

Gender Studies with a Biblical Worldview

Introduction

Why Do We Do This?

Some very alarming things are happening in our society that fifty years ago would have been unthinkable. What would our grandparents have thought about some states legalizing gay marriage? They would have been appalled, yet here we are facing this very issue. What would the Founding Fathers of our nation have thought about it? I dare say they also would have been disgusted by the whole thing. So much of the thinking that has led to these developments is prevalent in our public schools and in our university education system, and is prevalent in the culture in general. Add to that court rulings and new laws that are giving extra protection and rights for those who live “alternative lifestyles.” It seems that all standards as to what constitutes being a man and what constitutes being a woman are being destroyed.

The root of these problems is a fundamentally unbiblical paradigm that has gripped our culture and is growing in influence. More and more of those who have “traditional” views of gender, family, and God, are accused of being bigots and are shamed into silence. The war is on! It is a war of ideas. How do we define what a standard or model for gender might look like? What is a family to look like and function like? Why would anybody’s opinion on the subject be any better than anybody else’s? These are all questions of authority: who is in charge of all of this stuff, and who makes the rules for gender, family, or any aspect of life?

As it turns out, gender is God’s creation, and nobody would know more about it than Him. He has revealed His thought regarding gender to His Church, the *depository of truth* (1 Timothy 3:15), through the Scripture. Gender is not only God’s invention, but it actually reflects something about God Himself, making the subject of gender something very personal to God. If anybody wants to know about the subject, God would be the one to consult. That is exactly what we want to do in this study.

This study is an effort to combat what is being taught at the vast majority of universities (even Christian universities) about masculinity and femininity by going back and looking at God’s designs, integrating it with the larger Christian paradigm. For thousands of years, gender differences were recognized in every culture and taken for granted. They were so tightly woven into society that their meaning and purpose within a culture was implicitly understood. Over time, and under much ideological pressure, concepts of gender differences have eroded. These foundational concepts are being lost and we want to relocate them and reexamine them in a fresh new way.

Things Assumed

When coming to this study, there are some basic and core assumptions that must be established. The first and foremost is that the Bible is understood to be the inspired, infallible Word of God that does not err. Even if the student does not have all of the theological nuances of what that means, he or she must understand that we are using the Bible as the authority for the way we should think about, implement, and live out a core understanding of gender. Basically, we are not saying anything new. We are echoing what has always been taught and believed. We are bringing old things together in a unique way for better understanding of the topic presented (elements and theologies that have been understood for centuries but have been abandoned in modernity). Scripture is our source; the traditional view of biblical interpretation is our guide. Put another way: we view Scripture through the *lens of tradition* to understand the design, purpose, and meaning that God forged into gender.

Another assumption is that the reader has an inquiring mind, is one wanting to know God, His ways, and God’s plan for his/her individual life.

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter. The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable. (Proverbs 25:2-3)

If it seems like so much about God is hidden from view, it is true. God hides things, not from us, but *for* us. Why? He wants us to search it out with hungry hearts. God wants us to willingly seek after Him to know His ways and to understand His purposes; at its essence, God desires that we KNOW Him, who He is, and the manners in which he works

Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. (Isaiah 58:2)

Human interaction with God comes in the form of a relationship, and God is looking for those who will follow after Him and seek to know His ways. Bottom line: God is motivated by desire, our desire to know and seek after Him with all our heart.

Learning a New Discipline

Half of learning any new science or discipline is learning the vocabulary. If you know the meaning of the words and terms, integrating the material becomes a lot easier. If learning is like playing “connect the dots,” the vocabulary would be the dots and connecting them would represent filling out the understanding. Without understanding the terms and words, learning breaks down. Language also is, to some degree, dynamic, and ever changing; defining our terms is necessary for accurate communication. For that reason, we have included for each chapter a list of words and terms with their definitions. These definitions will be oversimplified but will give enough so that the reader will be able to easily access, comprehend, and connect with the material. Some of the terms are unique to our discussion and therefore will be defined for the reader. Some of the words utilized in this discussion will function with a more narrow meaning than other contexts and situations apply to them. In these situations, the functional definition of the word being used will be explicitly stated. Take time to familiarize yourself with the terms before reading each chapter. If you run across a term or word you are not familiar with and that is not present on the vocabulary list, try a standard dictionary definition.

