**Man and Woman in Christ Core Seminar**

**Week 3 – Man and Woman in a Fallen World**

So far in this course we’ve spent two weeks thinking about God’s original creation of men and women. By going *deeper* in considering our natures and *broader* in how those natures find diverse expressions in Scripture, we’ve seen how men and women, while equal in dignity, are created differently, for different purposes, with different strengths, and with different natural orientations.

One way to put it is like this: men and women are like different genres of music. Techno music is music, just as house music is music. But they are different genres.

Every now and then I will hear a brilliant DJ mix different genres of music over the course of one song. For instance, Hip-hop & R&B music are commonly mixed together. A good DJ can mix these genres together in such a way that can result in something truly unique and memorable. When you hear a good mix of two songs from two different genres, it can be hard to go back and listen to one of them isolated from the other. It’s as if the genres are made for one another.

There are some genres don’t work so well together. You’d have a difficult time, for instance, finding a good mix of classical and heavy metal. Blending these two genres would be challenging due to their stark differences in instrumentation, tempo, and mood.

This morning we are considering Man and Woman in a Fallen World. In many ways, the shift from Genesis 2 to 3 is a track shift from a Hip-Hop & R&B mix to a Classical and Heavy Metal mix. The differences *for* one another we considered last week begin to look more like differences *from* one another.

In Matthew 19, a Pharisee comes up to Jesus to test him on the subject of divorce, perhaps the most painful manifestation of man and women turned against each other. The Pharisee insinuates that Jesus’s vision for marriage was different than Moses’s.

Matthew 19:7-8

7 They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” 8 He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, ***but from the beginning it was not so.”***

What Jesus is saying is that the trajectory of men and women was once different than what it had become in Moses’s day. “From the beginning it was not so.” Because of sin and the hardness of hearts, God had made accommodations for his sexually-different creatures in a fallen world. Any consideration of sexual difference according to the Biblical worldview, then, *must* have sin and the Fall in clear view. And it’s to that task we’ll now turn.

If Genesis 1-3 is the story of Scripture in seed form, Genesis 3 in particular is the story of men and women alienated from God, creation, themselves, and one another.

**I. Genesis 2:25-3:6: Temptation and (Dis)order**

Turn with me to Genesis 2:25. We’ll plan to move from 2:25 all the way to 3:19, noting how the entrance of sin into the world shapes our understanding of sexual difference.

25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

At the end of chapter 2, man and women are naked and unashamed. Neither of them felt any need to cover their bodies. Neither felt any need whatsoever to protect their dignity from the lustful look of the other. The serpent of verse 1 was “more crafty than any other beast of the field.” Though it is hidden from us in english, the Hebrew word for “crafty” is almost identical in Hebrew to the word “naked.” We’re meant to see an association with the serpent and nakedness here. It’s the shameless nakedness of the man and women against the crafty nakedness of the serpent. It’s “nude” Adam and Eve and “shrewd” Serpent.[[1]](#footnote-1)

So how will the shrewd serpent strike? There’s much we could say, but I want us to especially notice how the crafty serpent seeks to upend the order of creation itself.

He targets the woman. Look at 1-6.

“He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” 2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

So why does he target the woman? (You can see this on your handout.)

Because 1) the woman is relying upon second hand knowledge. She had been with Adam in Genesis 1:29 when God said he had given everything in the garden to them. She had not been with Adam in Genesis 2:16-17 when he had told Adam “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” The serpent is playing off of this vulnerability. Eve had clearly heard some version of the commandment, but her version is different than the original in chapter 2. She had added “neither shall you touch it.” Before the fall, Adam was responsible to transmit God’s instruction to Eve. She was in a position of dependence on Adam.

And lest you think the serpent targeted Eve because she was more intrinsically gullible or less intelligent, I think last week’s class should make it very clear that is not at all the reason.[[2]](#footnote-2) When God had brought Eve to Adam in 2:23, he had broken out into song. Adam is fascinated with her, and rightly so. When she eats in verse 6, he’s with her. 3:17 says he “listened to her.” She has enormous power. If you want to get through to the man, it makes sense to go through the women. She can break through the man’s defenses in a way the serpent couldn’t directly.

