

Introduction

The topic of role of gender is important within scripture. It is important for us to study it, come to an understanding based upon the Word of God, and then to live accordingly. Our lives and our worship of God need to be based upon the principles and the instruction He has provided in his inspired word.

What is the first thing in scripture we are told was not good? (Gen 2:18) We are told that it was not good for man to exist alone, so God created a woman, a perfectly suited counterpart, to aid in the divine appointment. The divine appointment then as described by God in Genesis contained the following:

1. Be fruitful and multiply
2. Rule over and tend to the earth
3. To not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
4. To name all living creatures
5. To marry, becoming one flesh

We must acknowledge first that God created male and female. He does not do things without reason. We do not exist, nor does gender exist simply because of random evolutionary processes. God has done this for a purpose. Thus, just as we go to God's word to find out who He is, what He has done, is doing, and will do, we also must go to God's word to understand our role. Is everyone the same? Does everyone receive the same talents? Does everyone receive the same opportunities? Does God have the same expectations for each of us?

Those before us were just as capable as we are, and possibly more capable than we are at studying the Bible and understanding the principles and their application. We have not evolved, nor have we become more capable of understanding God's word than our forefathers. The concept that there are still undiscovered fundamental truths, or that God's truth is evolving, is deplorable. Is God able to clearly reveal himself and His expectations to us, or not? Does God change? Is He a great God, or a bumbling incompetent one?

Each generation must dig their own wells (Gen 26:18).

Each generation has had to deal with the subject of the purpose of gender and our roles. Biblical examples have provided us with God's template for life and worship that we must follow. If we come to a different conclusion to that provided by examples in scripture, or to our historical practice, it indicates one of the following:

1. **Argument:** God's instructions for the roles of men and women were based on the culture in Biblical times, and not intended to be followed today.

Implications: God, and those he appointed, were powerless to work against the culture of the day and had to compromise.

2. **Argument:** God's instructions for the roles of men and women have been misunderstood and misapplied; there is a better interpretation that needs to be implemented.

Implications: God was unable to clearly reveal his instructions to the faithful throughout the generations. Or we are simply better at understanding God now.

3. **Argument:** God's instructions for the roles of men and women have been purposely corrupted by many throughout history for their own personal gain.

Implications: This indicates that all those who have done so will be condemned.

There have of course been flaws, mistakes, and challenges within the body of believers. Our conclusions about the roles of men and women shouldn't be based upon a study of our own history, although such a study can be helpful. Rather, our conclusions should be based upon the inspired Word of God.

There can be no doubt the Bible is male-centric, although I use that term very lightly. It isn't male-focused. It is God focused. Words don't always convey everything without complementary examples that highlight both positive and negative. The question we need to ask is why?

The Challenge

There are three main arguments being made for change in gender roles within the ecclesia. They are not expressed this way, but the arguments given fall into one or more of these categories.

1. Equality between women and men is to be achieved through these changes. Equality represents an unbiased approach to roles regardless of gender. Men are not better than women, thus limiting what women can do is chauvinistic and unequal.
2. The structure of worship has changed throughout history and should change again. Part of this argument is an observation of certain inconsistent historical and current examples. Our religious worship should not reflect the cultural chauvinistic practices of the past.
3. Competency based worship is a better use of our membership. We should have the 'best' person to do each role regardless of gender. God has given us talents; we should use them to their fullest.

Five Class Overview

We have five classes prepared to address these three arguments. This first class is to establish Fundamental Principles. We'll use our Bible to create firm foundations. These Biblical principals are critical in our ability to understand all things in life, but specifically more challenging subjects like the role of gender in our worship of God.

We can see the need for understanding first principles before understanding more important topics related to Jesus Christ (Heb 5:11-14, 6:1-2). Paul makes it clear that understand Jesus Christ, and thus God his father, it requires having a full understanding of the milk of the Word. Of which he summarizes as repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection, and eternal judgement. Laying on of hands is interesting, as it contextually would imply it is no longer relevant. However, it is about the delegation of responsibility, and authority within the ecclesia. Quite relevant to our topic.

