

Kansas Ladies Retreat

July 31–August 1, 2020



Psalm 19: 7–11

*“The law of The Lord is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether,
They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.”*

This passage reminds us of the value of God’s Word in our life.
It is something that is available to all and yet few choose it.

The Word of God gives greater wisdom than a PhD, yet few study it.
The Word of God offers the greatest joy in life, yet few experience it.
The Word of God lights a path for our life, yet few follow it.
The Word of God is true and right, yet few believe it.
The Word of God has greater value than gold, yet few seek it.
The Word of God is sweeter than honey, yet few taste it.
The Word of God gives needed warning, yet few heed it.

In keeping the Word of God there is great reward, yet few will receive it.

STUDYING SCRIPTURE

1. **Content**—What does it say? What does it not say? Don't read in, read out.
2. **Context**—What is the context of the paragraph, the chapter, the book and the Bible? If you separate the text from the context you come up with a pretext.
3. **Culture**—Who is the book written to and why? Some passages of Scripture are very general, addressing spiritual issues that we all need to know and heed. Some passages are addressing a very specific issue that existed in the time and culture they were written. That specific issue may not be present in our time and culture. In such cases, we take the principle from that passage and apply it to where we are today.
4. **Comparison**—Look at other verses on the same subject to add to your understanding. When you put verses on a certain subject together you have a topic or category of Bible doctrine. This is helpful in getting a full and true understanding of a certain subject.
5. **Conclusion**—Take these things into consideration to come to a biblically sound conclusion.

By far, the best way to study Scripture is verse by verse through a book. Within that approach, categories of doctrines can also be studied. This weekend, we will study the category of "submission" by using the above five C's. We will broaden our understanding of submission and come to a doctrinal, scriptural conclusion about submission; it is a beautiful thing that blesses our lives.

LESSON ONE

The Beauty of Christ's Submission

Jesus is our forerunner in the faith (Heb. 12:2) and we are to model our lives after Him (1 Cor. 11:1). He came to this world as God in the flesh and He came in total and perfect submission to His heavenly Father. To broaden our understanding of submission, we must look to the example of Jesus.

1. Hebrews 10: 1–14

- **Verses 1–4:** The writer is showing us that the law/Old Covenant with its offerings and sacrifices was insufficient to pay the price for sin. They were only a picture of what was to come in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.
- **Verses 5–7:** quote words spoken from Jesus Christ to the Father as He was coming into this world in the form of a man. Jesus declares the purpose for which God sent Him, and His total surrender and submission to that purpose; *“Behold, I have come to do Thy will, O God.”*
- **Verses 8–14:** declare the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross as He paid the price of **all** sin for **all** people.
- The result of His submission and sacrifice was His eternal glory, His position of **exaltation** at the Right Hand of God, and our eternal salvation.
- Our very salvation is a result of the submission of God the Son to the Father’s will! Maybe submission isn’t such a bad word after all!

2. Luke 2:47–52 *“He continued in subjection to them (v. 51).”*

3. John 4:34 *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.”*

4. Matthew 26:36-64

- **Verse 36–44:** *“The cup”* represents all the suffering and sacrifice that Jesus would endure in taking on the sins of the whole world. He naturally shrank from it, yet willingly submitted to it.
- When He came into the world, He came to do the Father’s will. Now, on the brink of taking that horrific cup of sacrifice, He again states His submission to the Father’s will: *“not My will, but Your will be done.”* He prayed this a second and a third time (**vv. 39, 42, 44**). Isn’t it interesting that Christ affirms His willingness to drink the cup in submission to God the Father three times and, in this very same day, Peter will deny Christ three times?
- **Verses 52–56:** Twelve legions of angels were at His disposal—this is the power of approximately 12,000 angelic beings. There was a way out of this cup for Jesus, but He volitionally chose the path of submission and obedience *“that the prophetic Scriptures might be fulfilled.”*
- **Verse 64:** Again, as in Hebrews, we see the submission of Jesus Christ results in His position of eternal exaltation seated at the Right Hand of God. We are beginning to see a pattern of submission and glory. This link between submission and glory is repeated in Scripture. Keep an eye out for it!

5. Philippians 2:3–11

- **Verses 3–4:** Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to adopt an attitude of **humility**, which will result in joyful service to Christ and to their brothers and sisters in Christ. Arrogance focuses on self; humility focuses on the needs of others.
- **Verse 5:** This humble attitude is found in the Person of Jesus Christ. We are to follow His example, walk in His footsteps.
- **Verses 6–8:** Christ emptied Himself of all /set aside His deity to fulfill the plan of God for His life. He left a throne for a stable; He traded His glory for shame; He laid down His crown to take up a cross. The Creator of the Universe lowered Himself to willingly serve His creation—even to the point of death. His submission involved **sacrifice**.
- **Verses 9–11:** His humble submission led to eternal exaltation. Once again, we see the link between submission and **glory**.

