to lead in teaching and strength (Titus 1:9-11). It is the man’s job to instruct the church, because he imitates Christ. Christ accepted the role as the Word. Man must accept his role as the leader and head as Jesus did: with humility and love.

**Women are made in the image of God.** God has called women to submit to their head as Christ Himself submitted to the Father. To say that men can imitate Christ more than women is a mistake. *Women can imitate Christ just as much*. The question is: “What role did Christ have and what did He do with it?” Women are given a role to be followers and doers of the word, not preachers (1 Tim 2:11-12). Just as Christ said: “I do nothing of My own except I see it from My Father” (John 8:28), so women are not the origin of public teaching.

Sometimes women become jealous because they are not to verbally teach men, but they forget that Christ’s greatest gift was given while being described as “silent” (Is 53:7). There is power in actions that exceeds that of words only (James 2:18). It allows the woman to choose the “better part” of listening to wisdom and living it (Luke 10:42). Women have been blessed with the opportunity in the church to not be foolish like most men are by their mouths! Beyond that, their silent and hard working nature glorifies God in a way that He sees as precious and acceptable (1 Peter 3:4).

Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 give us a pattern to follow in all our relationships. If we are to imitate God in everything, then we should learn from how He treats others, and how He treats Himself. Christ and the Father are One. As such one is not higher than the other, nor is one more important. But they each take different and distinct roles. Each gender has a unique opportunity to learn something from Christ in a way that the other cannot. Both men and women must imitate Christ by recognizing God’s will and saying “Your will be done, not Mine” (Matt: 26:39). We are made in the image of God, and so we should pattern ourselves after Christ in everything because “He is the exact representation of His nature” (Heb 1:3). Let us each act in our roles like Christ acted in His because we are making our “new man” in His image (Eph 4:24).