The next three classes are to address the three main arguments.

Biblical Equality – Does the Bible teach gender equality? What does it say about it? What is the divine pattern and instruction teach us? How do we express equality in our lives and worship of God?

Inspired Formal Worship – Does formal worship change? What is God's expectation? What are the implications? Is formal worship clearly defined by God, or is something we can fashion?

Competency Requirements – Does the Bible list requirements for various roles and positions? What are the principles that govern our activities and participation? Is our worship of God an expression of our competency, or His?

Answering Specific Questions – This class has the purpose of essentially building upon all the previous classes. Without the prior classes, the answers found in this class will not make sense. It is critical that the hearer has already come to a knowledge and understanding of the principles of worship and God's expectations for each of us. This class will review head coverings, speaking, prayers, and serving roles within the formal worship of God in the ecclesia. Touching on some of the wrested scripture used to support alternative ideas.

There are overlapping principles within each class. This ensures a consistent understanding and application of the Word of God. It reinforces the truth found therein, and it helps us remember. The first class will introduce many of these principles that are shared.

Class Structure

Each class will provide an introduction, three main points, after each point a short time to discuss specific questions, and then at the end a summary. After which hopefully there will be time for additional discussion, feedback, questions on the topic.

Class One – Fundamental Principles

The three points we want to cover tonight are as follows.

1. All scripture is inspired
2. In the Beginning – Intelligent Design
3. What it means to be "in Christ"

All Scripture is Inspired

All scripture is inspired. This perhaps is only the second more important principle found within scripture. The first principle being, God exists! It is so very simple and easy to understand, yet for its simplicity men's heart continues to corrupt it and misinterpret it.

Many have concluded that the Bible is not inspired. Many have concluded that only parts of scripture are inspired. Many have concluded the Bible is not to be understood literally, but only symbolically. Many have concluded that only the Old Testament, or only the New Testament is relevant. Many have concluded that there has been and will be further inspired revealed written works. Many have concluded that interpretation is something we are responsible for. Many have concluded that it's impossible to correctly interpret certain parts of scripture, like prophecy. Many have concluded that since we are fallible humans, therefore we can never correctly and completely express in thoughts, words or actions a complete understanding of God.

All these conclusions are false, as they directly reject that "All scripture is inspired" (2Tim 3:16-17). Men and women have been able to completely understand and express a clear understanding of God, as the Bible is the collection of this very thing. If we have concluded any these examples, then we reject the power and wisdom of God. We reject that He is able, has and continues to reveal Himself clearly and appropriately to us. We reject that His son is a fully revealed complete and perfect manifestation of Himself and all that He is doing.

God can clearly reveal himself, his expectations, his plan, and purpose (1Cor 12:1-11; Rom 1:16-32 cp Mat 7:5). It isn't by man's wisdom that he can interpret, understand, expound spiritual principles. It is of God.

Principles are the basis of our faith and are critical to redemption. If you covet, you're an adulterer. If you hate you're a murderer (Mat 5:21-22; 27-28).

Principles are critical and are greater than the written law

- Moses gave a bill of divorcement, but it was not so from the beginning (Mat 5:31-32; 19:7-9)
- David ate the shewbread when it was only for the priests (Mat 12:3-4).
- Ruth married Boaz, even though the Israelites were not allowed to marry them (Deu 23:3).

The Bible is almost exhaustive in its mention of men. Women are often, only a name associated with a man. Is God sexist? Is God chauvinist? If he is, then one could argue for maintaining such practices. He of course is not. His Word is inspired, and the principles it teaches gives eternal life. How do we manifest these same principles? Is the maleness found in scripture an inspired principle, or a chauvinistic cultural influence? If inspired what does it teach us? If chauvinistic, what does this teach us about inspiration?

There are several challenging sections within scripture that are either difficult to understand, appear to be contradictory to other passages, or are incredibly contrary to modern wisdom. How do we approach such passages, what mindset do we have? It's always important to know that in any given argument where there are two contrary conclusions, there is only two possibly logical outcomes; one argument is correct, or both arguments are incorrect.