Approach

We could have treated *gender studies* and *Biblical Worldview* separately in two different studies, but they are not easily separated. Being that God created gender, to understand gender properly, we must understand it theologically. This implies that to understand the issue of gender, we also must grasp an understanding of some basic and fundamental theological understandings that all feed into a complete understanding of gender. While many chapters may not seem related to gender when they are first read, this is not a compilation of unrelated elements. Rather, we wish to convey a view of gender in the context of a larger spirituality and theological understanding. Isolating it from all of the other thought processes of Christianity is hanging it on a thread; integrating it into the larger concept of faith secures it into the student’s thinking.

Many in perverse lifestyles claim to be Christian, giving the impression to our Christian young people that God is somehow okay with these “alternative lifestyles.” Christianity, by nature, is a “*fixed value system*,” some things are NOT negotiable. And this is what we wish to instill in students through our material. If that is what you want, this material is what you are looking for.

The advantages of approaching truth in an organic/holistic manner are incontrovertible. If we think of learning the faith as building a stone wall, then we do not simply wish to present the student with only God’s design, purpose, and intent for gender, but to also convey a complete section of the wall. The contiguous stones provide reference and meaning to the stone we wish to add to a believers understanding. As it turns out, gender is related to many other theological elements: it relates to the “Seed Principle,” “Tension of Opposites,” to “Order and Authority,” and especially to “Covenant Basics.” Therefore, we are not just going to launch headfirst into gender studies as seen from a Biblical point of view without first adding these other “stones,” as it were, to the complete and comprehensive understanding, bringing forth, not just one stone in a

wall, but a whole sector of the wall with gender studies as its focal point. The surrounding stones give context, thus contributing to a stronger and more complete understanding of this specific stone's message, firmly securing the stone into our understanding of God, His purposes, and plans for us as His people; we cement the stone into the learner's life with other tenets of truth, namely an understanding of covenant principles (chapters on "Covenant Basics" and "Covenant Theology").

There is a manner of treating illness that is called the "holistic approach," which serves to treat the whole of the person and not just one symptom. The secular medical approach to treating disease usually focuses on one aspect of the person's health: the area with the problem. The difficulty with that approach is that a person's body is a complex integration of various systems. Some doctors are discovering that different medical issues may be interrelated, or systemic in nature, and find more success in treating a person's whole being and not just where it hurts. By the same token, we are interested in a "holistic approach" to studying God's design for human gender, because a believer is not a one dimensional entity: he is a multidimensional, integrated being that has complex needs and organic systems that support and contribute to each other. Therefore, we want an appropriately complex treatment of our subject.

In summation, we do not build a solid, impregnable wall out of a single stone. We want there to be sufficient stones in the wall to secure the stone of truth firmly and bring about a "holistic" approach to our subject. When finished the reader will feel like they have had a complete, though brief, study encompassing a Biblical Worldview.

Broad Assets

While mainly referring to Scripture as our guide for our study, we also will be referring to theological commentators from a broad spectrum of the Church. Interpretation will be quoted from some relatively new and some very ancient. Our study is not just like a stone wall: it can be described as your grandmother's stew. Many things go into that stew, both vegetable and meat. The flavors of potatoes, carrots, beef, and many seasonings, when cooked over time, all intermingle. Here, you will find the Protestant with the Catholic and the Presbyterian and the Charismatic, the new with the old. We will not be camping out in a particular denominational perspective but will be taking from a broad treasure, and throwing it into one pot, simmering it until the common flavor exudes from every morsel.

Objectives

St. Augustine (AD 354-430), Church bishop in Northern Africa, taught interpretation of Scripture as dividing elements of Scripture into "things" and "signs." "Signs" are references in scripture that point to something else, having a higher meaning than just what is indicated on the surface. "Things" are items that are to be taken at face value.¹ Reading what the Bible has to say about gender, we immediately see God creating Man male and female; this would be what St. Augustine called a "sign," something that has much greater import than just the mechanisms of procreation. We would miss something divine, something wonderful, and foundational if we just take gender at "face value." Divine and eternal truths are impressed into God's image, Man, through gender.