6. Philippians 2:12–16

In this passage, Paul is asking His readers to reflect on the humility and service of Jesus Christ and to live in like manner. This will give evidence of your salvation and will be pleasing to God the Father. This humility is displayed when we obey and serve without grumbling and disputing, when we hold fast to the Word of God to be light in the midst of a dark generation. This humility leads to glory.

7. Summary

What have we learned about submission from the life of Jesus Christ?

- Submission is a matter of choice, **volition**.
- Submission requires **humility**—inner condition of soul.
- Submission of the soul leads to outer compliance which often involves **sacrifice**.
- Submission results in **glory**.

LESSON TWO

Submission for One and All!

“*Submission*” is the Greek word *hupotasso*. It is a verb meaning, “*to be arranged in proper rank*” as in a military sense. In a non-military sense, Thayer’s definition is “*a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden.*” The Word of God encourages all the above in a healthy spiritual life. We are told to encourage one another, bear one another’s burdens, live peaceably with one another, consider the other person’s needs above our own, and so forth.

1. James 4:6–10

- This passage is a reconciliation passage. When the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32) realized he had made the wrong decision and wanted to return to his father, he had to walk the path back to home, back to the Father, back to reconciliation and back to blessing. We all at some point have (and will again) arrogantly walked away from our heavenly Father through an unwilling surrender to His will. This passage shows us the way back home!
- **Background:** In the opening chapter of James, he exhorts the believers to be “*quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.*” There were quarrels and arguments amongst the believers; James 4 addresses this problem. He begins with condemnation over their worldly behavior (vv. 1–5).
- **Verses 6–10: The humble road to recovery**
This road begins with personal humility.
 - **Verse 6:** God gives greater grace to those who desire to turn away from friendship with the world to dwell in the power of God’s Spirit. James makes the statement, “*God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*”
 - **Verse 7:** “*Submit therefore to God.*” Put yourself in rank under God: Submission to His Word, His commands, His leadership, and His plan for your life (geographic, operational, motivational). “*Resist the devil.*” The devil is a liar and a deceiver. To be a friend with the world means we have somehow embraced the lies and deception of the devil. “*Resist*” means to stand against. The road to recovery means we stand against the devil to stand with God.
 - **Verse 8:** “*Draw near to God,*” “*Cleanse your hands,*” “*Purify your hearts.*” This is confession and correction—a change of thinking that leads to a change of action. Notice the promises attached to these commands. “*He will draw near to you.*”
 - **Verse 9:** The misery, mourning, and weeping refers to a separation from the empty laughter and joy of the world and a sorrow over what has been lost through sin. Reconciliation and submission to God is the only source of true joy and happiness.
 - **Verse 10:** The exhortation here is to remain in a state of humility and fellowship with The Lord resulting in exaltation from God.

Isn’t it interesting that the first step on this road to recovery is submission to God? In grappling and wrestling they call it “tapping out”!

2. Jacob (Genesis 32)

The story of Jacob wrestling with God is a perfect illustration of this principle. Jacob is preparing to meet Esau—the brother that he cheated out of his birthright. He fears Esau’s wrath and so sends his family on ahead while he spends the night alone at the river crossing. An angel of the Lord comes to Jacob and wrestles with him through the night, dislocating

Jacob's hip in the fight (vv. 24–31). In this grappling process, the angel recognizes Jacob has come to a place of humility and submission, for Jacob is begging for a blessing. Jacob is tapping out! The blessing comes in the form of a name change from Jacob, meaning “supplanter” or “cheat,” to Israel, meaning “God prevails!”

From this day forward, every time Jacob limped, every time someone called him “Israel,” he would be reminded of the fact that when he (and believers) wrestle with God, the best thing to do is to submit, tap out!

3. 1 Corinthians 11: 3–15

This passage gives us the ladder of authority/submission/glory in the plan of God.