Consider the inspired Word of God, as expressed in the Law of Moses concerning vows (Num 30:2-8). Do we approach this unequal expectation and outcomes as unfair? Or perhaps a bygone age? Or perhaps as an accommodation for hard hearts, like the bill of divorce (Mar 10:4-9)? The truth is it was unfair for both male and female. Men had no way to escape a bad vow, while women did. Men could choose which vows the women must keep, whereas women could only adhere to the decision of the men. Why would God who is wise, loving, all powerful, all knowing, patient, kind, forgiving, and impartial inspire an unfair law? The answer is both simple and beautiful. When God speaks, it results in the exact outcome of the meaning of His words. This is an important principle we must come to understand and live by if we want to be like God. Secondly, we as humans make a lot of horrible commitments, all of which lead to failure. We are very thankful that God is not only able, but willing to forgive our foolish vows and redirect us in a way that leads to success. Our lives and our gender play an outward physical manifestation of the life-giving principles that govern God's creation. Jesus simplifies the principle down to a single sound byte (Mat 5:37).

Would it not have been wiser for God, to simply make a law that said. Don't make vows unless you can keep them. It isn't what God did. Simply put there are a myriad of other important principles that we learn from His way compared to our own. Consider perhaps one of the most important, which is we don't live in an independent vacuum. God declared it was not good that man should exist alone. There is a necessary and divine principle of a shared existence that is necessary for good results. This existence is not based on sameness, but rather counterparts, one over against the other.

Also consider the follow:

- There are no inspired records written by women, although there is clear influence by them (Pro 1:8).
- The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Why not their wives? There would be no heir without the wife. In these specific cases, the wives were barren. God would provide the seed.
- The conclusion is neither male nor female roles in the Kingdom of God (Mat 12:24-27 cp Gal 3:28-29).
- Do not add or take away from the written word (Deu 12:32; Rev 22:18-19)

5 minutes for discussion

Clarification questions? If God is both capable and has clearly manifested Himself in His inspired Word, why then do we get things wrong? Why is it critical to understand inspiration? What are the implications of inspiration in our lives?

In the Beginning – Intelligent Design

Is there purpose in God's design, or was it the result of random chance and chaos? Is it by evolutionary processes that male and female became a reality, or was it by divine principles? How do we perceived that which was created and its relevance to our daily life and formal worship of God?

What do we learn from the creative account and the outcome of Adam and Eve's disobedience, the curse, the blessing? Adam did not lead; Eve did not subject herself (Gen 3:15-19). Is the account simple a collection of facts, or is it an expression of natural and spiritual principles which lead to eternal life? Lessons by which we can understand God, our own nature, and the process by which life can be obtained.

Is there a lesson being taught to us by the example and failures of Adam and Eve? Is there a natural similarity/connection that the role of gender plays and our relationship with Adam and Eve?

There is only male and female, there are no other genders. God has created us this way. They are both necessary for the purpose for which they were created. Eve was created to complete and assist Adam. Without Adam, there is no Eve. Without Eve, Adam is incomplete/imperfect. It is impossible to obey the divine commandment, multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28 cp Gal 4:4-5).

We are children, God is our father. Just as we govern our homes, so does He. The structure is His to raise up children correctly (Rom 8:12-17)

Adam was created first, then Eve was created for him. Women would not exist if not for man. Man was incomplete without woman. Jesus is the first fruit; the ecclesia is made for him. He doesn't have a purpose without the ecclesia, he would be incomplete. The ecclesia only exists because of him (1Tim 2:13-14)

Men are utterly condemned by God. In Adam, all die (1Cor 15:21-22). There is no hope in man. Adam was absolutely condemned. There was nothing he could do to save himself or others. God cannot work with willful sinners (Rom 5:14).