The course is designed to reflect upon God's articulating Himself through Man—male and female—as it was expressed in the Garden from before the Fall.

At the Fall, the meaning and essence of gender came under assault, and so much was lost not just between God and Man but also between Adam and his wife. In modern times even what remnant is left of value placed upon masculinity and femininity is quickly eroding. Satan and his minions are launching an all-out attack on what understanding of gender we have left; a great battle is raging. Christ came to restore what was lost when Man sinned. Christ is the "Last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45), retrieving what the first Adam

forfeited. The goal of this study is to go back and take a look, if only a small peek, at what God’s intentions were when he created the highest part of His Creation, when He made an image of Himself—male and female. Not only do we want to go back and look into the wonder of Creation, we want it to be meaningful for us. God had a thought and purpose when He made Man, male and female, and properly assimilating the Creation Story is a key to perceiving what is revealed about God, ourselves, and how we are to live our lives.

Before going back to God’s original intent for men and women, in the early chapters, we will stage the journey by reflecting on some basic principles that will help us understand the Genesis account and God’s designs. We want to go into the beginning events equipped with a Biblical Worldview to correctly view, perceive, and understand the message God was sending. Think of a physicist who is searching for the simplest and smallest particle of matter. He first must go through many years of study to get to the point where he can understand how to do the research process. Likewise we will make some stops along the way and learn some things that will shed light on God’s designs. All of these preliminary studies are vital to a Biblical Worldview as well as shedding light on gender issues. They properly prepare us to look into the wonder, the marvelous glory of God’s design for Man, male and female.

Preview

Here is a brief look at each chapter, keeping in mind that it is important for students to understand some broad concepts before they can understand God’s design for gender.

Reformation or Revision: In the first chapter after the introduction, we talk about “Reformation or Revision.” There are two approaches to most aspects of learning and living. One, due to the Fall, things are constantly degenerating and that renewal of prior established standards needs to be occurring constantly. This viewpoint recognizes the Fall and its implication on the individual, the society, and ultimately, the human race at large. Two, the other approach is to take a revising position, whereby the individual is only accountable to himself and that he has no regard for established values. A simple way to understand this is that the individual or culture is continually changing or revising the values, the ethics, and morals from what God designed into something perverse. Every human being and every sector of society adopts one of these approaches. More and more we see primary education taking a revised approach to teaching American history; we also see more and more judges take a revising view of the Constitution, and even in some quarters of the Church, some are revising God’s Word to mean things and allow for things that were never meant to be and that run completely contrary to God Himself. The purpose of this chapter is to place before the student a distinct choice on how to approach virtually every issue of life and have them consciously choose to be a reformer. By doing that, they are setting themselves in opposition to revisionist’s narrative. They no longer can be neutral and vulnerable to revisions in any arena, whether it be in morals, theology, government, or even something as simple as how we see American history. In many ways, this could be setting them up for confrontations in that they cannot be neutral on many issues. It is important that there are no fence sitters by the time they get to college, because, at the universities, it is impossible to remain neutral, and the vast majority of voices will be pulling young minds towards the revisionist and unbiblical approach. Taking a reforming tact will never leave a student wondering where the answers are; they will be constantly referring to the Bible and the Church’s historical interpretation and stance instead of trying to invent new and hazardous ways to live life. It is important that they have a well-established and understood Christian value system that is based, first and foremost, on Scripture as it has been interpreted by generations past.

God and Creation: The Doctrine of Creation is the most attached doctrine of the Church which has opened the door for social engineering. Once God is removed from the human situation then, anybody’s idea as to Man’s purpose and lifestyle can be implemented. Methodical indoctrination in evolution separates the student from God, resulting in an amoral being. This chapter reestablishes in the mind of the student God as the Supreme Being in His place as the Covenant Head of humanity.

