

Confronting Christianity – Part 8

Doesn't Christianity Denigrate Women?

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Oct 23rd, 2022

Intro:

- Doesn't Christianity denigrate women? That depends on who you ask. If you ask women who have been honored, loved, and treated with respect because of biblical teaching, they will say, "no, Christianity doesn't denigrate women." If you ask women who have been dishonored, used, and disrespected because of "biblical" teaching, they would say, "yes, Christianity denigrates women." If you ask women who have come out of Islam and into Christianity, they will say, "no – Christianity doesn't denigrate women." If you ask women who have a secularized empowerment philosophy, they will say, "yes, Christianity does denigrate women."
- Who's perspective is correct? And what does the Bible have to say to us in our modern context about this question? The approach I am taking in this message is to look to the Bible to see what it has to say that applies to both women and men to counteract misunderstanding regarding the Bible's teaching on humanity.

Women and men are both image bearers.

Gen 1:26-27 (NLV)

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like ourselves. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

27 So God created human beings in his own image.

**In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.**

- So, what do we learn from this? This is a God who is one yet plural. Let "us" make. And we learn from scripture that the one is also three, always living in perfect relationship and community. Same in essence and distinct in function. This trinity makes human beings (plural) in their image. And both men and women—together—properly reflect and capture the image of God. Together, women and men reign over all other created things on this planet.
- Men and women, in our sameness to one another and our uniqueness from one another, together as a whole best reflect the image of God. Humans were uniquely created in a different way from all other things that were created, and we are the only creatures that, together as male and female, bear the image of God. God's image is not completely represented by man nor completely represented by woman, but together, both female and male "image" God.
- Genesis chapter one gives the "big picture" and general overview of God's work of creation. Genesis chapter two focuses with more detail on the creation of His "image bearers." Genesis two records that after God created everything and formed man, God put him in a garden and declared, "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). So, was this a "design flaw," or something the perfect creator messed up? The answer is no; God did not mess up. Life was set up this way intentionally so that we as humans would know that it is indeed not good for us to

be alone. We by ourselves are incomplete. We were made to be in community with others and in relationship with our creator.

- And then, in another distinctly unique act of creation, Genesis 2 records that God put the man into a deep sleep, took out one of his ribs and made woman, then brought her to the man (Gen. 2:21-22). That is pretty bizarre, but it was intentional to communicate to humankind that we are from one another, and we were made for one another. There is an interconnection and intersection and an interdependence upon one another. From the one, God created two so that the two would be one. This union is beautiful, profound, and glorious, and God calls it “very good.” Together—man and woman, woman and man—we bear the image of God.
- This is what is recorded by the opening pages of the word of God and the God of His word. This is what good biblical doctrine teaches, and this is what we, as Christians, should understand and embrace.

Women and men are both valued by God.

- First, as we have already established, we are valued by God because together we are made in His image.
- Second, we, both men and women, are bought with a price (I Cor. 6:20). Your value is based upon your purchase price. You personally, and you collectively, both women and men, were purchased by the giving of the most valuable and limited element in heaven and earth, the “precious blood of Christ” (I Peter 1:19).

1 Peter 1:18-20 NIV

Know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

- Third, we, both women and men, because of the love and mercy of God, are claimed and called together “children of God” (I John 3:1). We are now

1 Peter 2:9-10 ESV

a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- Women and men are valued by God based on our creation and on our new creation and redemption in Christ. Therefore, as Christians and God’s children, we are to value, honor, and love, and count as precious and of the highest value all human life regardless of gender, age, or ability from womb to tomb; humans have eternal worth and value because the God of eternal worth and value made us so and says it is so. Because we are valuable to Him, we have value. Not based in us but placed on us by the One by whom all things are measured.
- This is why scripture tells us to honor one another, love one another, value one another, (Rom. 12:10-16) being kind to one another, forgiving one another (Eph. 4:32) and submitting to one

another (Eph. 5:21). In humility we are to count others more significant than ourselves (Phil. 2:3). We are to encourage one another and build one another up (I Thess. 5:11). We as Christians are never to devalue what God has called valuable, and never objectify, subjectify, use or abuse, nor neglect or abandon the gift of and glory of God seen in those who are precious to Him—women and men, old and young, black or white or brown, educated or ignorant, prosperous or poor, friends or enemies. We are to love what God loves, honor what God honors, and value what God values.

Women and men are both kingdom workers.