2) She was targeted because of her *influence*.

That influence goes the opposite way it is supposed to in Genesis 1-2. Adam and Eve were to exercise dominion over the animals. Adam was to name them. Adam was to guard the garden. Instead, the serpent is *talking…* to *Eve…* *in* the garden. Adam was called to cling to, partner with, and protect Eve. Instead, he’s just with her. Here is the world’s first science experiment. He’s with her, in his lab coat, and she’s the guinea pig. Let’s see if she dies. When she doesn’t, he takes some and eats too.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Remember how we likened masculinity to the joyful acceptance of sacrificial responsibility? Adam is demonstrating the complete opposite here.

And so, as we mentioned in week 1, it is Adam who is held firstly responsible. As God had on day 4 set the lights as rulers of the sky– a greater light and lesser light (1:17-18), Adam had been placed within the garden to rule (2:15). In failing to instruct her, Adam does not bring forth light and truth from God’s word.

To continue with the light imagery, he was to be like the sun and she was to be like the moon, made to reflect the light of the sun. Instead, she listened to the serpent’s voice and reflected his darkness. Adam then listened to his wife as if he were trying to cause the sun to reflect the moon’s light.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Do you see how the serpent’s craftiness is targeted directly at upending God’s created order? For our purposes, this is instructive. It’s not that Satan *introduces* complementary roles and duties to the world. Those roles, duties, and orientations were already there, and he hated them.

And with that, nothing would ever be the same. Let’s keep going and see what God does.

**II. Genesis 3:7-19: Temptation and (Dis)order**

Our first section began with nakedness, and our second one will too. Look at 3:7:

7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.” (v 7)

When Adam had first seen Eve he sang, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!” (2:23) Both he and she had seen God’s plan of love inscribed on each other’s naked bodies. They knew they were gifts to one another, with the freedom to bless one another, and with no need to use or possess one another. They felt no risk in approaching the other. But now their *shameless* nakedness has become a *shameful* nakedness. And in their shame, they need clothes to cover themselves.

It’s worth stopping here to reflect. A part of what is meant by their eyes being opened is that, at this precise moment, Adam and Eve *had a different way of seeing each other’s bodies.* Their bodies were now at risk. At risk from the gaze, objectification, and lust of the other. That risk, or that temptation to objectify, use, or lust has never left us. This is the beginning of sexual brokenness and disunity between man and woman.

And of course this new way of seeing is because they now understood themselves to be at risk
of *God’s* gaze and of *his* righteous judgment. Look at verse 8.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Man and women are ***equally made in God’s image***. And man and woman are ***equally fallen, equally liable to God’s judgment***. They hide themselves *together* from the presence of the LORD God. Any anthropology that considers either sex more morally capable of virtue or prone to vice, is wrong.

Both are alienated from God. And both are alienated from each other.

It’s not hard to see this alienation from one another in the text.

9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” 11 He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12 The man said, “***The woman*** whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”

Before the “gender wars” showed up on the movie screen in *Barbie*, here they are on the first pages of Scripture. Adam shifts the blame to Eve. He now sees Eve not as a good gift but a bad one. Her differences from him were the problem. Her presence “with me” was the problem.

God curses all involved parties in verses 14-19. **The curses do not create a new order, instead they complicate the original one.**
Take the serpent in verses 14-15. The serpent is one of the “beasts of the field,” and should have been under the dominion of humans, but instead usurped authority and led Adam and Eve into disobedience. In God’s judgment, it is put back into subjection, but now the subjection is made more severe than before. “On your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat.” That subjection will also ultimately be painful. “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise / crush your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (3:14)

The pattern continues with the woman in verse 16.

16 To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

Her original task of childbearing will now be made painful.

Additionally, God’s sentence on her about her relationship with Adam goes along with this same pattern. The original order of husband and wife is reiterated, but now is made painful and difficult by the introduction of an inordinate desire for domination and control from both of them.[[5]](#footnote-5) The woman will desire to dominate the man, but in the end he will dominate her. This entire scenario, in which the woman subverts her husband’s authority and he harshly[[6]](#footnote-6) dominates her, is painful to all.[[7]](#footnote-7)

This pattern is repeated finally in the curse directed towards Adam.