Women received a blessing through childbearing. Without women there is no hope of the promised seed. God can work with someone who has been deceived. No hope in Adam, hope in the seed (Rom 5:14-15). Saved in childbearing vs work to death (2Tim 2:15). God choose then to work out his salvation through the woman.

The role of men in the ecclesia is not based on the patriarchy, or chauvinism. There is absolutely no hope in man. Adam represents willful disobedience and lazy leadership. Men are called to learn from his poor example and do better.

The role of women in the ecclesia is not based on the patriarchy, or chauvinism. There is hope in the seed of the women. Eve represents the deceived, and the natural desire to rule oneself (1Tim 2:13-15). Women are called to learn from this poor example and do better.

Yet still the seed is never specifically attributed to women, but rather men (Psa 89:35-36). It is not stated the seed of Sarah, but rather the seed Abraham.

By God's divine wisdom he intelligently created all things 'good', and fit for their purpose. The natural provides a shadow of spiritual lessons. Our outward manifestation of Godly principles requires appropriately fulfilling our designed gender roles.

The relationship between men and women expressed in marriage is a physical or natural structure necessary for life. In this relationship a new life begins (Gen 2:24). A new life expressed as 'one flesh', and then a promised seed. While naturally due to sin we die, but God has provided a structure by which our family 'name' continues through inheritance. We become living witnesses of divine principles. If these divine principles reveal within us through understanding and practice, a matching character, they result in eternal life. Not by our own works, but by the divine power of God making in us a new creation. Mankind in their rejection of divine principles corrupts even the natural (Rom 1:18-32 cp 16-17).

God has structured the world in such a way that we can observe and participate in divine principles simply by living our lives in an appropriate fashion. Participating in life this way has amazing short-term and long-term benefits, of which even modern studies agree.

How would you express in your life that you understand and agree with God's wisdom and commandments? Recall, that when God speaks, it is fulfilled. Expressed in another way, God commands, and it is done. God does not waste words; He does not say one thing and mean another (Isa 46:9-10; 55:11; Mat 24:35; Jam 1:18). Did He, or did He not predestinate each one of us (Eph 1:4-5). He has 'called' us (His word has gone out of his mouth and we have heard).

We have been fashioned, created, molded, crafted to precisely fit for His purpose; either for honour or for dishonour (Rom 9:21). That purpose of which requires both male and female, brought together in marriage will result in a new creation. There is no other way. There is no greater wisdom. The simple natural reality not only teaches us critical divine principles, but it also demands adherence for long-term survivability. So, to must the spiritual principles be exemplified in our natural bodies if we want eternal life. If God has made you a girl, rejoice in your role. If God has made you a boy, rejoice in your role. Fulfill God's purpose with you by understanding God's divine principles and manifesting them in your natural body.

What then is your role as a male or female? There are some obvious conclusions, but also some challenging implications and how to best to practice these roles. What must be understood by this second principle of 'Intelligent design', is that our roles are both required together and contain unique differences.

As we continue through our classes the role of gender, the differences and overlap should become exceedingly clear. The Word of God leaves no room for private interpretation. What we can expect is that these roles will align with natural creation and spiritual principles. As such we will find both condemnation and redemption. Both are required by divine wisdom and both are beautiful when brought together appropriately (Psa 85:10; Joh 1:14).

5 minutes for discussion

Clarification questions? If God is a wise creator, all knowing, and by whom only is life and light, what could be His purpose for creating male and female instead of asexually? Is our gender a random arbitrary outcome, or an element of divine purpose and wisdom? Is our gender an unfair aspect of life? How can we express in our gender God's wisdom and give Him glory?

What it Means to be “In Christ”

Each subsequent class digs into this specific subject of Jesus Christ in greater detail. The purpose in this class is to introduce it and to establish it as a fundamental guiding principle that governs our understanding, interpretation, and application in our worship and manifestation of God.

Jesus is the wisdom of God. He is the full manifestation of the word, character, purpose of God (Joh 1:14-18).

