

Sunday Morning, September 24, 2017

Growing in Grace, Growing in Community  
Life Lessons on Maturity with the Corinthians

***Man, Woman, and Worship***

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

God created mankind in His image, male and female. That is an oft repeated, clear statement of Scripture, and the principles which come from that, such as marriage, family, and healthy sexual identity have found an echo in all cultures in all times and places. Until now. What used to be a simple mark on a census form or credit application (Male or Female) is being questioned, and even this basic, common sense, universally applied category of the two sexes is under attack by those who would pervert creation order and confuse society and its children. But the danger is far greater, for the loving creation hierarchy which God ordained and we unapologetically uphold, is but a shadow of the hierarchy of the Trinity, and specifically the relationship between the Father and the Son. We know this because of how Paul reins in those Corinthians who had taken the idea of “freedom in Christ” to absurd and harmful conclusions.

❖ “All life is ordered in a hierarchy of authority which extends from the Godhead to home and church, from creation to the present.” vv. 2, 3

(Both our sexual identity and its implications are rooted in Creation Order, not arbitrary social or cultural constructs.)

❖ “Christians must not set aside either the God-ordained male/female distinctions or their proper cultural expressions.” vv. 4-15

Cultural sex distinctions should be maintained in public worship... (vv. 4-6)

because of the purpose and order of creation. . . (vv. 7-12)  
and because of what “nature” teaches us. (vv. 13-15)

❖ “The apostolic principles delivered to the early churches about that order are binding, and the final court of appeal.” v. 16

**Growth Principle #13 The spiritually mature Christian respects and follows God ordained differences between the sexes, including their implications and symbols in worship.**

***1. The distinction of male and female is rooted in Creation, and is to be preserved and observed in virtually every aspect of life.***

Paul argues that while hierarchies are in place, both men and women are equal in value and interdependent in Christ. He affirms the rightful participation of women in church life without unraveling the God-ordained social fabric of the home or assembly. Are your views on male, female, and sexual identity based upon our culture or God’s Word? 1 Corinthians 11:6

***2. Our personhood (self-image) is established in our place in God’s plan, and not an imaginary independence.***

The Bible never teaches that our value as persons rests in our position in life. Just as Jesus is not less than God because He is subject to the Father, we are not lesser persons or less valuable because we are subject to parents, husband, law enforcement officials, or elders. Beware of the spirit of our age which claims that our personhood depends upon our rebellion against norms. 1 Cor. 15:28; James 1:9, 10.

***3. Nature is supposed to teach us, that is, have its own message.***

Paul appeals to what we all “know,” and that which is universal in culture. Before our own culture began worshiping at the altar of the politically correct, we were much better at this. Physical and emotional differences between men and women are now such off limits issues that admonitions to “be a man,” or “act like a lady” are not only meaningless, but mean spirited. Both wisdom and folly are justified by their children. Romans 1:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 11:14. What do Proverbs 6:6 and 1 Samuel 4:9 say from nature?

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***Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:***

1. What kinds of things might Paul have in mind when he implies that nature teaches us about gender differences? How do we correlate these ideas with their cultural expressions? How do various cultures publicly reflect and demonstrate the differences between the sexes?

2. Because our culture has issues with any kind of authority, many recoil at the idea of “hierarchy” as an archaic and demeaning relic. How does the doctrine of the Trinity help us sort out the differences between our value as persons and our various places in home, church, and culture?