- **Verse 3:** God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of the man, the man is the head of the woman. We seem to be the bottom rung of a ladder in which everyone gets to boss someone around except for us. A **carnal-minded** woman will look at this passage with the attitude, “that’s not fair!” A **spiritual-minded** woman will look at the passage to see the honor and blessing that comes with obedience to God’s plan.
 - God and Jesus are equal in position, power, and essence. Yet, the Father is the head of Jesus. There is equality with difference. They are equal in position, different in participation God’s plan.
 - In Christ, the man and woman are equal in position and spiritual assets. There is equality with difference. The man and woman are equal in position, different in participation in God’s plan (Gal. 3:26–29).

*“If I set the sun beside the moon
And if I set the land beside the sea
And if I set the flower beside the fruit
And if I set the town beside the country
And if I set the man beside the woman
I suppose some fool would talk
About one being better.”*

– G.K. Chesterton

Seeing that one thing is fundamentally different from another does not imply that one is better than the other.

- The issue is not one being superior and the other inferior. The issue is following the role that God has designed for the human race. Play your part in the plan! Paul clarifies this for us in verses 11 and 12.
- **Verses 4–15:** These verses address a cultural issue. In Corinth, the women who were not veiled were prostitutes, whose heads were often shaved to shame them. The believing women, because of their equality in Christ, were casting off their veils. In so doing, they were shaming their head (their husbands) by associating themselves with the prostitutes. The application for us is not a matter of head covering but playing our God given role as women in the family and in the church.
- **Glory:** There is another issue in this passage that we cannot leave out to get a balanced understanding of submission. That is the issue of glory.

- In verse 3, Jesus is submitting to an equal and we know from the study in our last class that the result of His submission is exaltation and glory.
- The woman is also submitting to an equal, the man. And what is the result of humble submission? Exaltation and glory.
- A biblical and Hebraic means of expressing a superlative is to say Holy of Holies, Song of Songs, King of Kings, Lord of Lords. Consider the superlative “Holy of Holies.” In the tabernacle was the greater glory found in the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies?
- Because the woman submits to her equal—the man—and in so doing is submitting also to Christ, more submission is asked of her. But in doing so she receives glory for her submission to the man and glory for her submission to Christ. She receives the glory of glories!
- Rather than argue or resent our submissive role, let’s embrace it, let’s make it beautiful, let’s let it define our life, let’s claim the glory of it!

Play your part in the plan!

LESSON THREE

Is God a Misogynist?

Many people, through misunderstanding and lack of understanding of God's Word consider God to be a misogynist. Nothing could be further from the truth. In every encounter Jesus had with a woman His words and actions display His respect for the value of her life and soul. In every culture that embraces Christian principles, the value and honor given to the woman is elevated. In this lesson we are going to narrow down submission to the life of the woman. But rather than just hammer away at the commands to submit, we will, once again, see it within the overall plan of God for order and beauty in the human race.

1. **1 Peter 2:11–3:17**

In this passage, Peter will command:

- all men/women to be submissive to governing authorities,
- slaves (workers) to be submissive to their masters, employees to their employers, and
- wives to be submissive to their husbands.

Within the context of this passage on submission we will find two sets of “bookends” that help us to further understand the how's and why's of submission.

- **Witness to unbelievers (2:11, 12; 3:15):** Good behavior that brings order within the church, within society, within the home is a witness to the unbelieving world. Play your part in the plan! 1 Peter 3:15 implies that we speak **after** modeling good behavior.
- **Probability of suffering (2:19, 20; 3:17):** At times, our willingness to submit to God by submitting to unjust man may incur suffering. This is an opportunity to reflect the character of Christ.
- We will also see the principle of good and evil repeatedly mentioned in this passage. “Good,” referring to those following God's plan, and “evil,” referring to those opposed to God's plan.
- **1 Peter 2:13–17:** Submission is for all men and women for order in society.
- **1 Peter 2:18:** Submission of slaves/employees to their masters/employers, even in unfair situations.
- **1 Peter 2:19–25:** These verses unfold for us the unjust suffering of Jesus Christ to remind us of His example. We, too, may be called to unjust suffering through submission to those in authority over us. We are to walk in His footsteps.
- **1 Peter 3:1–2:**
 - “*In the same way*” refers to the submission and suffering of Jesus Christ.
 - “*to your own husbands*”—not men in general, but your own husband.
 - The goal is to imitate Jesus Christ (to win over an unbelieving or rebellious husband) through submissive, modest, and respectful behavior. Our actions carry more weight than our words.
- **1 Peter 3:3–6**
 - Outer beauty is fine, but far greater is the inner beauty found in the woman who has spiritually grown into a gentle (humble, meek), quiet (tranquil, undisturbed), and submissive woman.

