

In 2022, Matt Walsh, a conservative commentator, came out with his infamous *What is a Woman?* documentary in which he posed the question, “What is a woman?” He got two main answers. From one segment of the population the answer he was given was, “A woman is anyone who identifies as a woman.” From another segment of interviewees, the answer he received was that a woman is “an adult human female.”

I bring this up for two reasons. First, the popularity of that documentary showed how confusing this conversation can be. Questions abound on this topic. What is a woman? What is a man? Is there a difference? Does Scripture speak to this topic? If so, are its answers antiquated or are they relevant for today? Second, this conversation is what our text calls our attention to today.

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

I want to draw your attention to that last line: *male and female he created them*. That’s what we’re talking about today. So, where to begin? Let’s begin by noting that we are all...

“FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE”

Psalms 139:13-14 says, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

This is the beginning point! Did you know that who you are, how God made you, from your sex to your personality, is fearfully and wonderfully made? You know what this means? It means your life, your self, your body—you *aren’t* accidental. It means you were made with purpose & intent. Today, however, people want to downplay this reality.

Years ago, I read the Ernest Cline novel *Ready Player One*. One of the key features that made the book/movie so compelling was that it portrayed a future with a virtual world (called the OASIS), where you could change anything about yourself that you wanted. As the author writes, “In the OASIS the fat could become thin, the ugly could become beautiful, and the shy, extroverted. Or vice versa. You could change your name, age, sex, race, height, weight, voice, hair color, and bone structure. Or you could cease being human altogether, and become an elf, ogre, alien, or any other creature from literature, movies, or mythology.”

It’s *that* sentiment—that you can change your entire self, even your body should you so choose—which is antithetical to Christianity. As theologian Todd Wilson says in his book *Mere Sexuality*, “There is a...physical-bodies-are-bad mentality at work in the modern world—a view that biology, embodied sexuality, being male and female, is a limit to overcome, a hindrance to be removed.”

Examples? How about the artificial wombs in Japan? Social media filters? Cosmetic enhancements to “transcend” aging? But think with me about how Jesus confronts this whole “bodies-are-bad” ideology.

We believe that the Son of God became a human. What higher affirmation do we have for the value of human bodies than to say that the divine became human? But Jesus didn’t become a *sexless* human; he became a *male* human. Think about it: the Word became flesh (John 1:14), not in a general way, but in a very specific, embodied way—as *a particular male human being*. In other words, Jesus had a Y chromosome and facial hair. He went through puberty. He had armpit hair, a ring finger longer than his index finger, a deeper voice than most women, an Adam’s apple, and so on. Which means that not only is the body good, but so is maleness!

And in case you think that Jesus’ embodiment only means maleness is good, he also affirms the beauty and goodness of femaleness, too! How so? By embracing human nature, God the Son embraced the virgin’s womb. In other words, Jesus, the God-man, swam in amniotic fluid, fed from an umbilical cord, traveled a vaginal canal, and fed at his mother’s breast.

Again, Todd Wilson said: “Through the incarnation, God the son embraced male and female sexuality to the core. He didn’t sidestep human sexuality; rather, he embraced it fully.” God’s Word says that our embodiment, which entails our being male or female, is a gift and it’s intrinsic to who we are. It is fearfully and wonderfully made.

Now, let’s dive a little deeper because when God created humanity...

“MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM”

Years ago, the book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* talked about some of the biological differences between men and women. If I’m being honest, this resonates at one level because sometimes Ash and I feel like we’re from different planets! But in some ways, the title is unhelpful. It focuses on the differences of the sexes rather than the similarities. The author is obviously making a rhetorical point, but let’s not forget that men and women, rather than being from Mars or Venus, are both from Earth! In other words, males and females are more similar than they are different. Why? Because they’re both *human* and made in God’s image (Dan talked about that last week).

What does Adam say when he first lays eyes on Eve? “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!” (Gen. 2:23). In other words, what Adam sees when he first looks at Eve isn’t difference, but sameness!

