

Wednesdays at West Side West Side Church

Culture:

Its Creation, Fall and Redemption

A Case Study on Gender

Wayne A. Pelly

West Side Church
Empower International Ministries

Culture: Its Creation, Fall & Redemption

My Background

- Interest in New Testament culture – particularly
 - Application to today's evangelical church
 - How gender issues are addressed there
- Minister with Empower International Ministries – Seminars on Gender Issues in traditional cultures
- Eight mission trips since 2011
 - Seven to Africa & one to Haiti
- Will provide insights for our study together

A Case Study on Gender

The Class Schedule:

- # 1 – Creation (Genesis 1-2)
- # 2 – The Fall (Genesis 3)
- # 3 – The Gospels
- # 4 & 5 – The Acts & Epistles

Relationships as God intended

Creation

Man and Woman in the Beginning

- Creation of Humanity in God's image
- Matthew 19:3-8
- Genesis 1:26-29
- Genesis 2:7-24
- God's creation ideal / intent

Matthew 19:3-8

Some Pharisees came to [Jesus], and to test him they asked “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female’, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. . .

Matthew 19:3-8 (Cont'd)

... Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” They said to him, “Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?” He said to them, “It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.”

Start with Jesus!

- It is Jesus Himself who directs us to the creation account
 - Matthew 19:3-8 “. . . from the beginning”
 - Jesus’ diagnosis: “hard hearts”
- God’s ideal/intent – “one flesh”
 - The Law (and culture) contradicted God’s ideal
 - God’s ideal is found in creation – not in culture

Men and Women at the Beginning

- Creation of Humanity – Male and Female
- Presented in Terms of Marriage
- Provides an Important Starting Point for Understanding Culture & Gender in a broader way:
 - Creation: God's creation ideal/intent
 - The Fall: The consequences of sin
 - Culture: Reflects some of each

Genesis 1:26-29

- Vs. 26 – Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping things that creeps upon the earth.”
- Vs. 27 – So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:26-29

- Vs. 28 – God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”
- Vs. 29 – God said, “See, I have given you [the form of “you” is plural] every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you [plural] shall have them for food.”

Genesis 1:26-29 - Implications

- Creation of humanity as male and female
- Raises important questions regarding male and female:
 - *Who* is created in God's image?
 - *Who is* given mandate for dominion over the earth?
 - *Who* is given mandate for filling the earth (children)?
 - *Who is* given every form of food?

Some Implications for Africans

- Children are a blessing – not a commandment (challenges polygamy or sending a barren wife away)
- Children and property belong to women together with men
- Challenges the “split mandate:” men’s avoidance of responsibility for children & marginalization of women in society
- No food taboos: “My wife eats what I eat, when I eat it!”

Where did these cultural values come from?

Genesis 2:7, 18-24

The Ideal Relationship

- Creation of the first man and the first woman
- The “first couple”
- Important male-female relational implications for marriage, church and society (i.e., culture)

Genesis 2:7, 18-24

- Vs. 7 – Then the Lord God formed the man (ha Adam) from the dust of the ground (ha adamah), and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.
- Vss. 8-17 (Description of the garden and the command restricting the tree of knowledge of good and evil.)
- Vs. 18 – Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.”

Genesis 2:7, 18-24 (Cont'd)

- Vs. 19 – So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.
- Vs. 20 – The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.
- Vs. 21 – So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

Genesis 2:7, 18-24 (Cont'd)

- Vs. 22 – And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.
- Vs. 23 – Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, for out of Man she was taken.”
- Vs. 24 – Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Genesis 2: Summary

- God: “It is not good that the man should be alone”
- God creates a “helper as his partner” - Relationship
- “Therefore, a man leaves his father & mother, and clings to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”
 - Quoted by both Jesus & Paul:
 - Mt. 19 & Mk. 10; 1 Cor. 6, Eph. 5
- So – what does this all mean?

Genesis 2: The Matter of Authority

- Some claim that Genesis 2 teaches man's authority over woman
 - Marriage & Church; some -> Society
 - Common throughout cultures
- Gen. 1: "Let them have dominion . . ."
- Gen. 2: Authority is inferred from three standpoints:
 - "Helper" as a subordinate role
 - Adam names the woman
 - Adam was created first
- We need to "cross-examine" this claim

Genesis 2: Authority/“Helper”

Genesis 2:7, 18

Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper (Hebrew ‘ezer) as his partner (Hebrew kenegdo).”

