

Confronting Christianity

Week #4

Small Group Notes

Introduction:

Ice breaker: Share about a time when you needed help to get something significant accomplished. How thankful were you for the help?

This week we are going to look at the criticism that asks “Doesn’t the bible devalue women?” There are many who say that bible is just too old fashioned when it comes to gender or gender roles. Words like “helper” or “submit” are some of the most contentious. The criticisms are long but let’s see what the Bible actually teaches. For this we need to go back to the beginning.

Discuss:

1. Genesis 2-3

Explain: In Genesis Ch.2-3, we see the creation of Adam and Eve as well as how God’s order is then thrown into chaos by that first human couple’s disobedience. We see that God created man and woman in His image and that man and woman are to reflect His image in their own unique ways. Man is meant to work, cultivate and steward God’s creation; and the woman is, according to the book of Genesis 2:18, a helper “fit for the man.” Unfortunately, Adam shirked his duty in leading his wife (2:16-17) and Eve rejected both God’s and Adam’s headship (3:5-6). As a result, creation is thrown into disorder, with consequences that disrupt all the harmonious relationships that God had previously established. Adam and Eve and their decedents are plunged into alienation from both God and from one another and death enters the world. But even in the punishment, we see glimpses of God’s grace. (3:15)

Ask: 2-3 Discussion questions related to the content.

- ❖ **How would you respond to someone who says that the bible demeans women? Have you ever struggled with that criticism?**
- ❖ **Have a volunteer read Genesis 2:18-25. What do you think it means for Eve to be a helper?**
 - The idea of “Helper” (Hb. ‘ezer) is one who supplies strength in the area that is lacking in “the helped.”

- ❖ **Do you feel like a helper is less than? Why or why not?**
 - *A helper can never be less than the one needing the help because God Himself is often called our “helper” (c.f. Exodus 18:4, Deuteronomy 33:7). Since God has been called a helper, a helper cannot be inherently inferior.*
- ❖ **What is the significance of Eve being made from Adam’s rib?**
 - *The bible has always valued women.*
 - *It is a reminder that woman was created to be “beside” man. Together, the man and woman complement one another in marriage, and in Christ they are coheirs of the grace of life (1Peter 3:7)*
- ❖ **What do you think it means for Eve to be “fit for him” (2:18)?**
 - *Man and woman are meant to complement one another, not compete against one another. The weaknesses of the one is strengthened by the strengths of the other, and the strengths of the other one are made even stronger by their strengths of the other.*
- ❖ **Have someone read Genesis 3:1-7. In what ways did Adam fail to live up to his role?**
 - *(See 3:6) Adam was passive. He was there the whole time but there was no record of him saying anything about what God had commanded. He failed to lead.*
- ❖ **In what ways did Eve fail to live up to her role?**
 - *Passivity is not an excuse. She shares the blame for not helping Adam rise to the occasion. She failed to help.*
- ❖ **Gen 3 How did Eve’s relationship to Adam change when sin entered the world?**
 - *(v.16) “To the woman God said, “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” The Hebrew term here translated “desire” (*teshuqah*) appears again in 4:7 and communicates will to possess and master. The united love story between men and women is marred. Now there is conflict and power struggle.*
- ❖ **How has the relationship between men and women been affected by sin over the course of history?**
 - *It’s a vicious cycle. We’ve seen chauvinism, abuse, and misogyny and in turn we’ve also seen feminism, and misandry.*
- ❖ **In what ways have you personally witnessed the disfunction between men and women?**

❖ **Where in the curses could Eve find hope?**

- *(Read Genesis 3:15) There is hope even in the fall! God promised Satan that the “seed” of the woman would “strike (his) head.” Someday, the seed of the woman would come and destroy Satan and the evil work he began on that day. The hope Eve had was none other than the hope of Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve heard the gospel for the first time, and Eve knew that one day, she would have a son who would take away her sin and destroy the works of Satan.*

2. Luke 24:1-12.

Explain: In Jesus’ day, both Jewish and Roman societies were patriarchal, meaning men were considered the heads of their homes. Women could not vote and were considered the property of their husbands. Women had very little social, political, or cultural power. In fact, in court, a woman’s testimony was deemed less trustworthy than a man’s. And yet, in this patriarchal culture, God chose three women to be the very first evangelists.

- ❖ **Have a volunteer read Luke 24:1-12. Who were the first people to see Jesus after His resurrection? What did they do with this information (vv. 8-9)?**
- ❖ **What do you know about how women were perceived in first-century culture? Does it surprise you that the first witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection were women? Why or why not?**
- ❖ **Jesus valued their witness. What are some other ways that Jesus uplifted women during his ministry?**
 - *Jesus valued women’s education. Jesus consistently weaved women into his preaching and addressed them when teaching.*
 - *Jesus understood women’s struggles, and lifted them up.*
 - *Jesus gently confronted their sin (John 8)*
- ❖ **How does Jesus redeem manhood and womanhood?**

2. Ephesians 5:21-32

Explain: As time allows, we will look at another part of scripture that many critics claim devalues women. Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament is often called a misogynist because he calls wives to submit to their husbands in Ephesians 5. In the ancient world, women were often oppressed by men. Women also had few legal rights and were considered

unworthy of education. Husbands often treated their wives as fit only for keeping house and raising children. Paul gave Christian wives great dignity by speaking to them as moral agents capable of good decisions. On the basis of their personal relationship with Jesus, wives were to submit to their husbands. He viewed this as an act of service to Christ.

❖ **Why do some react negatively to Paul's instruction to wives? How would you answer their objections to the concept of "submitting"?**

- *Jesus submitted to the will of the Father. (c.f. Luke 22:42) Therefore, submission cannot be inherently inferior. A helper is not less than, and to submit to God's will ultimately means joy and freedom.*

❖ **In what ways do women look to revise God's instructions to them?**

- Contractual vs. obedience.

❖ **How might men be tempted to miss the context and whole of God's instruction to them?**

- Sacrificial

❖ **How is a husband called to love his wife?**

❖ **How does the relationship between husband and wife reveal the gospel?**

❖ **APPLICATION: How we live this out in our marriages and other relationships may speak more to critics than well-crafted arguments.**

- **Men, what can you do this week to step forward in your spiritual leadership role in your home?**
- **Women, what can you do to support your husband's spiritual leadership this week?**

Close: **How can we be praying for one another? How can we encourage one another this week?**