- The word for “gentle” in this passage is also used in Matthew 11:29, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am **gentle** and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.” To have a gentle soul is to reflect the character of Christ.
 - This inner beauty never fades (it is imperishable like God’s Word; see 1 Pet. 1:22, 23); it is a beauty that we take into eternity with us!
 - This inner beauty is precious in the sight of God. It indicates that His eyes penetrate like an X-ray into our soul to identify and value the beauty within.
 - The word for “precious” is the Greek word *poluteles*. The same word is used to describe “the costly perfume” that Mary of Bethany used to anoint the Lord. May our submissive nature anoint our Savior!
 - What a contrast to the fleeting beauty of face and figure!
 - When we embrace submission and play our part in the plan, we are walking in the footsteps of our spiritual foremothers. Sarah is given as our example. It is not recorded for us where Sarah called Abraham “lord,” but it declares for us her willingness to follow his leadership—even into some risky situations—and maintain her respect for his position as husband.
- **1 Peter 3:7:** At the end of this verse we find the phrase: “that your prayers be not hindered.” The Greek word for “hinder” is *egkopto*, meaning “to cut into, to impede.” This refers both to the submission of the wife to the husband and the understanding of the man regarding his wife. Failure to follow this God-given path hinders our prayers.
 - **1 Peter 3: 8–13:** This is what it looks like for a woman to be submissive and a man to be understanding. This is God’s design for our life—this is how blessing is found!

2. Ephesians 5:15–6:9

- **Verses 5:15–21:** We are encouraged to understand what the will of the Lord is:
 - To walk as wise men
 - To redeem the time
 - To be filled by means of God’s Spirit that brings about a joyful melody in our heart
 - To be subject (submissive) to one another in the fear of Christ. This means that we are to be aware and submissive to the needs of those around us and strive to fulfill those needs.
- **Verses 5:22–6:9:** Explains for us how this subjection to the needs of others is played out in relationships. Since God is our Creator, He understands the soul needs of each individual member of the human race.
 - Husbands submit to the needs of the wife by loving them as Christ loves the Church (vv. 5:25–33a).
 - Wives submit to the needs of the husband by giving them due respect (vv. 5:22–24, 33b).
 - Children submit to the needs of parents through obedience and honor (vv. 6:1–3).
 - Fathers submit to the needs of their children by training them up in the Lord (v. 6:4)
 - Employees submit to the need of their employers through obedience (vv. 6:5–8)
 - Employers submit to the needs of their employees through the rendering of good will (v. 6:9).
 - In addition to these specific commands, let’s strive to be aware and submissive to the needs of those around us; let’s be ready to encourage, exhort, edify, pray, teach, lead, love, lift, and serve those who need it. If you find a need, fill it!

3. Respect

The issue of respect is brought out in both the 1 Peter 3 passage and the Ephesians 5 passage. Just as a wife craves love from her husband, the man craves respect from the wife. Just as unconditional love towards the wife opens up her heart to her man, unconditional respect towards the husband opens up his heart to his wife. The coupling of love and respect builds intimacy within a marriage. The man is told to love his wife as Christ loves the Church; the wife is told to respect her husband as she would respect Jesus Christ. To obey these commands is to play your part in the plan. To disregard them is disobedience to Christ and His Word.

- 1 Peter 3:2, *“as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.”*
- Ephesians 5:33, *“and let the wife see to it that she respects her husband.”*
- Proverbs 12:4, *“an excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who shames him is as rotteness in his bones.”*

Here are some “how to’s” of RESPECT!

R—Regard. Regard him as king of the castle, general of the army, head of the household.

Two unchangeable absolutes put the husband in this role—the Word of God and the word of the wife when she said, “I do.” Since the man’s position as head of the household is from God, to regard the position is to regard God (1 Cor. 11:3, 8–9).

E—Engage. Engage in his dreams and desires, his goals, and activities. Converse with him in his ideas and opinions. Dismissal of any of these is a passive disrespect. Commitment makes a marriage last, but communication brings it to life.

S—Support. Be his support, help-meet, and co-worker in the plan of God. God has called him to a work or ministry and has called you to support him in that work or ministry. Help-meet and companion is the primary role of every wife (Gen. 2:18; Prov. 12:4a).

P—Pray and play. There is power in a praying wife. No one knows your husband’s needs, temptations, and tests like you do. Pray often, pray wisely, pray without ceasing. Play is relaxing, fun, and necessary—whether it’s in or out of the bedroom.