Adam’s task of working the ground is what he was originally created to do; that’s not new. What *is* new is the difficulty of the task.

17 And to Adam He said: “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat, cursed is the ground because of you; through toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it will yield for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your bread, until you return to the ground—because out of it were you taken. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

The soil that had produced seed-bearing trees will now produce seed-bearing thorns and weeds. Adam’s sustenance will now come only by sweat. The forehead sweats in response to heat, emotion, and mental effort, and a primary cause of excessive sweating is ***fear***. The very soil he works will prosecute God’s fearful curse against him, and the task given to him in Genesis 1-2 will eventually lead him in death back to the dust, the realm of the Serpent.

Do you see all the ways that sin alienates us? Man and women alienated from God and one another. Adam alienated from the ground. Eve in particular will be alienated from her very body. By that I mean she experiences a kind of disintegration between her body and her spirit. In the bearing of children, that which she is uniquely and gloriously capable of and drawn towards, she will experience severe pain.

As our Pastor put it in his forthcoming book on Ecclesiastes, “Now, instead of being at peace with God, at home in the world, in love with each other, and at one within, Adam and Eve, and everyone after them, are alienated from God, the world, each other, and themselves. Exit original goodness and wholeness; enter alienation and the absurd.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

You don’t have to look far in the pages of Scripture to see alienation and the absurd. In your handout are example after example in the book of Genesis of men and women experiencing some consequences of Adam & Eve’s fall.[[9]](#footnote-9) And while of course with the coming of Christ, God has entered into our broken world and relationships, the curse is still found far and wide in our world today.

**III. The Story of Today: Continuing Alienation**

So where do we see this alienation still at work today? The simple answer is that we say it everywhere we look. But in an effort to apply what we’ve covered to pressing issues of our day, let’s briefly consider how Genesis 3 sheds light on 5 particular issues of our day. The first 3 primarily highlight our alienation from one another, the fourth from our work, the fifth from our bodies.

*Alienation from one another:*

1. **Online Pornography**

As we considered earlier, when Adam and Eve’s eyes were opened in v 7, not only did they have a different way of relating to God, they *had a different way of seeing each other’s bodies.*

A basic shift in Adam and Eve was from seeing each other’s bodies as gifts to be gratefully received from God to objects to be used for their own purposes.

One way to understand the particular evil of pornography is to see it as a means to immerse us in a fantasy world where bodies become objects for pleasure and profit. In this fantasy world we begin to conceive of people as props. In this world, sex has no significance beyond the act itself. The person or persons behind the camera make no demands on the viewer. Instead, pornography preys on good desires for fertility and partnership, and our desire to move outward together in the world, and instead inverts them towards the self, rendering sex sterile.

Pornography promotes one of the very things that our first parents surely feared in the other: lust. It encourages us not to see bodies as ***icons*** pointing to a creator but as ***idols*** that steal worship from God.

Paul put it this way in Romans 1:21-23

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and darkened in their foolish hearts. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for *images of mortal man* and birds and animals and reptiles.

1. **Spousal oppression**

Tragically, domestic abuse is seemingly everywhere in our world, and too often amongst those who claim Christ’s name. In Ecclesiastes 4:1, the preacher laments:

Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of the oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.

In marriage, this kind of oppression occurs when one spouse seeks to control and dominate the other through a pattern of coercive, controlling, and punishing behaviors.[[10]](#footnote-10) There is so much that can be and needs to be said on this topic, but for our purposes we should recognize that the beginning of spousal oppression and domestic abuse goes back all the way to the Fall.

When Adam responds to God that it was “**the woman you gave me”** who was at fault, he not only abdicates responsibility, he also rejects the notion that Eve was a gift. He concludes she was less of a gift, more of a curse.

