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Teaching Notes

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Gender and Sexual Identity

Lesson #2: Complementary Roles for Men and Women

I. Defining Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

- Deep gender confusion in our day and age
- Our society (and increasingly our churches and Christian parents) completely unable to answer the questions:

A son's question, "Dad, what does it mean for me to be a man and not a woman?"

Or a daughter's question, "Mom, what does it mean for me to be a woman and not a man?"

Time Magazine article (May 26, 2016) by Jack Myers, author of *The Future of Men: Masculinity in the Twenty-first Century*)

"Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders are tapping into what I'm calling a 'Lean Out' generation of young, discouraged and angry men – men who are feeling abandoned by the thousands of years of history that defined what it meant to be a real man: to be strong; to be a provider; to be in authority; to be the ultimate decision maker; and to be economically, educationally, physically and politically dominant. A growing percentage of young men are being out-earned by young women, as women capture 60% of the higher education degrees required for success in today's economy.

We have the window right now to redefine what a good man—a 'real man'—is in the 21st century. As a society, we need to elevate the standards to which men are being held and no longer accept the outdated mantra that 'men will be men, and boys will be boys.' We must have zero tolerance for the destructive brotherhood that occurs when men of all ages gather and depend on sexism and misogyny as their common bond.

These are the tools of the patriarchy; they are the rituals of hazing that signify a boy's entry into manhood. They can be discarded if we

create a new narrative that welcomes young men into a truly gender-equal society. We should beware of falling into the trap of believing that the future of men is an ‘either, or’ confrontation with the women’s movement.

....

If we fail to focus on redefining men’s roles alongside women’s, we are in danger of fostering a culture of hostility among men who are feeling left out in school, in the job market, and in relationships. These men will be less likely to accept gender equality, less likely to advocate advances for women, and less likely to foster healthy relationships and families. For the sake of a healthy society, we need to redefine a positive and appropriate form of masculinity.

BUT... he doesn’t give us a definition of it! What it means to be a man and not a woman...

A. Definitions of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

What follows is from John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*: John Piper, Chapter 1: “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity” (p. 31-59)

1. What is Biblical Manhood?

At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for, and protect women in ways appropriate to a man’s differing relationships.

2. What is Biblical Womanhood?

At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive, and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman’s differing relationships [John Piper, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 35-36]

3. Unpacking the manhood statement

- a. **“At the heart of...”** = these definitions are not exhaustive
- b. **“...mature masculinity”** = a man’s sense of responsibility is in the process of growing out of its sinful distortions and limitations, finding its true nature as a form of love not self-assertion

- c. “... **a sense of**” = the man must “sense” “feel” “affirm” his responsibility or he is not mature
- d. “...**benevolent**” = the responsibility of manhood is for the *good* of woman, ruling out all selfish or tyrannical motives or behaviors
- e. “... **responsibility**” = man will be uniquely called to account for his leadership, provision and protection in relation to women; this is illustrated when God came to Adam first in Genesis 3:9 saying “Where are you?” though Eve had eaten the fruit first; this does not mean that woman has no responsibility as we shall see, but just that man bears a unique and primary one
- f. “... **to lead**” = this is such a difficult word to define that Piper had nine substatements explaining it!!
- 1) not to be served but to serve and to sacrifice for the good of woman;
 - 2) not to assume the authority of Christ over woman but to advocate it;
 - 3) not presuming superiority, but mobilizing the strengths of others;
 - 4) not initiating every action, but feeling the responsibility to provide a general pattern of initiative;
 - 5) accepting the burden of the final say in disagreements between husband and wife, but not presuming to use it in every instance;
 - 6) expressing leadership in romantic sexual relations by creating an aura of strong and tender pursuit;
 - 7) in a family, taking the initiative in disciplining the children when both parents are present and a family standard has been broken;
 - 8) being sensitive to cultural expressions of masculinity and adapting to them (where no sin is involved) to communicate to a woman that a man would like to relate not in any aggressive or perverted way, but with maturity and dignity as a man;
 - 9) recognizing the call to leadership is a call to repentance and humility and risk-taking
- g. “...**provide for**” = not that a woman can take no supportive role in providing for a family’s needs, but that, when there is no bread on the table, it is the man who should feel the main pressure to do something to get it there; note: this is strongly implied by the focus of the curse for the man in Genesis 3 being on his breadwinning power