But this doesn’t mean there isn’t *any* distinction. Look with me again at our passage: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” This is how God designed us to be! Male *and* female. There *is* distinction here!

We see this even when we look at nature.

- There are **biological** differences. On average, men tend to be stronger, faster, and taller, but women tend to be better at endurance. There are a wide range of biological differences between men and women, most obviously related to reproduction.

- There are **psychological** differences, too. An NIH study shows that, generally, women are more agreeable than men. They are “more nurturing, tender-minded, and altruistic more often and to a greater extent than men.” They are higher in politeness, yes, but also in negative emotion and anxiety. Men, however, tend to be higher in “assertiveness and excitement seeking.” Renn says, “Men tend to be more dominant and agentic [i.e. industrious] than women.”
- There are also **sex role differences**. In general, women tend to navigate towards jobs that revolve around people (e.g., nursing) and men tend to navigate towards jobs related to things or ideas (e.g., STEM). Is this from societal expectations? Maybe. But, according to one study, even in the most egalitarian places, sex role differentiation hasn’t diminished; it’s either stayed the same or has even widened.

There are all kinds of distinctions. Consider what we might miss out on if we were to dilute male/female distinctions. On a recent weekend trip, Ash and I arrived at our Airbnb around midnight and spotted a woman in the parking garage who seemed upset. I was tired and oblivious, but Ash's instincts kicked in—she sensed the need and prompted us to help. Turns out, the woman was in bad shape. She had been the victim of a domestic violence situation that very evening—we were able to care for her and get her to a safe place for the night. Amid the pain of that situation, I felt deep joy in Ash's natural attentiveness to others' hurts, a beautiful gift that complements my own blind spots.

Men need women and women need men! What would happen if we had a planet full of males? I’ll tell you what would happen: Old Spice 3-in-1 shampoo, conditioner, and body wash stock would go through the roof! Or a planet full of females? As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11, males and females are interdependent. We need one another!

Now, consider what we might miss out on in relation to God’s character. Of course, God isn’t male or female; God is spirit (John 4:24), but all throughout Scripture, God is primarily described in typically male ways: He is King (Psalm 47:7) and Judge (Psalm 96:13). He is Lawgiver (Isaiah 33:22), Master (Ephesians 6:9), and Father (Matthew 6:9). All these images are “male” images. These terms are used because they indicate to us something of God’s character, namely, His authority and transcendence.

Conversely, while male imagery is primarily used for God, there are a few occasions where feminine imagery is used to convey something *different* about God’s character. Consider Isaiah 66 where God says, “As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.” And consider Jesus’ use of maternal imagery when he says, “How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings” (Matthew 23:37). What do these convey about God? He is compassionate, loving, close, etc.

Males and females are similar, yes, but they’re also distinct. Without the distinction, you lose something in the process. Now, here’s where I want to move next: the reality is that both males and females are...

“SUBJECTED TO FRUSTRATION”

That line comes not from Genesis but from Romans 8:20. It says, “For the creation was subjected to frustration...” There can be a lot of frustration in conversations around sexuality and gender, male/female, etc.

Case in point: stereotypes. Isn’t one of the most confusing things about male/female stuff the confusion about what it means to be a man or what it means to be a woman?

When I was a kid, despite being male, I did sports, yes. But I also did choir! Pretty bad, right? Well, it gets worse, because I not only did choir, I did show choir! Gasp! But it gets worse than that, because I not only did show choir, but I even tap danced in show choir! Am I any less of a man because of those things? No! If you said yes, I’ll see you out back—for a tap competition.

All the time, men and women are held to cultural standards of masculinity and femininity that *aren’t* biblical. Sometimes, we get the idea that men can’t be emotional, or we get the idea that women can’t be out there killing it in a career. In the Bible, however, men can be profoundly emotional (e.g., Jesus) and women can be profoundly entrepreneurial (e.g., Proverbs 31:16).

