



## Lesson 5 – God’s Blueprint

### The Creational Pattern for Men, Women, and Family

**Note to teachers:** Some aspects of this lesson may be difficult for members in your group. Some may wish to be married and yet be single, and some married couples may wish to have children but not be able. Someone may have a divorce in their past, while others may have seen male leadership abused and struggle with accepting the goodness of God’s plan. None of this means that we should back away from God’s truth, and so we don’t. But we should always strive to be aware of where people are and give them the truth of God with the love of God. If you foresee that an aspect of this lesson might be difficult for someone at your table, pray and ask God for wisdom and grace to teach carefully, truthfully, and compassionately.

Imagine a new home is about to be built. A blueprint is carefully drawn up. Sewage, water, electric, foundation, all of the details are considered and a complex set of diagrams emerges. The foreman in charge of building the house shows up, takes one look at the blueprint, laughs, and says, “I think we know how to build a house, boys!” The crew then proceeds to build the house without ever consulting the plans. Pipes go wherever the individual crew member thinks will work. The shape of the house doesn’t match what the customer ordered, but rather the layout is whatever the construction crew thinks will work best. No one is paying attention to the support structures to make sure the weight is evenly distributed. Everyone does whatever seems right to them. Such a worksite would quickly turn into a disaster. If you try to build a building but begin by throwing out the blueprint, you’re going to have quite the headache on your hands.

Genesis 1-2 is God’s blueprint for how men and women are supposed to relate to each other. When asked about marriage, Jesus went back to Genesis 1-2. When discussing both marriage and how men and women should relate in the home and in the church, Paul went back to Genesis 1-2. If we want to have successful marriages, churches, and families, we need to get back to God’s blueprint, we need Genesis 1-2. Sadly, the culture in which we live has ignored God’s pattern to the point where they are angered by God’s pattern.

***Why does the world reject God’s pattern?***

***Why does the world eventually become angry at the pattern it has rejected?***

In this lesson, we will look at God's blueprint for marriage and at gender roles.<sup>1</sup> We will see how the New Testament addresses these issues, but we will notice how it specifically goes back to the Old Testament, and we will use that example as we try to answer similar yet different issues today.

## God's Pattern for Marriage

In Matthew 19:1-9, Jesus was asked a question about marriage and gave a somewhat surprising answer. The Pharisees were having an internal dispute over divorce, questioning whether the Old Testament allows for divorce under basically any circumstance or whether it gives strict controls.<sup>2</sup> They asked Jesus His understanding, and rather than give an answer from the Mosaic law, which is what they were likely expecting, He backs up and goes to Genesis. Not only this, but He asks them the biting question, "Have ye not read?" Jesus implies they should have known from Genesis what the answer was before He told them. They shouldn't have known to check the blueprint.

### Marriage is Between Males and Females

Jesus begins His citation with the statement that at the beginning God made them "male and female." Interestingly, this isn't part of the Genesis 2 instruction on marriage. Instead comes from earlier in Genesis (1:27). Jesus intentionally combined the instructions on marriage with an earlier passage on God creating both men and women because He wanted to give the big picture of God's plan for marriage, and apparently for Jesus it was important to note that marriage requires a man and a woman. Often the LGBT movement will argue that Jesus never mentioned homosexuality. While it's true that Jesus never directly mentioned homosexuality, His statement here clearly addresses that question.

***Why do you think Jesus didn't mention homosexuality more directly?***

***What is the danger in arguing that Jesus not mentioning something means He is okay with it?***

### Marriage is a Lifelong Commitment

The main point of Jesus's discussion is that divorce is not permissible, except perhaps under certain conditions. The exact nature of this exemption has been hotly debated,<sup>3</sup> but we can understand this much

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<sup>1</sup> The LGBT movement has made a big distinction between sex and gender, where sex is biological and gender is psychological. For our purposes these terms will be used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> Specifically, this debate is likely over the phrase in Deuteronomy 24:1 which gives as a ground of divorce "some uncleanness in her." The Hebrew could be translated more literally as "indecent of a thing." The Pharisaic school of Shammai wanted to emphasize the word "indecent" and allow for divorce only on the ground of sexual immorality. The school of Hillel wanted to emphasize the word "thing" and basically allow for divorce if for any reason, essentially the ancient equivalent of a "no-fault" divorce. This explains why the Pharisees ask if a man can get a divorce "for every [any] cause" (Matthew 19:3).