- h. “**...protection**” = “Suppose a man and a woman (it may be his wife or sister or friend or a total stranger) are walking along the street when an assailant threatens the two of them with a lead pipe. Mature masculinity senses a natural, God-given responsibility to step forward and put himself between the assailant and the woman. In doing this, he becomes her servant. He is willing to suffer for her safety. He bestows honor upon her.
- i. “**...women**” = I do not say “wives” because there is a sense in which masculinity inclines a man to feel a responsibility for leadership, provision, and protection toward women in general
- j. “**... in ways appropriate to a man’s differing relationships**” = Ephesians 5:22 exhorts wives to be subject to “your own” husbands; thus the relationship of leadership and submission between a woman and her husband should be different than how she relates to other men... but there is a general pattern established here which is worked out in a variety of complex ways—in business, recreation, government, neighborhood, courtship, engagement, etc. These expressions of manhood will include acts of defense and protection, a readiness to serve with strength, and a pattern of initiative

4. Unpacking the womanhood statement

a. **At the heart of...** = not exhaustive, but the essence.

b. **...Mature Femininity** = as opposed to distorted feminine traits; -Ronda Chervin, in her book *Feminine, Free and Faithful*, gives a list of what people commonly consider “positive feminine traits”:

Responsive, compassionate, empathetic, gentle, warm, tender, hospitable, receptive, diplomatic, considerate, polite, supportive, intuitive, wise, perceptive, sensitive, spiritual, sincere, vulnerable (emotionally open), obedient, trusting, graceful, sweet, expressive, charming, delicate, quiet, sensually receptive, faithful, pure.

-Negative traits:

weak, passive, slavish, weepy, wishy-washy, seductive, flirtatious, vain, chatter-box, silly, sentimental, naïve, moody, petty, catty, prudish, manipulative, complaining, nagging, pouty, smothering, spiteful.

c. **...Is a freeing disposition** =

-disposition to yield/inclination to follow (ultimately under Christ), rather than set of behaviors or roles because mature femininity will express itself in so many ways depending on the situation. Not immediate sensations of unrestrained license or independence, but true freedom seeks to fit smoothly into God’s design. Changed by the Spirit so that you can do what you love to do and know that it conforms to the design

of God and leads to life and glory. Some come naturally, others grow into through prayer and practice.

d. ...To affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men =

-Not merely as a response to whatever sinful men happen to offer up, but rooted in a commitment to Christ as Lord and is discerning it what it approves. Woman should not abandon her femininity, but also recognize that the natural expression of her womanhood will be hindered by the immaturity of the man in her presence.

-Affirm:

Advocate the kind of masculine-feminine complementarity that we are describing here.

-Receive:

Feels natural and glad to accept the strength and leadership of worthy men.

She does not want to reverse these roles. She is glad when he is not passive.

-Nurture:

Not merely to receive, but to nurture and strengthen the resources of masculinity. Partner and assistant. Not mere recipients in relation to men, women bring qualities men do not; they bring things that make the relationship stronger. It is very misleading to put negative values on the so-called weaknesses that each of us has by virtue of our sexuality (men and women are weaker/stronger in different realms). Two columns of weaknesses and strengths; the two will balance out. Complement, not duplicate. Men's weaknesses bring out women's strengths; women's weaknesses bring out men's strengths.

e. ...In ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships =

-Does not express itself in the same way toward every man (the degree to which she welcomes leadership from her husband vs. other men). But she will affirm and receive and nurture the strength and leadership of men *in some form* in all her relationships with men. This is true even though she may find herself in roles that put some men in a subordinate role to her. Some roles might stretch appropriate expressions of femininity beyond the breaking point. Brink of contradiction suggesting that a woman may hold a position of leadership and fulfill it in a way that signals to men her endorsement of their sense of responsibility to lead. But the complexities of life require of us this risk (it is simply impossible that from time to time a woman not be in a position of influencing men). But there is a way for that housewife to direct the man that neither of them feels their mature femininity or masculinity compromised. Better to not provide list of jobs, but rather guidelines (it is hopeless to go case by case and seek a black/white assessment).

II. Complementary Roles

A. What is “Complementarianism”?

1. Basic concept: that men and women have roles that compliment each others’ roles and each are vital to the health of the family and the church

TGC Confessional Statement: “men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways.”