So, what are we to do? Is it wrong for women to mow grass and for men to fold laundry? Can a woman lead a company and can a man be a stay-at-home dad? I don’t think there’s anything wrong with any of these things! But I think we all know that a line can be crossed.

It’s crossed when people *downplay* their good, God-given male/female design.

Let’s get real for a moment: Isn’t this the issue we would have with trans ideology? All caveats noted—they are people, there can be real gender dysphoria struggle, etc.—isn’t one of the core issues with transgenderism the fact that when a female gets top surgery, shortens her hair, and takes testosterone, or when a male puts on long hair, pink lipstick, heels, and silicone breasts, they are *purposefully* obfuscating their God-given, fearfully and wonderfully made, good male and female identities?

That’s crossing a line, obscuring/downplaying God’s good design. But it’s *also* crossing a line when people *overplay* their good, God-given biological male/female design.

Lots of people have heard of Andrew Tate. He’s a guy who has a lot of influence on younger men, promoting himself to be some sort of ideal vision of what a man should be (wealthy, lots of women, independent, physically powerful, and so on). But he’s also a guy who *overplays* male/female differences. In other words, he *uses* a difference (male strength) and *abuses* that difference. As the New York Times has reported, he is “facing criminal charges in Britain of rape, human trafficking and assault, and an investigation in Romania over human trafficking and money laundering.” My stance on Tate? While what Tate does/has done *seems* masculine and macho, in reality, *I don’t think he’s masculine enough!*

Here’s why: I agree with Sam Allberry, author of *What God Has to Say about Our Bodies*.

True, biblical masculinity and true, biblical femininity are, respectively, simply what naturally emerges when men and women grow in Christ. Biblically speaking, masculinity is what long-term sanctification produces in Christian men and femininity is what long-term sanctification produces in women.

Now, to wrap this up, here's what I'll say: There's immense freedom to live as male and female in ways that we want, but we shouldn't purposefully obscure the way God made us by either *downplaying* or *overplaying* our biological realities as male or female.

Ok, enough about stereotypes. Shame is another way we experience frustration.

Recently Babylon Bee came out with "10 Surefire Ways to Lose Your ManCard." Mind if I share a few? Here are my favorites:

1. Linger too long at the soccer game while flipping through channels.
2. Use any emoji other than "thumbs up."
3. Moisturize.
4. Ask for help at Home Depot.
5. Sneeze quietly.

I'm not sure what the female equivalent would be for those, but in all seriousness, while maybe those things aren't real sources of shame for men, shame does abound for both men *and* women!

For men, this can revolve around body image (believe it or not). It can revolve around "proving" themselves to "be men." It can revolve around their sense of needing to protect, to provide, to show independence, etc. Men, have you ever experienced shame in these ways? I know I have.

For women—I'm not an expert here, obviously, but I asked around and some ladies said things like there are expectations to look young, stay fit, be caregivers, give everything in relationships, not experience infertility, kill it in the public sector—in general, to meet people's expectations. Women, do you ever experience shame in these ways?

So, we have stereotypes and shame. Now, last one: sin.

Really simple here: are males/females both guilty of sin and thus guilty before God? Yes!

All of this is *frustrating*! Who likes stereotypes? Who likes shame? Who likes sin?

Here's how I'll end: Yes, stereotypes, shame, and sin abound! Creation is subject to frustration! But God has come to save us. The Son assumed humanity. He went to the cross. In Christ, instead of stereotypes, there's freedom to express your maleness and femaleness with the help of the Holy Spirit. Instead of shame, there's honor. Instead of sin, there's righteousness.

"For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26-28). Did you catch that last line? Yes, we are fearfully/wonderfully made. Yes, we're created male and female. Yes, we're subject to frustration, but what's also true is that male/female are both *one in Christ*.

My exhortation to you, dear friends is this: Let us live as God's people—free from stereotypes, honored in Christ, clothed in His righteousness, and working together, male and female, to reflect His glory! Amen!