E—Elevate. Praise him both in private and in public. He wants to know that you hold him in high regard. This is more than “I love you.” This is expressing to him what you admire and appreciate about his character and person. Be specific! Contrary to popular belief this doesn’t puff up his ego; it does just the opposite, it fills his need to know that you respect his position and his person. Elevating him in your heart, will humble his heart (Prov. 18:22)!

C—Cooperate, don’t control. He didn’t marry his mother; you didn’t marry a child. Your husband has moved into adulthood so treat him like one. He doesn’t need you to make his decisions for him, argue at every turn, and try to control his life. Let him man-up and play his designated role in God’s plan. You will both be happier for it.

T—Trust. Trust his leadership and his decisions. By trusting him you are giving him the opportunity to grow in his masculine role. If he makes wrong decisions, he as leader and head, bears the responsibility of that wrong decision. He will also suffer the consequences and, hopefully, learn from the mistake. Remember, when you can’t trust human leadership, you can trust divine leadership. When you can’t trust human authority, you can trust divine authority. God will take care of you (Prov. 3:5; Psalm 28:7).

4. Illustration: David and Michal, 2 Samuel 6:12–23

- **Proverbs 18:21.** *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”*
- **2 Samuel 6:20.** Michal’s words of disdain and disrespect killed the love that once existed between David and Michal. Either due to David sexually exiting the relationship, or God judging Michal, she remained barren to her dying day (v. 23).
- Does this mean we just swallow everything? How should Michal have handled the situation? First, with God through confession and correction. We must purify the heart to tame the tongue. She could have then joined in the celebration and it would have been a day to remember and cherish.
- If needed, she could later have addressed her feelings with David and talked openly about them. A moment of bitterness is not the time for conversation.

LESSON FOUR

Overcoming Evil with the Good

My husband and I have ministered the Gospel in multiple countries and cultures around this expansive world. In doing so, we have been confronted with many tricky questions that arise from believers living in godless countries and cultures. In this class, we are going to address the issue of sinful and evil authorities and answer this question, “*When do we **not** submit to a higher authority?*”

Let’s first look at what Scripture says about submission to governing authorities:

1. Romans 13:1–7

- **Verse 1:** God is the ultimate authority over all earthly authorities.
- **Verse 2:** Submission to human authority reflects our submission to divine authority.
- **Verses 3–4:** Generally, the law-abiding citizen (or submissive wife) has no cause for fear. Meaning, submission to authority should be the norm of our life.
- **Verse 5:** Submission is also a matter of inner conviction. We recognize obedience to law and authority is the right thing to do.
- **Verses 6–7:** Submission to higher authority defines the way we live.

This passage addresses the issue of submitting to a higher authority that is good, that is acting within your best interest. The question remains: When do we **not** submit? That question is answered for us in Romans 12:21 (remember how important context is!):

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Satan is the source of evil, and the old sin nature is the source of sin. The source of good is God! When a higher authority requires us to join them in sin or evil, that sin or evil must be overcome (conquered) with the good. If God is the source of “good” it is imperative that we are filled by means of the Spirit of God and the Word of God to have the discernment provided by God to overcome the evil. This is called “civil disobedience.”

2. The Word of God gives several examples of what this looks like in the life of a believer led by God:

- **Peter** (Acts 5:17–42)
- **The Hebrew midwives** (Exod. 1:15–21)
- **Rahab** (Josh. 2:1–21; 6:22–25)
- **Abigail** (1 Sam. 25:2–42 cf. 1 Cor. 7:12–16). We could call this “domestic disobedience.”

3. Summary of Submission

- **Submission is personal and specific.** A woman is told to submit to those who are in direct authority over her—God, government, church leadership, employer, her own husband.
- **Submission is practical.** It brings order and harmony to a nation, a church, and a family. We can see from the disorder and chaos that our nation is now experiencing how important submission to law and order is.

- **Submission is purposeful.** God has a purpose behind everything that He does. He uses physical things on this earth to display spiritual principles.
 - Submission in marriage has a spiritual purpose—to display the relationship of Christ and the Church. The man should unconditionally and sacrificially love the woman as Christ loves the Church. The wife should unconditionally submit and serve the husband as the Church submits and serves Jesus Christ.
 - Submission enables leadership. Without someone to follow, there is no need for someone to lead. Just as Christ is the head of the Body—the Church—the man is the head of the woman. If the body refuses to follow the leadership of the head, it is called “disease” or “paralysis.” When the body follows the leadership of the head, it is called wellness. Are you living in paralysis or wellness?
- **Submission is provisional.** There are boundaries and limits to submission. Submission never means surrendering to sin and evil. The limits come when one in authority asks us to act outside the authority of God and His Word. God is our supreme authority!

