

Dancing Together. Women, part 1

Genesis 3:16, Titus 2:3-5, Proverbs 31:10-31

INTRODUCTION

As we tackle the subject of God, man, and woman, we discuss it as family. That means that we are listening to our Heavenly Father, and speaking as brothers and sisters. For that reason, I invite everyone who hears my voice to ask him or herself, "Am I a Christian?" By that I mean, do you believe that salvation is offered freely to you, regardless of your many sins and evil deeds, because God sent His Son to earth to die in your place? It also means that you turn away from your own opinions about God and whether you are good enough or not, and trust in Jesus to save you. Further, it means that you surrender your whole life to Jesus. If you believe these things, and have surrendered your life to Jesus, then you are saved. If not, the content of this sermon is for you as a stranger, listening into the discussion of a family not yet your own. I don't want that. Join the family! Believe in Jesus. Give your life to Him!

When the Bible speaks of God's work in saving humanity, it does so with language referring to the family. God is the Father. We are called the children of God. Christ is called the groom, and the church is called the bride. When a person receives Jesus as his Lord, he is told that he has joined a very large family, and that he will remain in a family relationship for eternity.

When asked by Peter what the rewards would be for leaving all and following Jesus, Jesus answered Him like this:

"Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life." (Mar 10:29-30 ESV)

To belong to Jesus is to forever have a part in a family, and forever you will be a member of that family. God formed humanity, intending for us to build families, and in most cases, the center of every family is the woman. Women glue families together, and build the traditions which define the environment that makes the family what it is.

We have looked briefly at the role of the man in relation to a woman. We now turn to the woman. Remember, we are concerned not with what the culture wants, or even with our own individual desires, but with what God says.

And now, let's see what He said to the woman, going back to Genesis 3, and the result of the fall into sin:

16 To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." (Gen 3:16 ESV)

The changes brought to the woman, due to sin, dealt with two main areas of her life: Her relationship to her children and her relationship to her husband. Childbirth now becomes a very painful event. Children, the greatest gift of all, instead of sliding easily into this world, would come with much pain and sickness, causing both mother and child to cry out in distress! Beyond this, the relationship with her husband, which was to be harmonious and unified, would become one with conflict over power in the center.

To contrast God’s message to Eve with His message to Adam (in Genesis 3), we see that the results of sin in her life don’t first point to her need to make a living, but rather to make “the” living –childbearing. Also, unlike Adam, God doesn’t point her towards her relationship with the earth, but to her relationship with her husband. The spheres of main influence for the woman, in a general sense, are her role as wife and child-bearer.

And here is where the trouble begins for our modern times.

What are the main roles to which our society calls women? The answer might be, marketplace workers, soldiers, athletes, and political power-brokers. The politically correct answer to the question, “What should a little girl grow up to be?” is “You can be anything you want.”

The response to being a wife and a mother? These roles should be put behind other priorities, for becoming a wife means being defined by a relationship with a man, and this is not good. Furthermore, being a mother means being limited in your choices, for now you must care for children.

But what does God say?

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. (Tit 2:3-5 ESV)

Here, we have instructions to women who have raised their own children. The Bible says that you women who have raised children have a responsibility to the young women in the church. You are to be in their lives and to train them so that they live lives pleasing to God. I’d like us to focus on a couple aspects of this instruction, but first, let me offer a couple of caveats.

1. Women are not prohibited from the marketplace.

As I have mentioned before, the Bible does not prohibit women from creating wealth. Indeed, the word “working at home” in the text above does not simply mean cleaning the dishes and washing clothes –although those tasks are important and loving—but can also include working in a way that increases income for the family. There is no prohibition here for women working outside of the home either.

2. God's purposes for some to be single.

Many want to be married, but are not. Some do not want to be married. A single life has its place in the Bible. There are many single people who do the work of God. To be single all of one's life, as far as the Bible is concerned, means that the energy that one would have put towards family is to be devoted to God. That said, it is to be the norm that most people will marry.

3. Having children is not necessary to be a complete woman.

Along the same lines, the longing for children is natural. Many married women struggle to have children, and can become quite discouraged. The Bible shows many godly women in this position, but God does not punish by withholding babies. Women who struggle without children should serve God and entrust their futures to Him, seeking to fulfill His purposes for their lives. They are no less in the eyes of God because they have no babies.

Now, having given those caveats, I'd like to return to the text from Titus two and focus on two areas.

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Focus 1: Child bearing is to be held in high esteem.

The young women are to be trained to love their children, to be workers at home, and to be kind. In order to love children, children must be valued. God intends for us to see the production of children as the first and most important order of business for the human race.

God's instruction to Adam and Eve was: "*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,*" (Gen 1:28 ESV). Following the flood, God said the same to Noah and his sons: "*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,*" (Gen 9:1 ESV). God desires that humans constantly increase in number. There is nothing more valuable on the entire earth than a human soul. God has designed it such that He would only produce more human beings by union of a man and a woman. There is no greater thing that a man and a woman can do on the earth than to produce a human being made in the very image of God. Each human has an eternal soul that can reflect the glory of God forever and ever.

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. (Psa 127:3-5 ESV)

God desires us to see children as a blessing, a gift. Again, this does not mean that those who struggle to have children are not equally blessed, just differently blessed. Remember Sarah, who had only one son. Through that man, would come the entire nation of Jews who would bring the Savior to the whole world. That said, having children is to be valued.

