

JOCELYNE'S RESOURCE-OF-THE-MONTH: July 2017

*My Commentary on: "3 Strategies for a Marriage that Sings!" [Podcast #005, by Dr. Taylor Marshall]
Audio File → <http://taylormarshall.com/2013/09/3-strategies-for-a-marriage-that-sings-podcast.html>*

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*My Commentary on: "Male and Female He Created Them: Complementarity as Mission." [Talk by Dr. Deborah Savage]
YouTube Link → <https://youtu.be/LJ'BgR6krKaY>*

True Feminism, Part 3: Male and Female He Created Them

In part one of this series on feminism, I spoke of the God-given gift of womanhood. In part two, I emphasized that abortion, contraception and promiscuous sex erode the dignity of the human person, and especially harm women. I will now try to look at the relationship between men and women according to God's design. This is a huge undertaking. I will not be able to do this topic justice in a short commentary and I am certainly not an authority on this topic, but I will do my best to share with you the basics of what I have learned.

To this end, let us turn to the first creation account found in the book of Genesis. The creation accounts need not be understood literally, as they are narratives, but they are nevertheless Divinely inspired and provide much insight into God's design for humanity.

"And he said: Let us make man to our image and likeness: and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth. God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him: male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26-27)."

These verses highlight the fact that woman was not created as an afterthought. God created man; man is male and female. When the Bible refers to 'man,' therefore, it refers to both man and woman. Both were made in God's image and likeness. They are equals before God. The following excerpt from the Catechism echoes this truth:

"Man and woman have been created, which is to say, willed by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. 'Being man' or 'being woman' is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator. Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity "in the image of God". In their 'being-man' and 'being-woman', they reflect the Creator's wisdom and goodness (CCC, Paragraph 369)."

Now, let us look further into the book of Genesis at the second creation account for more insight.

"And Adam called all the beasts by their names, and all the fowls of the air, and all the cattle of the field: but for Adam there was not found a helper like himself. Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam: and when he was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it. And the Lord God built the rib, which he took from Adam into a woman: and brought her to Adam. And Adam said: This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh (Genesis 2:20-22)."

Again, to say that for Adam, "there was not found a helper like himself," does not mean that God created woman as an afterthought. This verse is simply meant to highlight the fact that men and women were created to support each other. Nor does it mean that woman is the "second sex" and therefore inferior to the man. Dr. Deborah Savage notes that God's creatures were created in a hierarchy that is on the way up, from lower to higher life forms. The man was created after all the other creatures. The woman was created last and "on the way up," Dr. Savage explains. Adam was not meant to be alone. We are social beings, designed to be in communion with others. The fact that Adam exclaims that the woman is "bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh" is also noteworthy. Adam is acknowledging her equality. Notice also that the woman is fashioned from

Adam's rib. This is a powerful illustration of the complementarity of men and women. Adam is now missing a "rib," and this becomes the woman.

I find this quote from the Catechism of the Catholic Church helpful here:

"In no way is God in man's image. He is neither man nor woman. God is pure spirit in which there is no place for the difference between the sexes. But the respective "perfections" of man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God: those of a mother and those of a father and husband (CCC, Paragraph 370)."

The woman, therefore, provides for what Adam is missing, an equal companion and complimentary helper. TOGETHER, with their uniquely male and female bodies and sacred gifts, they represent FULLY the image and likeness of God. This is God's plan for Christian marriage. Man and woman, equal in dignity before God, are complimentary helpmates, "two in one flesh." This does not mean that in marriage man and wife lose their identity. Man and woman remain two whole, individual persons. Their differences are recognized AND they are complimentary. This also does not mean that those who remain unmarried are somehow unfulfilled; what I'm saying is that the union of man and woman, complimentary in their bodies and in their God-given gifts and talents, reveal something to us in terms of the nature of God in His fullness. This complementarity is echoed in other male and female relationships as well. Take for example, Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross, who were dear friends. What they teach us in regards to prayer is complimentary. This is only one example of this complementarity outside of the sacrament of marriage.

Regrettably God's complimentary design for men and women, as we see later on in the book of Genesis, is perverted by original sin, when Adam and Eve disobey God.

"And the Lord God said to the serpent: Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed among all cattle, and beasts of the earth: upon thy breast shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel. To the woman also he said: I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee. And to Adam he said: Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work; with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return (Genesis 3:14-19)."

"The punishment is appropriate to the specific functions of each: the woman suffers as mother and wife, the man as breadwinner... Sin upsets the order willed by God: woman instead of being man's associate and equal, becomes his seductress, while he for his part reduces her to the role of child-bearer. Man instead of being God's gardener in Eden has to struggle against a now hostile environment. But the greatest punishment is the loss of intimacy with God (The Jerusalem Bible footnote, 21)."