“Wives be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in The Lord.” Colossians 3:18

“We must obey God rather than men.” Acts 5:29

Challenge: Revelation 5: 8–14

Put yourself in this picture, because one day you will be there. Can you imagine standing at this majestic throne in the presence of The Holy God with arrogance? Doubt of His Word? Resistance to His plan? There would only be an attitude of total worship, surrender, and submission to all that He is and all that He asks of you. Let’s not wait, let’s do it now! Let’s bring Heaven down to Earth through humble submission. Let’s play our part in the plan to the glory of God!

LESSON FIVE

Feminine Faith in Action

Our God is beauty and loves beauty!

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shone forth.” Psalm 50:2

“Splendor and majesty are before Him, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.” Psalm 96:6

Have you ever considered how much the Creator God loves beauty? Deep in the ocean there is a myriad of colorful fish that no one ever sees but God. Behind the sealed clasps of oysters lay beautiful pearls that will never make it to a woman’s jewelry box. Their beauty is only seen by an omnipresent God. Space is full of planets and stars, comets, suns, and moons that we cannot see with the naked eye. But God created them, and God beholds their beauty. Here on Earth, consider the beauty in the bloom of a single flower, the song of a meadowlark, or the smile of a little child. God is our Creator and He loves beauty!

We were created to embrace and live out the beauty of submission, but we were created for so much more. We were created to be feminine creatures that reflect the beauty of our Lord, our Savior, our Creator God.

1. Man and Woman were Both Created in God’s Image

“God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Genesis 1:27

- It is only when **both** man and woman are created that God’s image is fully reflected. This is because the man and woman reflect His image in different ways.
- Certainly, Jesus came to this earth as a male. It is also true that God is referred to in Scripture as the heavenly Father and Jesus as the Son. Each member of the trinity is referred to in Scripture with the male pronoun, “*He*.” However, we must never make the mistake of claiming that God, in His divinity, is intrinsically male.
- The Bible is clear that God is spirit (John 4:24) and, as such, He is not gendered. When we call Him Father, we do not mean that He is male, like human fathers are. Rather, we mean that He relates to us **like** a human father does, only perfectly. Likewise, when the Bible speaks of God as a husband, it does not claim that God is male, but that God jealously guards His relationship with His people like a good husband loves and protects his wife.
- God has feminine attributes as well as masculine. There are things about God that men more directly reflect, and there are things about God that women more directly reflect. Both are needed to display the image of God.
- Feminine characteristics of God:
 - God comforts his people like a mother comforts her child (Isa. 51:12; 66:13).
 - Like a woman would never forget her nursing child, God will not forget His children (Isa. 49:15).
 - God is like a mother eagle hovering over her young (Deut. 32:11).
 - God seeks the lost like a housekeeper, trying to find her lost coin (Luke 15:8–10).
 - God cares for his people like a midwife that cares for the child she just delivered (Psalms 22:9–10; 71:6; Isa. 66:9).

- God experiences the fury of a mother bear robbed of her cubs (Hosea 13:8).
- Jesus longed for the people of Jerusalem, like a mother hen longs to gather her chicks under her wings (Luke 13:34).
- In Christ, both man and woman have the same standing and spiritual assets. In Christ, there is equality with difference. Equal in position, different in purpose (Gal. 3:28). Let's embrace the equality; let's also embrace the difference!
- The Lord has put boundaries on our life like a frame on a picture. The frame encompasses the picture—limits the picture—but enhances the picture, drawing your eyes into it. The boundaries God put on our life are for our blessing and purpose. One of those boundaries is gender. In God's sight, it is non-negotiable.

2. God's Purpose and Plan for Eve

To understand the divine plan for women, we must go back to the beginning of all beginnings: the creation of the world, the creation of the man and the creation of Eve—the first feminine creature of faith. In the age and culture in which we live, some of the beauty and glory of femininity has been lost; women have been deceived about their purpose, leading to loss of pleasure and fulfillment.

- **Fruitfulness (Gen. 1:28)**

“And God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply ...’”

This command is repeated five times in Genesis. The first command God gave to His creation was to *“be fruitful and multiply.”* The woman was created for fruitfulness. You and I are created for fruitfulness. To embrace femininity is to embrace fruitfulness. Whether it be in childbearing or the production of spiritual fruit to the glory of God.