Building or sustaining a family, with an eye to carrying that family forward on the right path into the future, is the noble task assigned by God to the entire human race.

That family is to begin with a marriage. When Lorrie and I were married, I was still in college. After I got out of college, and before the year was out, Lorrie gave birth to Mandy. That year, I began working for Hardees restaurant as an assistant manager. It was not a great job, but it was a job, and it paid the rent. A little over a year later, we moved to California. I got a job working in management at a drug store company. They moved us to Arizona, where Nicholas was born. I continued with that company for over four years, moving into the main office, as to work in the training department. Then, we moved to South Carolina, and lived in a trailer so that I could go to school to prepare to be a pastor. While there, we had our third child, Catherine Michal. In all the years since we married, though we both had college degrees, I was getting career training in the work world, and then educational training to prepare me for the vocation I am in now. In comparison, my wife did little to advance herself career-wise in her field of accounting. We rented, and we drove old cars. We never had much to spare at after the bills were paid. What we valued most was what only Lorrie only could do, produce our children, and build our family environment. Three eternal souls were given to us by God. Lorrie was the main builder of what our family was to be. She valued the children and the world they grew up in more than any other work in the world. She was right to do so, for she is a woman who fears God.

But that is not the way the world instructed her to be. Satan has attacked our families and our world. The thinking of our culture is completely the opposite of what God commands, and because of that, our society groans in pain and doesn't even know why.

We live in a culture of death. A culture that attacks the origin of humanity itself, marriage and motherhood. Our culture fights hard to free women from the love of family and children. Don't believe it? Google search the term "reasons not to get married," and you will see hundreds of current articles and blogs explaining the advantages of never marrying and never having children. Look at the ruthless ferocity with which the pro-abortion movement fights for every single abortion possible to be easy, cheap, and available. Human children are the disposable product of sexual union and marriage, and family is a prison cell used to remove the freedom of all women. This is how our world sees child-bearing.

But God sees things differently. Every life matters. Every baby is more valuable than the earth onto which he was born. Every child is worth what he or she costs his mother and father.

What should Christians do, then?

We should teach our little girls that they should expect that they will probably be mommies and wives and have children, and that building a family is a high calling.

We should teach our little boys that they are to live lives of sacrifice and hard work so that they can provide for their wives and children.

Focus 2: Women hold primary responsibility for forming a home environment for their children and husband.

The Titus 2 command is that older women train younger women to be workers at home. As we already mentioned, this is not a prohibition on women working in marketplace settings. However, it is a call to recognize that only a woman can relate to the home as a woman.

Every woman is an artist who fills her home with her touch, with her song, with her beauty, with her creativity, and with her values. The man may build the house, but the woman builds the home's environment. She sets the order for the children, and she makes the nest worth living in for the man.

Proverbs 31 paints the picture of an excellent wife. I'd like to read part of that chapter to you now. Ladies can often be intimidated as they see this portrait of a woman and wonder if they can live up to her standards. Put your mind at ease, ladies. This is not written as a prescription that you must copy to the letter. Rather, this is the description of the beauty of a woman filling up the home. In your own life, you don't have to be this woman. Nevertheless, you can be like her in this: You can bring your beauty, your creativity, your values, and your traditions to bear on the family.

Let's look at the Proverb:

- 10 *An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.*
- 11 *The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.*
- 12 *She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.*
- 13 *She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands.*
- 14 *She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar.*
- 15 *She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.*
- 16 *She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.*
- 17 *She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong.*
- 18 *She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night.*
- 19 *She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.*
- 20 *She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.*
- 21 *She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.*
- 22 *She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.*
- 23 *Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.*
- 24 *She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant.*
- 25 *Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.*
- 26 *She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.*
- 27 *She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.*
- 28 *Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:*
- 29 *"Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all."*
- 30 *Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*
- 31 *Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates. (Pro 31:10-31 ESV)*

What we see here is a picture of a woman who confidently throws all of her energy into loving her family in the way that only she can, for only she is in position to do so. She does this over many years.

Whether your home is a trailer, a house, an apartment, or a mansion, the happiest home is the one where the wife within fills it with her spirit and personality, so that all the other members of the family can thrive in that environment.

The opposite of that is also seen in Proverbs:

The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands. (Pro 14:1 NAU)

Let me address a couple of practical matters at this point.

First, I understand that, with the prevalence of divorce, many times a woman must work alone. To you, I say, entrust yourself to God and do your best. You may not be able to play the role of father, but you can still be fully woman, and bring your unique touch to that home. Raise your boys to know that they are to work in the home, and, when the time comes, to get jobs so that they can care for their wives one day.

Also, young men need to be taught not to depend on their wife's salary for life. Many women feel regular guilt because they cannot be at home more often, even though they want to be. Unfortunately, their husbands have not been willing to let the standard of living adjust to their income so that their wives can work only part time, or, if possible, not be burdened with having to make money at all for a season.

Also, step-mothers have a unique challenge in that they are helping to raise children who will have a natural preference for the ways of their own mother. This job of step-mother takes grace and a good deal of humility.

CONCLUSION

Next week, we will continue on the role of women in the dance of marriage. For this week, we all must realize that God's plan for the human race was the continuation of families and the multiplication of children. Most women will find themselves in the most important part of pulling off the mission God has for mankind, raising the children when they are at their youngest, and building the environment within which the family can thrive.