It is important to note that the greatest punishment, "the loss of intimacy with God" is a shared punishment, whereas the other punishments speak to God's design in terms of the differences between the sexes. While sin has corrupted God's creative order and harmony, the respective functions of man and woman remain complimentary. In essence, God's plan for man and woman has not changed, it is the way man and woman relate to one another that is spoiled. Nevertheless, it is God's will that all men and women work together, using their unique, God-given talents and gifts, toward the common goal of attaining Christian perfection; ultimately this means that we are to help each other achieve salvation, to get to heaven. Husband and wife are also meant to model this Divine design to the children of God entrusted to their care, the fruits of their union.

In the Biblical account of the fall of Adam and his wife, Eve, God explains to the woman, "thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee." Wait a minute, I thought men and women were equal in dignity before God? The creation account confirms this. So what does this passage mean? The New Testament confirms this idea as well that wives are to "submit" to their husbands. Let's look at the following commonly despised and highly misunderstood passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

"Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord: Because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. He is the saviour of his body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and delivered himself up for it: That he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life: That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. So also ought men to love their wives as their own

bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the church: Because we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the church. (Ephesians 5:22-32).”

In the podcast episode that I’ve highlighted for this month titled, “3 Strategies for a Marriage that Sings,” Dr. Taylor Marshall focuses on this passage of scripture.

Now at first, when Dr. Marshall brought up this passage, I rolled my eyes and thought to myself, “Here we go...” However, Dr. Marshall was able to present this passage to me in a new light, one that I hadn’t considered. He stipulated that as Christ sacrificed Himself for us (and died), husbands are called to do the same for their wives. Dr. Marshall then asked, wouldn’t it be easy to submit to a husband who is constantly sacrificing himself for his wife and for the good of his family? Of course it would! For man and woman, this is a MUTUAL self-sacrifice. The problem is that our society does not value self-sacrifice, but the pursuit of pleasure, the pursuit of self-gratification and personal happiness! How difficult to live this Gospel, but how wonderful would the world be if we all did! Women and men would be happier!

Dr. Marshall also explained that our families should be modelled on the Holy Family: Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Looking at the marriage of Mary and Joseph, he invited the listener to ponder who is more pure, holy and wise of the two. The answer is obviously Mary, the one chosen to be the mother of God! Yet Mary was subject to Joseph! Likewise, Jesus was the most pure, holy and wise of the family, yet He was subject to His parents! Isn’t that interesting! Dr. Marshall elaborates on these ideas, explaining them better than I have and he also speaks to the meaning and etymology of the word “submission.” Trust me, this half-hour podcast is worth the listen. If nothing else, it will leave you with some extremely thought-provoking insights.

Please also check out Dr. Deborah Savage’s talk titled, “Male and Female He Created Them: Complementarity as Mission.” Dr. Savage does an excellent job at explaining the creation accounts in terms of what they tell us about the complementarity of men and women. My commentary is obviously heavily influenced by this talk. It is also well worth a listen!

In sum, men and women are DIFFERENT and COMPLIMENTARY; they are also EQUAL. I’d like to finish by commenting on equality, a term that is commonly used among feminists and largely mismanaged. Yes, we need to fight for equality! However, equality does not always mean sameness. I will try to explain this using an analogy. Imagine that you are the parent of two children. For the purposes of this argument, we will take biological sex out of the equation. One child loves sports; the other prefers to sing and make music. You want to ensure that as their parent, you are treating them fairly, equally. Does this mean that you sign them both up for the EXACT SAME activities? If you signed them both up for music lessons, would this be fair to the child who doesn’t care for music and has other talents? Would this be equality because they are both being given the SAME opportunity to try music? Or would it be better and fairer to encourage the development of each child’s unique talents and enjoyments in an equal manner?

Men and women are different. We have different brains, different reproductive organs, our skeletons are different, and we view and relate to the world differently. This is all scientifically proven. Pretending that these differences do not exist is not equality. The differences between women and men should be embraced and celebrated. Again, men and women are complimentary. We are meant to work together according to God’s design, a design meant to promote true human flourishing and happiness. Science has also proven that when men and women live according to God’s design, they are happier than those who don’t. This is the truth.

What are these God-given male and female qualities and gifts? What does this mean when we consider the roles of men and women in our world and in the church? I will try to tackle these topics next in my ongoing commentary on what I call “True Feminism.” Until then...

Your sister in Christ,

Jocelyne

Work Cited:

The New Jerusalem Bible. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1990. Print.