- **Work (Gen. 2:7–18)**

Even in a perfect garden, there was work to do. The work was given to the man, but God recognized the man could not properly do the work alone, the work needed a helper, the work needed a feminine touch. The woman was created to work towards the goal of beauty and glory. You and I were created with a purpose, to bring beauty and glory to this earth. To embrace femininity is to embrace the work God has given us to do.

- **Beauty and glory** are one of the feminine characteristics of God. We see both in His extraordinary creation—a creation full of color, diversity, and intricate detail.
- The throne of God is a place of beauty and glory. *“Splendor and majesty are before Him. Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary”* (Psalm 96:6).
- The tabernacle and the high priest's garments were designed with extreme beauty in mind to reflect God's glory (Exod. 28:2, 40; Psalm 27:4)
- David was king of Israel, residing in a beautiful palace, yet the desire of his heart was to dwell in the tabernacle of the Lord and behold His beauty (Psalm 27:4).
- Regarding creativity and imagination: What did Eve add to the beautiful garden that God had created? Perhaps the mixing of colors to enhance the beauty of the flowers, the discovery of flavors that complimented one another. There was no one to evangelize, to teach, to counsel, no mission trips to take, no diapers to change. There was a garden and a work to do in that garden.
- Whatever she did, it was something that God recognized Adam was not equipped to do, but Eve was. And whatever she did, it enhanced the beauty and glory of the garden.
- We were counseling a young couple recently and the main complaint the man had towards his wife was this, “She never creates beauty.”

- Women are meant to reflect Him by creating beauty and glory in their surroundings. The bird sings because God put a song in his heart. What has He put in your heart as a means of reflecting His artistry, beauty, and creativity?

- **Companionship and pleasure (Gen. 2:18–25)**

The only thing God spotted on the earth that was not good was the aloneness of the man. Therefore, the woman was created to be a companion for the man. You and I are created for companionship; purpose and pleasure should be found in our relationships with others, whether it be in or outside of marriage.

3. God’s Plan and Purpose for Today’s Woman

The plan and purpose that God had for Eve is the same plan and purpose that he has for us today. The time and place of our life is obviously different, but the purpose for which He created us remains the same. God’s purpose for the woman transcends centuries, countries, and cultures. Let’s take these three things (fruitfulness, work, and companionship) from the garden and bring them into our daily walk with Jesus Christ and our interaction with family and friends.

- **Fruitfulness (John 15)**

Abiding in Christ leads to spiritual fruit. To “*abide*” is “to stay, to continue, to dwell, to remain.” The Spirit of God works in conjunction with the Word of God to bring forth the fruit of God from the woman of God. What a blessing that the Lord has designed our lives to be productive and useful to Him! Notice the progression of fruit in the life of a believer who stays connected to “*the Vine*.”

- “*Fruit*” (v. 2) ...
- “*Much fruit*” (vv. 5–8) ...
- “*Fruit that remains*” (v. 16).
- There are also temporal benefits for the woman that abides in Christ—the fullness of joy (v. 11), and friendship with Christ (vv. 14–15).

- **Work: for beauty and glory**

“*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*” Ephesians 2:10

- **Workmanship**

The word for workmanship is the Greek word *poiema*, from which we get the English word “poem.” This same word is used in Romans 1:20 for the creation of the heavens and the Earth, they too are God’s workmanship or *poiema*. The same divine nature and eternal power that created the Universe was used to create you and me!

- **Good works, prepared beforehand**

To use our life to fulfill the work God created for us in eternity past, is to fulfill the beauty and glory that He desires for us. This will look different in every woman’s life; the key is in knowing and doing what God has for you. Stick with it and don’t let the world take your attention from it (like the serpent in the garden).

- **Walk in them**

Walking is a continuous action, like abiding. Again, we see the need for consistency in our spiritual life. It is necessary for fruitfulness and good works.

- **Companionship**

“Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2

The word for “bear” is *bastadzo*, meaning to carry, to put upon oneself. It is used in John 19 for Jesus carrying the cross of crucifixion on His back. This is one of at least 26 “one another” commands in Scripture. How we relate to our husbands and to others is important to God.