A recent study published in the Journal Frontiers in Psychology examined how men and women attribute blame in interpersonal conflicts. The research found that women were more likely to blame themselves, while men were more likely to attribute blame to external factors or other people.[[11]](#footnote-11) While spousal oppression can of course go both directions, because of asymmetry in physical strength, higher levels of testosterone, and characteristic tendencies to aggression, cases of abuse most often happen at the woman’s expense. It’s no surprise that of the very few passages directed specifically towards husbands in the NT, Paul says “Husbands, love your wives, and *do not be harsh with them*” (3:19)

Of course this was predicted in the curse on the woman in verse 16, where both parties will seek to dominate the other. Right before Paul’s instruction to husbands in Colossians 3:19 he wrote, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.” Both parties will be prone to treat the other as means to achieve their own ends, and to inordinately control the other. Abusive relationships form when, in the words of Abigail Favale, “the dynamic of communion is displaced by a dynamic of possession.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

1. **Unchosen singleness**

Marriage rates in much of the West have been in decline for 40 years. For a variety of reasons, marriage is not *changing* so much as it is *receding*. Fewer people want it in an era of increasing technology, gender equality, expectations, cost of living, and secularization. Marriage is no longer seen as a ***cornerstone for most****, but* ***a capstone for some.[[13]](#footnote-13)***

Perhaps paradoxically, as marriage rates have declined over the past 40 years, research has demonstrated that so has women’s happiness.[[14]](#footnote-14) This has surprised some, as many of the shifts that seemed to propel the marriage recession are typically thought to have advantaged women societally.

As Christians, we can wholeheartedly affirm that singleness can be a beautiful calling from the Lord to be undertaken for his glory and advance of his kingdom. But we should ask ourselves what plummeting marriage rates might mean for a society at large.

Marriage recedes as the system of *atomism* replaces a system of *familism*. That is, the more men and women prioritize individual personal socioeconomic success and personal fulfillment *apart from* one another, the fewer marriages and fewer births there will be, and the less we’ll see the family unit as central to human flourishing.

In Genesis 1-2, marriage and procreation is built into God’s charter for humanity. It’s how he has chosen to maintain and multiply the human race, which glorifies his wisdom as Creator. In one sense, marriage is a kind of default, factory setting.

And yet you can see in Genesis 3 the beginnings of a trajectory of men and women not united together, but as atomized individuals with their own agendas. A downstream effect of this attitude is that many people, including many Christians, will find themselves in a society that by and large is oriented toward different priorities than producing marriageable men & women.

*Alienation from Creation:*

1. **“Deaths of Despair”**

The Brookings Institute scholar and researcher Richard Reeves has recently written that western culture finds itself dealing with the consequences of a “male malaise.”[[15]](#footnote-15) The most tragic symptom of this malaise is the shockingly high and rising male suicide rate. Men have always been more likely to commit suicide than women. This has been true across all cultures for as long as it has been studied. And yet, surprisingly to some, the gap between men and women in suicide is widest in more advanced economies like ours, where men are now 3x as likely than women to take their own life.

There is a male malaise setting in. This crisis has been prompted by many economic and political factors of which Bobby will be teaching on during week 5. All of those factors have created a sense of cultural redundancy between men and women when it comes to work. Men and women are functionally interchangeable for almost all jobs in the modern world. Why does this matter?

Alastair Roberts puts it this way:

Men’s identity is more directly contingent upon, has thrived against the backdrop of, and is more fitted to symbolize an external realm of risk, danger, and meaning, a world with high spiritual stakes, of meaningful action and production, a world where differences and oppositions exist and matter, a world of authority and duty, a world that stands over against us, with its own moral order that we must uphold and advance, a world where claims are pressed upon us and which demands our loyalty and commitment. Simply put, men have a hunger for their work to have meaning.[[16]](#footnote-16)

So what happens when men can no longer find unique meaning in work? They struggle significantly. This is the great tension on the man introduced in the fall. That realm where his identity is to be formed will also kill him. Man was made to work, but his work will frustrate him. The world will not cooperate with him. There will be pain.

As Jesus said, “this was not so in the beginning.”

*Alienation from our bodies:*

1. **Body Image & Gender Dysphoria**

Scripture’s insight that sin not only ushers in alienation towards God, each other, and creation, but also even with our bodies sheds crucial light in understanding contemporary issues with body image and gender dysphoria. Thinker Mary Stanford has written that on this side of the fall women are more characteristically likely to live as if “I am” my body, while men are more likely to see the body merely as something “I have.”