Everything starts with Creation; getting that right filters out a lot of false teaching and heretical ideas. The most foundational points are located in the first three chapters in the book of beginnings, Genesis. There you will find how God is properly defined as being the Creator, who created everything apart from Himself. As the *transcendent* God, He is above and beyond any of Creation and therefore not subject to *scientific review* and thus He is in charge of all things, making all men accountable to Him. By the same token God, being transcendent, has not abandoned His Creation but sustains it on a daily basis; this is referred to as God's *immanence*. God's handiwork in Creation points to Him, and the crowning component, Man, is God's image. Man is unlike anything else God created because Man is a spirit being, which makes him *covenantal*. Man is also designed to live forever in either heaven or hell. Creation has two dimensions as spelled out by Scripture and the Nicene Creed (things visible and invisible): the spiritual dimension and the physical dimension (the visible portion of creation which we touch on a daily basis). Man being created in God's image, male and female, calls back to God as a reflection of something in God's very identity; God projected something of Himself onto Man. This is why Man should not be classified as an animal because he bears God's image. God and Creation is vital information for a Biblical Worldview and elemental in the chapters on covenant.

Seed Principle: The *seed principle* as it works out, ties several major theological concepts together. It answers how one man's sin affects everybody, and how one man's act of righteousness brings redemption to all who accept. The seed principle means *the one becomes many*. As a farmer, who intuitively sees a whole cornfield in one kernel of corn, so God saw the whole human race in Adam. In that context the whole human race has covenantal and organic one-ness. Headship principles are established here. Adam was the *corporate* and *covenantal head* of the human race. Christ is the *corporate* and *covenantal head* of the Church. These principles give more meaning when a man is recognized as being the head of his home, bringing covenantal and organic one-ness. The Seed Principle is foundational to understanding covenant because God always deals with Man by way of representation: one represents many (which is imperative for covenant function).

Covenant Basic: Covenant principles are as inescapable to human existence as the laws of physics are to the physical creation. God does everything by covenant; Man has inborn covenant instinct: all successful relationships work by covenant and covenant is essential to success, etc. What is covenant? It is *mutual obligation*. Covenant functions by way of five elements: *transcendence, hierarchy, ethics, sanctions, and continuity*. All relationships have two sides: a *legal/moral* side (covenant) and an *organic* side, fellowship and communion. Covenant can be *unilaterally imposed* or *agreed-upon*. Covenant generally is initiated by declarations, vows, and oaths in ritualistic fashion. Covenants have *initiation, renewal, and documentation*. Marriage and Christianity are both covenants, each with *initiation, renewal, and documentation*. Covenant provides for a *sanctuary of trust*, the catalyst for fellowship. *Dominion*, by God's design, is only done by covenant, whether in the context of God's Kingdom or in common economics. Based on the *seed principle*, God deals with mankind on the basis of two covenant heads, Adam and Christ. Adam, breaking God's covenant, was sanctioned by death, which fell to all: this was the *Covenant of Works*. For any relationship between God and Man to go forward another covenant had to be enacted that would restore *relationship* and therefore *fellowship*. For the *Covenant of Grace* to work it had to absorb the *Covenant of Works*, in that it had to pay off the judgments against Man sustained by it and procure the benefits allowed by it e.g. access to God. Eating and drinking together is covenantal initiation and renewal. Since the Fall, blood has been required for covenant with God, first from animals as substitutes and then from Christ. Covenant can die (be rendered useless) when it does not bring about communion and fellowship.

Covenant Theology: This is a tracing, very briefly, of God's covenant dealing with mankind, locating the generalities of the subject. Starting with John Calvin's understanding that there are basically only two covenants when looking at God's relationship with the whole of humanity, we work from there. The *Covenant of Works*, the first covenant, is God's covenant with Adam, which was broken by Adam's disobedience. It was a "one strike, you are out" covenant, there was no second chance to try it again; any disobedience meant immediate sanctions (judgment). With the first covenant broken, and even pirated by

Satan to establish him as the “god of this world,” God brought another covenant on the scene restoring relationship between God and Man: this is the *Covenant of Grace* which is promissory in nature, based on God’s promises, not works, requiring faith. This covenant is administered in various ways throughout history, first through *surrogates* of Christ (types and shadows), and then with Christ Himself when He is revealed. Calvin postulates that the Old and New Testaments are really two different administrations of God’s one, continuing *Covenant of Grace*,ⁱⁱ God dealing with both Old and New Testament saints on the basis of *grace*. Christ is the center of everything God does— Genesis to Revelation— so we will tie in the ever expanding revelation of Christ from the Garden of Eden to the consummation of all things to the unfolding God’s *covenant of grace*.