<sup>3</sup> There is a great deal of debate about what exception Jesus has in mind, an exception which strangely does not appear in Mark 10:11-12 or Luke 16:18. It is interesting that Jesus uses the word "fornication" [i.e. sexual

clearly whatever position we take: Jesus's position is radical to the Pharisees and to the disciples (cf Matthew 19:10ff). In a culture that was already trending toward a more lenient view of divorce, Jesus states the idea that someone would get married and end that marriage is deeply broken. Jesus shocked everyone, including His own followers, by reminding everyone that divorce was never God's intention and should be avoided at all costs.

***Why does our culture push back against the permanency of marriage?***

***What is lost when marriage is treated cheaply, and immorality and divorce are rampant?***

### **Marriage Provides for Raising Children**

God's plan from the beginning was for man to "fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Part of the dominion mandate is for mankind to have families. In Scripture, children are seen as a great blessing (Psalm 127:3-5) and stretching all the way back to Genesis and Exodus we see Satan attack the family (Genesis 4; Exodus 1). Generally speaking, God wants married couples to have children. Not only does God desire for Christians to have children, He wants parents to then disciple those children to love, serve, and obey Him (Deuteronomy 6:20-25; Ephesians 6:4).

Now, some believers never marry, and Christ allows for this (Matthew 19:11-12) while Paul even celebrates it (1 Corinthians 7). Some believers are unable to have children because of the brokenness of the fall, and those believers can still live God-glorifying lives and have God-glorifying marriages. But the general creation pattern is for believers to marry and have children, and today we find ourselves in a culture that has rejected this command, so that a normal family is borderline counter-cultural.

***What are other ways that the culture rejects God's pattern for family?***

***Why does the culture we live in not value having children?***

***How can believers slip into the thinking of the world in this regard?***

### **God's Pattern for Men and Women**

When God made men and women, He made them uniquely distinct from one another. Men are not women and women are not men, and this is a very good thing. We live in a culture, however, where the differences between men and women are being erased. Believe it or not, we aren't the first culture where this happens. Even during the era of the New Testament church, Paul had to deal with Christians pushing at the boundaries of what God designed. Like Jesus, when Paul wanted to explain how men and women should relate, he went back to the account of creation in Genesis 1-2.

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immorality] rather than the narrower "adultery." The major views on this exception are 1) adultery, understanding fornication as simply a broader term for the same sin 2) an illegitimate marriage (cf 1 Cor 5), such as Herod had and for which John the Baptist's criticisms cost him his head 3) a violation during the betrothal period leading to a "divorce" ("divorce" is the term used for what Joseph was considering in Matthew 1:19)

## Was Paul Sexist?

Many people today have two visions of Paul. First, there was Paul the sexist. Many who doubt the truthfulness of God's Word will argue that Paul thought, said, and did sexist things, and some Christians will go along with them to an extent. After all, Paul thought women should keep quiet in churches (1 Corinthians 14:34-35), needed to continue wearing headcoverings (1 Corinthians 11:2-16), shouldn't teach men (1 Timothy 2:11-14), and he thought they would be saved if they had children and their children grew up loving God (1 Timothy 2:15). It wasn't his fault, many will say. After all, that was part of Paul's culture: he was so immersed in the patriarchy he didn't even realize he was immersed in it. Asking Paul if he was sexist would be like asking a fish if they were in water – he knew nothing else.

That was Paul the sexist, but there was also Paul the great liberator of women. This Paul had numerous women who partnered with him in ministry (Romans 16). He taught that there is now no more male and female, for all have been made one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). This Paul spoke of the dignity and decency of all and even allowed women to pray and prophesy in the assembly (1 Corinthians 11). Such a Paul was very progressive by the standards of his day and if he were alive now would certainly have no problem with women preaching or pastoring.