- Look at every relationship as a ministry opportunity/ privilege.
- Be willing to give more than you receive.
- Forget your companion’s faults, remember his/her victories.
- Do not just build a relationship, build a relationship full of memories. Beauty stirs the emotion and emotion creates memory. How many sunsets have I seen? How many do I remember? Only the ones that stirred great emotion.
- Don’t just pray for them, pray with them.
- The Danish Theologian Soren Kierkegaard said this, *“When one has fully entered the realm of love, the world—no matter how imperfect—becomes rich and beautiful, it consists solely of opportunities for love.”*

- **Some thoughts on beauty**

- Our walk with God and our service to God should create beauty around us; more importantly, it should create beauty within us. The most precious kind of beauty in God’s sight is the inner beauty found in a woman who is submissive to God’s plan (1 Peter 3).
- For a woman, beauty is a two-edged sword that can be used for good or for evil.
 - It was lusting after the beauty of the fruit that caused Eve to sin. Genesis 3 shows us Satan attempted (and succeeded) to derail Eve from God’s purpose in her life through the use of lust and deception. The enmity between Satan and the woman is still alive and powerful on Planet Earth. Beware of his tactics!
 - The women of Israel were judged because of their obsession with physical beauty rather than obedience to God (Isa. 3:16–24).
 - *“Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord will be praised”* (Prov. 31:30)

- **Consider these three things**

Fruitfulness, work/ministry, and companionship/relationship. They enhance our lives by giving us a purpose and an opportunity to display the beauty of God in everyday life. Can you imagine the emptiness of life without a personal and fruitful relationship with Jesus Christ? Can you imagine the vanity of a life lived without service and ministry to Christ? Can you imagine the loneliness of a life lived without the companionship that comes from Godly relationships? Thank God for femininity!

4. The Example of Ruth—Feminine Faith in Action

- **Her decision (Ruth 1:8–17)**

Orpah turned back to Moab, a picture of the world; she is never heard from again. Naomi blamed God and turned to bitterness, a denial of the goodness of God. Ruth humbly submitted. She chose to play her part in His plan.

- **Companionship (Ruth 1:16)**

“... where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God, my God.” Ruth became a faithful companion to Naomi, ministering to her in faith and service.

- **Work (Ruth 2:2)**

“And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, ‘Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.’” Ruth set out to provide for herself and Naomi through gleaning in the fields.

“Through love serve one another.” Galatians 5:13b

- **Fruitfulness (Ruth 4: 13–22)**

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife ... and the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son” (v. 13). Her work was blessed by God through the provision of Boaz, the marriage to Boaz, and the birth of a baby boy, Obed. Her spiritual fruitfulness is very evident as well; we still talk about her faith today. Ruth is one of the few women named in the lineage of Jesus Christ. Her faith had lasting and historical impact. Fruit, much fruit, and fruit that remains!

IN CLOSING

I have been to India 29 or 30 times—so many times that all the trips, with their villages, churches, and people tend to run together in my mind. But there are some moments in India that will be forever etched in my memory as distinct and special. I would like to share one of those moments with you now.

Some years ago, we were given the opportunity to do a children's ministry in a slum near the church that we regularly work out of. This slum is built on a garbage dump where the people forage through the garbage for food, for something they may be able to use for shelter, or for something they may be able to sell for a few meager rupees. The poverty and filth of that place is beyond description. For years, we had driven by this slum, coming and going to ministry in various places, and we had asked the heavenly Father many times over to open a door for us to give the Gospel to the children in that slum. Finally, after several years of prayer, the pastor told us the door was open!

The church people put up a large tent in the middle of the slum and prepared a fragrant meal of rice and curry to feed the children and their parents. Then, we—as a team of four American women—went in to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with a raggedy bunch of slum children. We were so excited about the opportunity and I wanted to let each woman have some part in the message. We started with songs both in English and Telugu followed by the gospel message. I used pictures and illustrations to help the children understand the love of God, the sinfulness of man, and the work of Christ on the cross. I presented a simple and clear gospel message ending with the promise of Heaven for all who believe in Jesus Christ.

Then, I sat down, and my friend Kim Maguire took over. Her portion of the message was to share with the children the beauty, glory, and wonder of Heaven. And that is exactly what she did! She had glittery, sparkling pictures that showed God's majestic Throne, heavenly mansions, and myriads of angelic creatures. She spoke of the Savior waiting for us to run into His arms and be forever happy and joyful with Jesus. She made Heaven come alive in the hearts of children who only knew poverty and despair. We could see and feel their excitement!

I spoke the Gospel and stirred their thinking, but Kim opened their hearts. I spoke theology, she made theology shine!

We are designed for submission—to submit is to participate in the plan God has for us. But we are designed for so much more! We are designed to beautify the gospel message and the Person of the Gospel in all that we say and do: in how we cook and create, in how we live and love, in how we sing and serve, in how we give and pray, parent, and praise. We are designed to stir hearts by creating beauty that reflects the beauty of Jesus.

Let us display His beauty in such a way that it opens the hearts of the people around us to see and embrace His love!

Amen.