Common Versus Special: When the Bible talks about “holiness,” what does it mean? In our chapter on “Common Versus Special,” we delve into the biblical meaning of holiness in a new and fresh way. Some things belong to all, and are therefore common to all. Some things are rare, special, and to be prized and highly valued, like a single person’s virginity. To be holy or special means two things. One, it means to belong to somebody, to be in covenant with someone. In the case of the virgin he/she is saving themselves for their future spouse. Two, it means to be different in a positive way. Being different is what makes Christians stand out in stark contrast to the cultural norm. By making “holiness” simple by using the term “special,” it takes the mystery out of it and makes it accessible. Relationships are to be holy (or special) in that we cannot treat others we have relationship with as common, especially our spouse.

Tension of Opposites: Starting from how *tension of opposites* works in physics, the human body, nature, and government, we tie into how God has arranged truth in opposites called antinomy. Ultimately this reflects back to how a husband and wife are designed to be complimentary and not contradictory. Within this chapter, we lay the foundation of defining masculinity and femininity in a biblical way. Within God, there is tension of opposites that cast their shadow onto mankind. One of these is Grace and Truth: God relates to Man from these positions of His moral character. Another antinomy in God is related to His dynamic attributes; that He is all powerful and all beautiful. These dualities in God define Man, male and female.

Order and Authority: Order is in everything God does. Chaos is against God’s nature, and whenever He works in our lives, order emerges, because God is a God of order. What is order? It is the *accurate arrangement of things*; how things should be put together. This chapter works very close to the one on covenant as it is a further expansion of some of those same principles. Authority maintains and creates order and is a part of everyday life. The family unit is to have an order, prescribed by God to fit His designs. When functioning in an authority structure, one must learn about how to delegate, defer, and make an appeal. Here we deal with more of the technical aspects of functioning within an authority structure.

Identity: Some of the most basic questions of life are related to this subject: who am I, and why am I here? These are not mysteries hidden from us like some cruel joke to make people stumble through life looking for purpose. These are questions we have answers for through our faith in God. Identity works like GPS guiding us through life’s journey. Knowing God’s determination of who we are calibrates our Identity/GPS to follow His plan and brings about His appropriate purpose; identity drives purpose.

Purpose: Why did God make Man? Trinitarian Theology shows us that God has a manyness (He is three) and He also has a singularity (He is one); namely that He is Three in One and One in Three. This is reflected in God’s purposes for Man in that there is a manyness (we have located three purposes for Man), and there is a singularity or oneness to God’s purpose for Man (there is a single overarching purpose for Man) and that is to bring Christ to the center of all things. In the manifold purposes of God we see Man was created (1) to glorify God, (2) to enjoy God forever, and (3) to have dominion on God’s behalf. All three of these are accomplished by the singular purpose for Man and that is that Christ will have preeminence in everything; the manifold purposes for Man are only accomplished by Christ, God’s singular purpose for Man. There is an auxiliary purpose for Man (we call it an auxiliary or accessory purpose because Man does not benefit directly

from it), and that is that God’s purposes for Man, both manifold and singular provide a tutoring opportunity for the angels; God shows forth to the all angelic beings His manifold wisdom in the Church.

Image of God, Male and Female: If Man, male and female, is the image of God, then masculinity and femininity can be defined in terms of what we know about God. Man is like a two-sided portrait of God, neither side being the whole picture, or we could say a picture with two dimensions, male and female. In this chapter we provide for a biblical definition of what true masculinity and true femininity look like. The things we know about God that help us define masculinity and femininity can be seen in how the Bible describes worship of the Most High God. Here we provide biblical definitions of masculinity and femininity from the point of view of being God’s image and from a covenantal point of view.

Two Sides of Marriage: Man being made *for* both dominion as God’s representative and fellowship *with* God, marriage can be divided into two aspects. One—the dominion or administrative side is based on *economic diversity*. Two—communion or fellowship as based on *ontological equality*. This is a reflection of Trinitarian theology, that the three persons of the God Head are equal as to their persons but function different in authority. The Nicene Creed demonstrates this tension of opposites. When separating these dimensions in times of marital distress, the answers become clear. In everyday life the two sides work very close together in a seamless fashion.