Mary Kassian, TGC: “A complementarian is a person who believes that God created male and female to reflect complementary truths about Jesus. That's the bottom-line meaning of the word. Complementarians believe that males were designed to shine the spotlight on Christ's relationship to the church (and the LORD God's relationship to Christ) in a way that females cannot, and that females were designed to shine the spotlight on the church's relationship to Christ (and Christ's relationship to the LORD God) in a way that males cannot. Who we are as male and female is ultimately not about us. It's about testifying to the story of Jesus. We do not get to dictate what manhood and womanhood are all about. Our Creator does. That's the basis of complementarianism.”

2. Key texts

1 Corinthians 11:11-12 In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

1 Corinthians 12:14-22 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable

B. Four Dangers for Complementarians (This entire section comes from Gavin Ortlund)

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/four-dangers-for-complementarians/>

1. Stereotyping gender roles

In cultures where complementarianism is embraced, it can be all too easy to confuse the essence of masculinity or femininity with one particular expression of it. But marriages and church cultures patterned after complementarian convictions will not always look the same; they take on shape and beauty as expressed through particular personalities, cultural locations, and relationship dynamics.

Kathy Keller: “The basic roles – of leader and helper – are binding, but every couple must work out how that will be expressed within their marriage.”

Andreas and Margaret Köstenberger: “Scripture doesn’t give a lot of detail as to how God’s design for man and woman is to be worked out, so a traditional division of labor (women in the kitchen, changing diapers; men at work letting women do all household chores) doesn’t square with the biblical design.”

For people who have grown up in a home in which the wife tends to do the dishes, laundry, and cleaning, and the husband tends to work a job, mow the lawn, and get the oil changed, it can be only too natural to simply assume that this is what complementarianism should always look like. So we should be careful to clarify for people – most of whom have not studied this issue in depth – that embracing complementarianism need not always require embracing these kinds of culturally conditioned roles. (Gavin Ortlund)

Other stereotypes:

- guys are less sensitive or less emotional than girls
- guys are less talkative than girls
- guys like sports more than girls

It is unfortunate when people stumble over complementarianism because they associate it with such assertions; they are stereotypes, not biblical mandates.

2. Failing to clearly distinguish complementarianism from various kinds of patriarchalism and hierarchicalism

Many people in our culture think only in two categories on the meaning of gender: conservative vs. progressive. But in truth, biblical complementarianism – like the gospel it pictures – will subvert both

progressive, egalitarian mindsets as well as traditional, hierarchical/patriarchal mindsets that tend to assign men a more basic role in society than women. It will stand out as different, as beautiful, as an alternative, not merely in 21st century Manhattan, but also in ancient India, medieval Europe, and 1950s America.

We must also affirm complementarianism over and against any other alternative to the beauty of Ephesians 5. If people only hear us pushing in one direction, we make it easier for people to lump us together with others pushing in the opposite direction. We say, “egalitarianism is wrong”; they hear, “patriarchalism is right.” If we distinguish the biblical view of gender from both its progressive and conservative alternatives, we position people better to perceive its nuance and beauty and depth.

3. Defending complementarianism zealously, but failing to live it out beautifully

There is a real danger at hand when the (difficult) goal of defending complementarianism becomes so prominent in our vision that it sidelines the (even more difficult) goal of living it out in a beautiful, life-giving way. Theological integrity is hard and important; godliness and love equally important, and probably harder. But to affirm the truth without also applying it to ourselves is not just incomplete: it is actually a step backward. We should labor to show that complementarianism is not merely biblical, but beautiful.

4. Failing to celebrate the contribution of women

We should be enthusiastic about the myriad ways that God calls and uses women. Too often this comes across as a concession from complementarians, rather than something to rejoice in. And too many complementarian churches are not just “male led,” but “male heavy” in their various ministry spheres.

III. Overall Goals for the Class

1. Delight in God’s purposes in creating gender
2. Understanding manhood and womanhood biblically
3. Delighting in what God made you to be
4. Honoring what God made others to be
5. Opposing Satanic attacks/argument on this issue
6. Delighting in God-ordained sexuality
7. Embracing holiness as sexual beings

8. Learning to be completely content in what God ordains
9. Celebrating the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only power liberating all sinners from whatever patterns of sin they are displaying in this area