**Man and Woman in Christ Core Seminar**

**Week 12 – Answering Common Questions (Moderated Panel)**

[Note to teacher: For the first portion of this class time, it could be good to invite a mature woman or two from the congregation to prepare a testimony about how she has seen the Bible’s teaching on men and women well lived out, and the difference it has made in her life.]

**Authority Questions**

1. **Question:** Is male headship over women unfair and inherently abusive?
   * Start by acknowledging it can be. And we should lament that, do all we can to guard against it, and hold men accountable when they abuse their authority.
   * Analogy: even apart from the fall, authority is a necessary good, and is woven into the fabric of creation. Think of what a conductor enables an orchestra to do. A conductor is not taking something away from the players, but adding something to the whole.
   * So, headship is meant to be a *form* of provision. A *form* of protection. A form, even, of nurture, contributing to a wife’s flourishing. And the way the Bible tells men to exercise this headship is through sacrificial love.
   * One of the keys to understanding this issue is that, recognizing the ways men and women are built, especially physically, leads us to understand that men will always exercise *a certain kind* of power over women. The question is, will that be loving, sacrificial headship that leads to their flourishing? Or some combination of ungodly domineering and callous neglect?
2. **Question:** How can complementarian churches do well listen to women members? 
   * Start by acknowledging what we’ve covered in this class around the church being a family, examples from Jesus & Paul’s ministry, recognizing the feminine genius, etc.
     1. Could even reference the story of Numbers 27:1-11. There were 5 daughters of a man named Zelophehad, who died without leaving any sons to inherit his property. The daughters bring up something, appeal to what they know of God’s character, and God speaks to Moses & Eleazar the priest and says “They’re right!”
   * Recognize it may take more work to amplify women’s voices given power differential and challenges to meet 1:1 in the same way as men.
   * Having elders who are approachable and get to know sisters, visiting small groups, members meetings, inviting feedback, initiating conversations, focus groups, etc.

**Marriage Questions**

1. **Question:**

* Can you give a good example a wife’s submission in marriage in the context of disagreement?

[Give thoughtful personal examples]

* Can you an example when a wife should not submit to her husband in marriage?
  + Husband has authority of counsel not command. Which means he can not physically enforce his directives like the government can. Therefore any thing that would either be a matter of disobedience to God’s law, or put her in harm’s way, or to submit to any kind of “punishment”, or to transgress her conscience… he does not have jurisdiction in those ways. He is to live in an understanding way with her.
  + You won’t find a passage that directs husbands to “rule” or “command” or “lead with authority.” The directives are to love (Eph 5:28, Col 3:19), not to be harsh (Col 3:19), live in an understanding way (1 Pet 3:7), show honor (1 Pet 3:7), provide (1 Tim 5:8). His yoke is meant to be “easy” like Christ’s.
  + Submission then is not something he should *demand*
  + *Thinking more about conscience…*
  + *Example: Woman* who stays at a church, when Husband wants to leave, despite her flourishing.
  + His authority is “conscience binding”. He does have the authority to say “should” but not in areas she would understand would cause her to sin or to be deeply unwise. In those situations she has the ability to appeal to spiritual authorities, to aim to persuade her husband, and even in some circumstances not “submit.”
  + Sometimes she will not have an option. This is where inevitably she is more vulnerable.

1. **Question:** Is it ok to be a stay-at-home Dad?

* Bible doesn’t explicitly prohibit this, so I won’t make an absolute rule. In itself, not intrinsically sinful. There might well be some situations where, due to certain limits or circumstances, it’s the only option, or seems the best option available. (Meaning, that somehow a wife needs to work outside the home and a husband is unable.)
* However, we have to quickly acknowledge that it stands in tension with *both* men and women’s psychological wiring, and with God’s ordained patterns for men and women. So we should recognize it’s against the grain. Swimming upstream against a strong current. Not a neutral, flip-a-coin, equally valid option.
* In situations where both mom and dad work, and the mother significantly out-earns the father, it could be prudent to limit a father’s work outside the home so that he can give more time to nurturing their kids. In that circumstance it would be important to help that father find other ways to exercise his gifts, lead and provide for others, and do things that earn him respect and status, whether in the church, neighborhood, or broader community. Things like leading in church, coaching teams, serving in public-oriented volunteer opportunities.
* Also, there’s a significant difference between a father having *no* paid work, or *no* contribution to the family’s subsistence, and a mother earning a larger share of it.
* Men and women are differently oriented toward the nurture and care of children. While not an absolute rule, more women have more of a desire to provide constant care for their kids, and that difference of desire is relevant to thinking through a family’s priorities.

**Workplace Questions**

1. **Question:**

* What counsel would you have for women who have authority over men in the workplace?
  + - To men & women: It is wise to pursue worldly endeavors that embrace and encourage your identity as a man or woman, rather than undermine or suppress it.
    - Recognize that the modern workplace is built to mute sexual difference.
  + When a woman finds herself in a position of authority over men, she should fulfill that role without giving up—much less rejecting—her God-given femininity. In other words, a woman should not feel that she has to adopt an air of hyper-masculinity to function well in her leadership role. She also should work against any temptation to be relationally cold or distant from her employees in an attempt to seem more masculine or less feminine. Many studies have suggested that women tend, in general, to lead differently than their male counterparts—to put it bluntly, in a relationship-oriented fashion as opposed to a task-oriented fashion—and that they are much more effective in their leadership when they don’t try to affect a masculine air. That’s not surprising to those who believe that men and women are actually different. Perhaps the bottom line is this: If you are a manager and a woman, then be a manager and a woman.
* Relatedly: what counsel would you have for men who are under a female authority?
  + “Having a female boss is no different than having a king, a master, a mother, and a sister. In fact, it’s precisely like having all of those wrapped into one. Your female boss is worthy of the petitions a subject gives on behalf of his king, the hard work a servant gives his master, the honor a son gives his mother, and the protection a brother gives his sister.”
    - Pray, work diligently, honor her, protect her

**Church Question**

1. **Question:** How does this church think about deaconesses?
   * We understand that the office of deacon is devoted to serving the church in practical ways and promoting the unity of the church through handling material needs. So we don’t understand that there is any element of authoritative teaching or pastoral oversight, which is what Paul forbids of women in 1 Timothy 2:12. In other words, there’s no biblical reason why women can’t serve as deacons.
   * Further, we understand that in 1 Timothy 3:11, which treats deacon qualifications, you could translate either “their wives” or “the women.” We think translating as “the women” makes by far the most sense. In other words, in 1 Timothy 3:11 Paul seems to explicitly be addressing the qualifications of female deacons.
   * And in Romans 16:1 Phoebe is called a “deacon” of the church at Cenchrae. You could translate that word as “servant” in a general sense, but it seems most likely that she was actually a deaconess.
   * So we gladly and joyfully have women serve as deacons, in a wide variety of roles, and our church is immensely helped and enriched by women’s service in those areas.

**Parenting Question**

1. **Question:** 
   * What advice do you have for parents for children who seem to be opposite of typical gender stereotypes?
   * “Better for a parent to expand visions for masculinity or femininity than to narrow a child to fit a cultural stereotype.”
   * [I might fill this in more later]

**Questions for congregants**

1. What so far from the classes has clarified or refined your understanding of Sexual Difference as relates to various spheres?
2. What are some applications that you have found helpful as you try to follow Jesus in light sexual differences?
3. Any good examples in your life of where you have seen sexual differences highlighted?