1 Peter 4:10-11 ESV

Each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

- Every one of you who is in Christ, both women and men, have received a gift and are called to use that gift to serve one another as a good steward of God's varied grace. You have been given gifts, and you have the honor to use them. You will also be accountable for their use.
- Every Christian, both male and female, has a significant and vital role to play in the body of Christ. John Piper, along with Wayne Grudem, in their book *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, explains:

“The New Testament makes it plain that Christian women, like men, have been given spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). Women, like men, are to use these gifts to minister to the body of Christ (1 Peter 4:10); their ministries are indispensable to the life and growth of the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). There are many examples in the New Testament of just such ministries on the part of gifted Christian women. To be true to the New Testament, then, the contemporary church needs to honor those varied ministries of women and to encourage women to pursue them (p. 284).

- Both men and women are gifted for ministry and are encouraged and required to use their gifts. Jesus gave gifts to both men and women (Eph. 4:8) and honored as credible the word and witness of women by appearing to them first after the resurrection (Matt. 28:1-10) in a time when the word and witness of women were discredited.
- Rebecca McLaughlin does a helpful and wonderful job in examining the portrayal of women in the Gospels (and by the way, she is not a feminist; she holds to complementarianism, as do I.) She says this:

“The portrayal of women in the Gospels—particularly in Luke's Gospel—is stunningly countercultural. Luke constantly pairs men with women, and when he compares the two, it is almost always in the woman's favor. Before Jesus's birth, two people are visited by the angel Gabriel and told they are going to become parents. One is Zachariah, who becomes John the Baptist's father. The other is Jesus's mother, Mary. Both ask Gabriel how this can be. But while Zachariah is punished with months of dumbness for his unbelief, Mary is only commended. The prominent role of women in Luke continues as Mary and her cousin Elizabeth prophesy over

Jesus in the womb, and as a prophet (Simeon) and a prophetess (Anna) prophesy over the infant Jesus.

“The adult Jesus consistently weaves women into his preaching. In his first sermon, he enrages his audience with two Old Testament examples of God’s love reaching beyond the Jews: one is a woman, the other is a man (Luke 4:25–27). In Luke 15, the female-oriented parable of the lost coin is nestled between the male-oriented parables of the lost sheep and the lost (or prodigal) son. In Luke 18, the female-oriented prayer parable of the persistent widow is paired with the male-oriented prayer parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Even as he approaches crucifixion, Jesus stops to address female mourners (Luke 23:27–31). In a male-dominated culture, his attention to women throughout his preaching is remarkable. This male-and-female thread works its way through Luke’s healing accounts. First, Jesus heals a man with an unclean spirit (Luke 4:33–35). Then he heals Simon’s mother-in-law (Luke 4:38–9). In chapter 7, Jesus heals a centurion’s servant and then raises a widow’s son, out of compassion for the grieving mother. In chapter 8, Jesus heals a man with a demon, then a bleeding woman, and then a synagogue ruler’s daughter. Jesus’s last healing in Luke is of a woman with a disabling spirit. She praises God. When the male synagogue ruler objects, Jesus calls him a hypocrite and reminds him of the woman’s status as a “daughter of Abraham” (Luke 13:16–17).

“Jesus’s elevation of women as moral examples is yet more striking. In Luke 7, he is dining at Simon the Pharisee’s house, when a “sinful woman” (likely a prostitute) disrupts the party. She weeps on Jesus’s feet, wipes them with her hair, and anoints him with ointment. Simon is appalled: surely if Jesus were a prophet, he would know this woman is utterly unworthy of touching him! But Jesus turns the contrast on its head and holds this woman up as an example to shame Simon. In cultural terms, Simon has every advantage. He is a man; she is a woman. He is religiously admired; she is despised. He’s hosting a dinner party; she is a weeping, prostrate embarrassment. But according to Jesus, she surpasses Simon on every count (Luke 7:36–50). Jesus elevates another low-status woman as a moral example in Luke 21, when he commends the poor widow for her gift of two small copper coins. In Jesus’s eyes, this offering exceeds the much larger gifts the rich are putting in the offering box (Luke 21:1–4)” (McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Confronting Christianity* pp. 136–137).

“Jesus’s valuing of women is unmistakable. In a culture in which women were devalued and often exploited, it underscores their equal status before God and his desire for personal relationship with them (McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Confronting Christianity* p. 138).

Conclusion

- The theology and teaching of both the Old and New Testaments values all human life and honors and elevates women in contrast to cultures that dishonor, discount and dismiss them. Let us live lives that rightly reflect the teaching and theology of the Bible. Not overvaluing humans above God or undervaluing God’s “very good” final creation of His image bearers of men and women.
- Some of you who already hold these things dear, be encouraged to continue in this way of thinking and practice. Some of you who do not, please examine what we have talked through today and examine yourself in light of scripture so that all of us together will better reflect the grace and glory of God to each other and the world.