God when calling the Children of Israel out of Egypt expected an appropriate response and worship. He slaughtered the 1st born of Egypt and anyone who rejected his divine prescribed formal worship (Exo 12:1-14). The Passover was a mere shadow pointing forward to the greater, which is Jesus Christ. If he expected a response of formal memorial worship there, what do we think of God's expectation for our response when He offered up His only begotten perfect son (Mat 3:17; Luk 9:35; 20:13 cp 2Pet 1:16-21)?

Jesus is male (Gen 18:10 cp Mat 1:21-23 cp Gal 3:16). This may appear to be overstated, or perhaps chauvinistically leading. If we have already acknowledged 'all scripture is inspired', and 'intelligent design', then we must also conclude that this fact has important meaning. It is not by accident, or random chance Jesus is male. How does this fact govern our understanding and application of our own worship of God? Does it play a role at all? Of course, it does. God could have made Jesus a female. Would not have it been better for God to overthrow the chauvinistic sexist patriarchy? Surely the principle that there is no hope in man, and the principle that hope can only come through the seed of the women surely would demand Jesus be female. Yet Jesus is male, just as the ecclesia is female (1Cor 15:20-22).

To be in Christ means and requires us to manifest our relationship to him. Our relationship according to divine wisdom is through marriage. The ecclesia is expressed as female for a reason. An unblemished virgin bride prepared and excited for her groom. Our worship, our outward display of holiness demands this relationship be openly declared and manifested, not only to God, but to an external observer (Rom 8:1-17; 12:1-21).

It requires all parts of the body to successfully manifest or worship God in the appointed way. We cannot do it in isolation from the ecclesia. There are many parts of the body, some strong, some weak. Each provides for that which lacks (Heb 10:24-29 cp 1Cor 12:12-27).

The phrase 'In Christ' is not ambiguous. The phrase is not up for private interpretation. It is an expression that in its simplicity it encapsulates the divine wisdom, principles, and purpose of God. God

has clearly revealed himself to us in His son Jesus Christ (Joh 12:45; 14:7, 9-10; 1Joh 1:2-3). Our relationships with one another in the ecclesia are an outward manifestation of our understanding of God's calling and principles. The rules that govern the ecclesia contain both equally shared responsibilities and gender based responsibilities (Col 3:8-25 cp Col 2:8-10, 16-23 [read in another version]).

5 minutes for discussion

Clarification questions? Is the greatest purpose and plan of God captured in the expression "In Christ"? If so, what are the implications both in our natural bodies, and our spiritual minds? How do we manifest in our daily lives and formal worship our relationship to Christ?

Conclusion

An understanding of these fundamental principles is necessary to correctly understand the role of gender in the ecclesia. These fundamental principles provide for us a firm foundation that allow us to correctly interpret and apply the more challenging application of living Godly.

Our three fundamental principles we covered in this class are as follows.

1. All scripture is inspired
2. In the Beginning – Intelligent Design
3. What it means to be "in Christ"

If we understand and accept that all scripture is inspired, then we will acknowledge that God is not only able but has fully revealed himself. It is not of our own wisdom or intellect to interpret the principles, lessons, commandments that establish how we worship God.

Secondly, God is not a man. He is not a fool. He is not incompetent. He is not cruel. God has created all things beautifully and for a purpose. Just as he created male and female, so too has he defined their roles so that they together can give him glory and fulfil his will. God created us individually and collectively with purpose. We are not arbitrary, random occurrences. God has predestinated us before the creation of the world. He understands what is required for life to succeed both short-term and long-term.

The sum of the whole process and purpose of God is simply captured in the expression "in Christ". The principle of being "in Christ" is fundamental to our understanding of God, his plan and purpose, his love, his righteousness, his wisdom, his grace, his mercy, his justice, and his expectation. Our gender, our talents, our relationships, our competencies, are all required to be expressed in the appointed way according to divine intelligent design. We are as a group, are the body of Christ and through this physical and spiritual union are made a new creation, cleansed from the old man. Independently we lack necessary requirements for redemption. Collectively in Christ we are blessed with all the requirements for redemption. Of which all could be expressed in simple terms of which a child can understand and participate.