She writes,

“Both perspectives can easily become problematic. The tendency to identify oneself with one’s body can incline women to find self-worth in their physical attributes alone, while men can be tempted to objectify the body by disconnecting it from personal identity. When these views collide, each contributes to a toxic co-dependence between the sexes.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

Thinking more broadly, the reality that the fall has alienated us from our own bodies gives us more critical understanding around the issue of gender dysphoria. One tragic evidence of the fall is that many image bearers in our world, seemingly from an early age, perceive that their “gender identity” is at variance with their biological sex. This has led many to conclude, both with gender dysphoria and without it, that the body is merely something “I have.” This perception is itself influenced by fallen human nature. Scripture teaches instead that we are ensouled bodies, and embodied souls. Both “I am” my body and “I have” my body miss the mark.

Transgenderism seeks to explain and solve why there is this disconnect between the body and the soul, the outer man and the inner. The transgendered person, in seeking to alter the body to conform with the self-understanding, is really seeking wholeness, inner peace, and the reconciliation of the body and the soul. To overcome that alienation between body and soul. This desire for wholeness is not unique to transgenderism. It is something hardwired into each of us, ever since the Fall.

**Conclusion:**

We’ve thought this morning about the varied ways because of the fall our differences *for* one another first began to look more like differences *from* one another. Because of the fall, the creation order, while still in place, has been significantly complicated, and marked by pain. We see this pain everywhere we look, and each of us feels it one way or another. It’s against this backdrop that the reality of Christ taking on a human body himself in order to redeem man and woman, renew them and repurpose them towards his glory becomes all the more glorious. Some of those promises were in our very text we studied. But it’s to that wonderful subject we’ll turn next week.

Let’s pray.

1. "Crafty" (עָרוּם, 'arum) is almost identical in Biblical Hebrew to the word "naked" (עֲרוּמִים, 'arummim, from the root עָרוֹם, 'arom). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Many have interpreted 1 Timothy 2:14 this way: “and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” We do not think Paul is implying here that women are ontologically or intellectually inferior, especially since he so regularly commends women who teach other women and children in the Pastoral Epistles (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15; Titus 2:3-4). Instead, we think Paul is pointing out that the Serpent subverted male leadership and interact directly with Eve *purposely*, to undermine God’s order. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This image is from Jeffrey Hemmer, *Man Up! The Quest for Masculinity* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This sun/moon symbolism is picked up in other places in Scripture. In young Joseph’s dream, sun, moon, and 11 stars represent Jacob, Rachel, and the sons of Jacob (Gen 37:9-11). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The wording here is identical to Gen 4:7 in the case of Cain, to whom God says, “and [sin’s] desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” Her desires will go against the man’s direction. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. It’s no surprise that of the very few passages directed specifically towards husbands in the NT, Paul says “Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them,” right after commanding wives to submit to their husbands as is “fitting” in the Lord (Col 3:18-19) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The phrase can also be read with an additional meaning: that the woman will have an inordinate “urge” / desire to find a man to submit to. This is referenced in the handout: “a frustrated desire for inordinate submission or control.” One effect of the fall is that a woman may be tempted to so long for a relationship with a man that she endures anything to gain it, even to her own harm. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Bobby Jamieson, *Everything is Never Enough*, forthcoming. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Drawing from Jim Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgement* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Definition from Darby Strickland, *Domestic Abuse: Recognize, Respond, Rescue* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. K. Elise Goubet and Evangelia G. Chrysikou, ”Emotion Regulation Flexibility: Gender Differences in Context Sensitivity and Repertoire,” *Frontiers in Psychology,* 10:935 (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Abigail Favale, *The Genesis of Gender* (San Fransisco: Ignatius Press, 2022), 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Cornerstone / Capstone insights drawn from Mark Regnerus, *The Future of Christian Marriage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020)*,* esp 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, “The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness,” *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy 1* (2019), 190-225. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Richard Reeves, *Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male is Struggling, Why it Matters, and What To Do About It* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Alastair Roberts, “Rescuing Christian Masculinity,” available at <https://alastairadversaria.com/2014/11/12/rescuing-christian-masculinity/> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Mary Stanford, “The Body as Symbol: Sex, Objectification, and the Self,” available at <https://fairerdisputations.org/the-body-as-symbol-sex-objectification-and-the-self/> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)