Genesis 2: Authority/“Helper”

- Hebrew *‘ezer*
- We usually think of a subordinate
- Hebrew Bible uses this term for God
 - A superior!
- A king or army who comes to the aid of another king in battle - military image
- Never used for a position or role of an inferior or subordinate.
- The man is in a position of need

Genesis 2: Authority/“Helper”

- Hebrew *'ezer* – “Helper” Used for God
- 1 Samuel 7:12 – “Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer (*'ezer* [this one should be obvious]), saying, “Thus far has the LORD helped (*'ezer*) us.”
- Psalm 30:10 - “Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me; O LORD, be my helper (*'ezer*).”
- Psalm 46:1 – “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help (*'ezer*) in trouble.”
- Psalm 54:4 – “Behold, God is my helper (*'ezer*); the Lord is the upholder of my life.”

Genesis 2: Authority/“Helper”

- Hebrew *'ezer* – “Helper” Used in military contexts
- Joshua 1:14 (To the Israelites that settled east of the Jordan) – Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers. You are to help (*'ezer*) your brothers.
- 2 Samuel 8:5 - When the Arameans of Damascus came to help (*'ezer*) Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down twenty-two thousand of them.
- Also – used for a man’s name (e.g., Ezra)

Genesis 2: Authority/“Helper”

- Another term for woman– *Kenegdo*
 - Modifies ‘ezer
 - “Suitable” or “like” = a partner
- ‘Ezer Kenegdo: A “strong partner”
 - Not like the animals
- Some translations: “Help meet”
 - NOT “Help mate” (popular but incorrect)
- Literally: “Facing”
 - To meet face to face
 - Often the very opposite of traditional cultures

Genesis 2: Authority/“Helper”

- A caution against ***anachronism***
 - “A chronological misplacing of persons, events, objects, or customs in regard to each other”
(M-W)
- African men: What gain with brideprice?
 - Children, sex & food; a “work donkey”
 - They see this when reading Genesis 2
 - “Helper” equals “Worker”
 - Reinforces – rather than challenges – the culture that marginalizes women
- “How can I help you?” – Two senses
- Repeat: No indication of authority

Genesis 2: Authority/Naming

- Adam “names” the woman (Gen. 2:23):
 - “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’ (‘ishah’), for she was taken out of man” (‘ish’).”
- What is wrong with this claim?
 - Not a name! “Woman” is only a feminine form of “man”
 - They share a name – even as they share humanity! Emphasis on similarity
- No indication of authority

Genesis 2: Authority/Naming

- What's in a name? Or, "naming"?
 - Genesis 3:20 – "Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all living"
 - Genesis 16:13 – Hagar names God "El-roi," "the God who sees" (based on her experience with God)
 - Ruth 4: 17 – The women of Bethlehem name the son of Boaz & Ruth, "Obed" ("worshipper" [of God])
- "Naming" as an expression of insight or wisdom - not of authority

Genesis 2: Authority/Creation Order

- Why was the woman created?
 - God's own statement in 2:18
- “Not good for the man to be alone”
- The man needs a strong partner – an ‘ezer kenegdo
- An indication of the man's need – not of his authority

Genesis 2: Authority/Creation Order

- **Closest analogy: Birth Order**
 - Cain & Abel: Sacrifice accepted
 - Ishmael and Isaac: The child of promise
 - Esau and Jacob: Father of nation of Israel
 - Reuben and Judah: The tribe of the ruler – from David to the Messiah
 - Manasseh and Ephraim: The greater of the sons of Joseph – a leader of the 10 northern tribes
- **A questionable basis for authority**
 - Aaron and Moses: The Lawgiver

Genesis 2: Authority/Creation Order

- A caution against ***circular reasoning***
 - “An argument that assumes what it is attempting to prove”
- Implications for understanding 1 Tim. 2:12f
 - The reference to the creation order by Paul
 - The traditional interpretation assumes that Genesis 2 supports that use of this reference
- Peter (& the rest of the 12) and Paul, the “least of the apostles” & the last to whom Christ appeared (1 Cor. 15)
- A questionable basis for authority

Genesis 2: Authority/Summary

- Genesis 2 as a basis for male authority over females:
 - Woman as a “helper” for the man
 - Adam naming the woman
 - Creation Order
- None of these stand up to scrutiny as a basis for male authority.
- We cannot appeal to creation for a basis for male authority over women
- God’s creation ideal vs. effect of the Fall

Genesis 1 & 2 – Conclusion

- Genesis provides its own conclusion:
The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Adam and his wife were both naked, and *they felt no shame.*

Next: Genesis 3 – The Fall

- The Fall: What happened?
- What is the impact on:
 - Men & women
 - Their relationship
 - Culture itself
- The key: The curse on the ground
 - “It will produce thorns and thistles . . .”
- From the *abundance* of Eden to the *scarcity* of the fallen world
 - How does that affect culture?
 - To be continued . . .