### ***How do we account for these two seemingly different views of Paul?***

Some will work hard to try and say that the passages in which we think Paul is limiting women have been misunderstood, but as we will see in coming weeks those arguments aren't very convincing. Others will say we've moved past some of Paul's bad ideas, just as Paul didn't seem to have a problem with slavery and yet today we see slavery as a great moral evil. Paul got a lot of things right, they argue, but in some areas he was unduly influenced by his culture.

### ***What is wrong with saying that Paul was simply thinking like the culture around him?***

The problem is Paul's arguments are not ultimately based in culture. ***Paul is making theological arguments on the difference between men and women.*** He isn't just going with the flow of his culture: "Hey guys, no one else thinks women should lead, so let's not be the first to rock that boat." Rather, he is doubling down and arguing from the creational pattern that God has designed it so that men lead and women help. In the weeks to follow, we will dive into this topic more fully, but for now let's notice three big overarching ideas.

## Men and Women Complement<sup>4</sup> Each Other

Men and women were made different, but this difference is not arbitrary. As Genesis teaches, woman was made to be "a help meet" for Adam (Genesis 2:18). This phrase is a compound of two very important words. The first is the "helper," a word that refers to one who provides absolutely necessary aid, often in times of military encounters and desperate situations. In fact, this is normally a word that refers to the fact that God is our help (Exodus 18:4; Psalm 70:5). The word "help" might be demeaning if we don't understand what this passage is saying. When we say women are a help, it's not a take it or leave it kind of help, it's a necessary help! The other word that is used is "meet," a word which means "opposite from"

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<sup>4</sup> It's important to note this word is comple<sup>m</sup>ent, not compli<sup>m</sup>ent. To compliment someone (with an "i") means to say nice things about them. To complement someone (with an "e"), means to complete something or perfect it.

or “complementary with.” In other words, woman provided the help she provides because she is different. God created Adam and gave Him a job, yet there as a deficiency. Not because God had made a mistake, there was a deficiency by design. It was “not good” that Adam was alone. He needed help. The first man needed the first woman, and today men and women still need each other by God’s design.

***In what ways do the differences between men and women help each other out?***

***What would the world look like if there were no women? No men?***

### **Men Are Tasked with Leading**

When it comes to men and women, Paul reads Genesis and comes away with the conclusion that men are the ones who have been tasked with leading, especially in the home and in the church. In 1 Timothy 2:12-14, in giving instructions on how the church should operate, Paul instructs that the women are not to be in positions of authority over the men. In Ephesians 5:22-24 the wives are instructed to submit to their husbands. Both of these factors mean that in the church and in the home, men are expected to lead. One group of Christian theologians got together and attempted to summarize what the New Testament teaches about the roles of men and women. For men they came up with the follow definition:

*“At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man’s differing relationships.”<sup>5</sup>*

***What about this definition stands out to you?***

***What potential pitfalls do you think a definition like this is attempting to avoid?***

### **Women Are Tasked with Helping**

As we have seen earlier, women are called upon in Scripture to have a helping and assisting role. Women support, encourage, and work to enable the dominion mandate to go forward. This is far from just sitting on the sidelines and being a cheerleader. Throughout Scripture we see examples of strong women who work hard and accomplish incredible things, and the picture in Scripture of the ideal woman (Proverbs 31) has a lot of hard work, industry, and even business involved! The same group of theologians mentioned earlier also came up with a definition for the biblical role of women:

*“At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman’s differing relationships.”<sup>6</sup>*

***What about this definition stands out to you?***

***What potential pitfalls do you think a definition like this is attempting to avoid?***

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<sup>5</sup> *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, 35.

<sup>6</sup> *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, 36.

But how does all of this work? What does it look like fleshed out in everyday life? How should men and women at Colonial think about each other, and how do we present this teaching to a world hostile to it? Hasn't this teaching been abused before? In the following weeks we will dive deeper on many of these questions, but right now we want to make the general point that 1) God created marriage and gets to define it and 2) God created men and women different, and He gets to define them. Once we accept that He has the right as our Creator to give us the blueprint, and understand the basics of how that works, we have a strong foundation to begin exploring more deeply what that blueprint teaches us.