

GENDER EQUALITY AND ROLE DESTINCTIONS
1 Corinthians 11:2-16
1/23/05

God's word is often counter cultural

Isaiah 55:8-9

Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Chuck Swindoll compares our passage this morning to an emotional minefield.

Let us begin to carefully navigate our way through it.

1. Gender Equality

The Bible teaches that God made both men and women of equal worth, value and dignity.

Both are created in the image of God. Gen 1:27

Both are given dominion over the creation. Gen 1:28

Both are fellow heirs of the grace of life. I Pet 3:7

Womanhood is to be honored. v. 7

Both are equal in redemption and relationship with God.
Gal 3:26-29

Children of God by faith in Christ v. 26

United with Christ v. 27

Abraham's offspring and heirs v. 28

Both are joint heirs with Christ. Rom 8:15-17

Both are called to grow in their knowledge and relationship with Christ. cf Lk 10:38-42

Both are members of the holy royal priesthood. I Pet 3:9

Both will judge angels. I Cor 6:2

Both are gifted by God. I Cor 12:4ff

The **question** is, “If men and women are equal, **why** does the Bible teach that we are to maintain gender distinctions and role differences?”

The issue in Corinth was head coverings for women. Should Christian women wear them?

The head covering was a cultural way of recognizing and maintaining gender distinctions.

The head covering was a public symbol of a woman being under her husband’s authority

But if men and women are equal before God and in their relationship with Christ, why follow cultural forms.

2. Gender Distinctions

a. We Should Maintain Gender Distinctions Because God Has Established A Hierarchy of Authority. 11:2-3

Head - refers to a position of leadership or authority

Eph 1:20-22; Col 2:10, 15 cf LXX 2 Sam 22:44 etc

Used of leaders of nations and of Christ’s dominion over all rulers and authorities.

A subordinate role does not mean an inferior personhood.
1 Peter 2 cf I Cor 15:25-28

Government, church, family

We should maintain gender distinctions because this is the way God designed for us to work in harmony.

He created an order of authority.

To violate God’s order leads to tremendous personal and cultural consequences.

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ISA 3:8-12, 16FF

b. We Should Maintain Gender Distinctions Because To Disregard Them Is A Disgrace. 11:4-7 cf Deut 22:5

v. 4 disgrace- dishonor, humiliation, embarrassment, shame; often used of things that are shockingly evil or sinful cf Romans 1:26-27

Why was it disgraceful for a man to pray with his head covered?

Because a head covering was a symbol of womanhood and submission in that culture

A breaking down of gender distinctions

Deuteronomy 22:5 "A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.

It is abhorrent to our Creator!!

It is a rebelling against the way God made us to be.

We will all stand before the JSC awaiting our rewards and His commendation.

“Well done thou good and faithful servant.”

v. 5 Likewise it was disgrace for a woman to come before God without her head covered.

For a woman to break down gender distinctions is to dishonor and show contempt for the husband God has placed in authority over you, and in fact God Himself.

The cultural expression may vary from place to place, but the principle of acknowledging and accepting gender distinctions remains.

Gender distinctive styles of dress and hair

Mrs. vs. Ms

Husband's last name

How we choose to name our children

v. 6 A shaved head was a sign of disgrace

Tacitus- adulterous woman

Aristophanes- unworthy mothers

Women who fraternized with the Nazi's in WW 2

v. 7 glory- refers to honor

Men were made for the glory of God.

Women were also made in the image of God to glorify God,

But they were also created to bring honor and glory to their husbands.

If we refuse to function in the role that God created for us, we dishonor the one who is in authority over us.

c. We Should Maintain Gender Distinctions Because God Has Created Us To Fulfill Different Roles. 11:8-9

The woman was created as a helper for the man. cf Gen 2:18

helper- one who assists, but does not imply inferiority.

God is frequently referred to as our helper.

Role differences were a part of God's original design, not a consequence of the fall.

True significance and meaning come from fulfilling the role for which God created us.

cf Businessman that God wants to use to influence an industry, be a witness to workers, and provide financial resources to God's ministry vs. pastor

d. We Should Maintain Gender Distinctions As A Testimony Of Our Faith And Allegiance To God Before The Angels. 11:10

Angels are watching.

Satan's fall was due to pride and his unwillingness to play a subordinate role.

He rebelled against the purpose and role that God created for him to fill.

When we fail to honor role distinctions we dishonor God before the angels.

We are rebelling against God's created order just as some of them did.

We glorify God by trusting His plan and fulfilling His purpose and design.

3. The Great Equalizer 11:11-12

God Has Made Men And Women Interdependent Upon One Another To Demonstrate Their Equal Importance.

This does away with the idea that one is superior to the other.

Women are an essential, invaluable part of God's plan.

Men and women are equal- possessing different roles, but equal.

God made both dependent upon the other.

4. A Lesson From Nature 11:13-15

Those who would deny gender differences should look at nature.

Appearance (size, color, appendages)

deer, elk, moose- horns

birds- different coloration

lion- mane

Roles

Distinct roles in most animals

Though men and women have equal standing and value before God, there is no question that He made them very differently. cf I Pet 3:7

We can only find true fulfillment and personal contentment when we function the way God designed us to function.

God designed us so that men and women could use their differences to work together to compliment one another's strengths and cover for one another's weaknesses. cf Gen 2:18

To complete one another rather than to compete with one another.

God's plan is one of beauty, satisfaction, and fulfillment.

It is not only right, it is good.

We can only find personal peace and fulfillment in life by being what God created us to be and doing what God created us to do.

5. The Churches' Policy 11:16; cf 14:34-35; I Tim 2:9-15; Titus 2:5

Why Should We Maintain Gender Distinctions And Role Differences?

Because this is the way God designed for us to work in harmony.

Because violating God's order leads to tremendous personal and cultural consequences.

Because we want to hear Jesus say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant," when we stand before Him awaiting our eternal rewards.

Because true significance and meaning only come from fulfilling the role for which God created us.

Because we love God and want to honor Him before the angels.

Because we can only find true fulfillment and personal contentment when we function the way God designed us to function.

Because this is the way God instructs for us to function in this life.

Because God knows best and wants what is best for our lives.

Jer 29:11 I know the plans that I have for you declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you future and a hope.

Rom 5:8

6. Some Practical Application

- a. Honor God by being the man or woman He made you to be.

Men- be responsible, loving, servant, leaders.

Reggie White, former defensive end for the Green Bay Packers, “Being like Jesus is not being a wimp. Loving your wife and children is not being a chump. That’s real manhood.”

Wives- be godly, responsive, submissive, helper-mates.

1 Peter 2-3

- b. Matters of fashion and style are personal, but your style should support your sexual identity, not obscure it.

There is room for self-expression.

Don’t buy into today’s androgynous (unisex) thinking.

Clean, modest and in keeping with your gender.

- c. We should be willing to adapt our styles and lifestyles in order to bring honor and glory to God.

Are you willing to live for the glory of God?