Meaning of Intimacy: Everything God does has meaning and God placed within the design of our bodies divine mysteries, things related to eternity. And intimacy in marriage has some of the most profound meaning in the universe. The Hebrew word for “Praise” (Yadah) is the same word for marital intimacy. Marital intimacy reflects our relationship with God, the relationship with God being the higher principle, superior to the earthly. God is not a sexual being; worship is on a much higher plain and is projected in a finite way back onto the two sided portrait of God, Man, as it is realized within the bounds of marriage. This chapter speaks of the *communion* side of marriage as it relates to the most intimate aspect of marriage.

Domestic Order: Here we lay out some important yet practical protocol for managing a home, not in minute detail, but as to the general principles God designed to order a household. If all authority is tied back to God (“Order and Authority”), then somebody in the house is responsible to God for the proper ordering of the home. Some of that authority is *delegated*. The home, like the Garden of Eden, is to be a sanctuary, a place defended against intrusion, and that can only come about if there is some form of order.

Courtship/dating: This is a staging for marriage. Having a quality courtship and observing the proper boundaries sets the eventual marriage up for success. If marriage is covenantal, then courtship/dating should be as well. We provide for a format that brings the suitor into a covenant agreement with the father of the young lady. If Dad is to give his daughter away at the wedding, then it is Dad’s job to ensure and safeguard his daughter’s virginity. This can only be done with Dad in the dating/courtship picture, monitoring the situation. We believe the Scripture gives Dad veto power, not only over his household but especially over who his daughter is to date and ultimately marry. Along with the authority God gives fathers, men know other men better, what drives them, how they think (these are things a woman can never fully grasp); this gives fathers a practical advantage when dealing with suitors. Making Dad’s oversight understood early, before the first date, is imperative. This is not a concept of forced marriage but one that gives both the daughter and father veto power over any courtship/dating relationship. Bottom line: its Dad’s job to screen potential suitors and that can be done with covenantal principles.

Summary

As we mentioned before, our ancestors would be appalled if they knew of the things that are happening now in our society and even the world at large. Western Civilization seems to be losing its grip on the Christian principles that made it so great. Locating the foundations of Christian civil life, with its moral moorings, must be recovered if there is to be any hope for our future. Where does that process start? It starts with each of us looking into God’s plan for Man and then choosing to live it.

What are some things we want to take from the chapter?

1. Gender is God's creation; He would be the one to consult on gender issues.
2. The basis for our study is the Bible, the inspired, infallible Word of God.
3. God honors an inquiring mind and a seeking heart with insight.
4. Learning any new science is made easier by learning the vocabulary first.
5. Our study will be a holistic approach bringing in other relevant truths.
6. We will be pulling treasure (theology) from a broad spectrum of our Christian faith.
7. Revision versus Reformation: there are two different approaches to history/ the Constitution/the Bible/theology.
8. God and Creation: starting right helps get everything else right.
9. Seed Principle: what it means that Adam is God's seed, Christ is the Last Adam.
10. Covenant Basic: is the single most organizing principle of Scripture, relationships, and the universe.
11. Covenant Theology: God's dealing with Man are within the framework of two covenant—the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace.
12. Common Versus Special: some things are not ordinary and should not be taken for granted.
13. Tension of Opposites: two seemingly contrary forces/truths coming together to bring a desired result.
14. Order and Authority: order ensures function, and authority maintains order.
15. Identity drives purpose.
16. God's purposes for Man have manyness and singularity.
17. Image of God, Male and Female: masculinity and femininity call back to God as a reflection of Him.
18. Two Sides of Marriage: reflecting man's two fold purpose, marriage should be understood as having two sides.
19. The Meaning of Intimacy: Scripture correlates marital intimacy with worship of God.
20. Domestic Order: this is family administration as seen in Scripture.
21. Courtship and Dating: a plan of using covenantal principles to govern dating and courtship.

ⁱ Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Translated by Rev. J. F. Shaw of Londonderry, Book 1, Chapter 2.

ⁱⁱ John Calving, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Henry Beveridge, Book 2, sections 2,4.