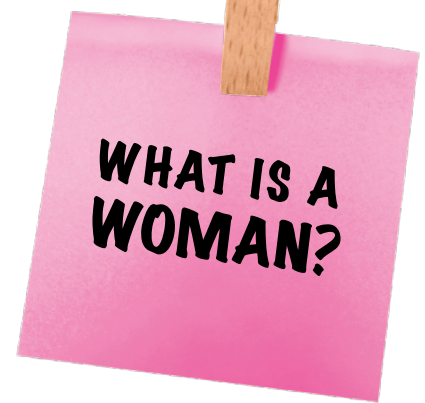


WHAT IS A  
**WOMAN**  
ACCORDING  
**TO GOD?**

A white silhouette of a woman in profile, facing right, is positioned behind the main text on the pink card. She has her hair pulled back and is wearing a simple dress or top.

BY DR. OWEN STRACHAN



What is a woman? You might think that this is a simple question. In recent years, however, it has become as hard to answer for many people as an algebra problem, the kind some of us once sweated out in high school. This confusion was captured in a memorable video from a few years ago. Interviewer Joseph Backholm went to the 2020 “Women’s March” in Washington, D. C., and asked numerous women the seemingly straightforward question: “What is a woman?”<sup>1</sup>

Backholm rarely got a clear or coherent answer. Here is some of what he heard that day:

*That’s a trick question.*

*Someone who chooses to express themselves, it can be in a feminine way, or it can be in a non-binary way as well.*

*We can express our womanhood in soooo many ways, that it is just unfathomable.*

*Anyone that identifies as a woman—it’s as simple as that.*

These answers range from the humorous to the bewildering. A common thread emerges from these responses: many women marching in support of women couldn’t articulate what womanhood is. This is a perfect picture of our gender confusion today; outside of this event, many people today have no more clarity than these answers represent.

Thankfully, Christians know what a woman is. This is not because of our brilliance. This is because God has defined womanhood in his Word. Let’s consider three key elements of biblical womanhood, truths that we fathers and mothers should teach to our children as they navigate a confused world today.

## **THE BIBLE TEACHES WHAT A WOMAN IS**

God creates and defines womanhood in Genesis 2, the foundational text for understanding the sexes. From Genesis 2, we can observe three truths about womanhood.



<sup>1</sup> “How Does the Women’s March Define What a Woman Is?” What Would You Say?, January 22, 2020, accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ax-rB7ieV0o&t=149s>.



## FIRST, WOMANHOOD BEGINS WITH THE BODY.

The woman's body comes from the man's body. Hers is distinct from his.

This distinctness is not a floating

essence, as if anyone can embody the spirit

of womanhood. To the contrary, womanhood is embodied in

every woman. In the simplest form, we communicate to our children that if you have a

girl's body, you are a girl. (This goes all the way down to the level of genetics; if your genes are an XX pattern, you're a woman, if an XY pattern, you're a man. Sin can mess with these realities and distort the body, but we nonetheless find clarity in God's design of our body.)



## SECOND, WOMANHOOD IS CONNECTED WITH HELPING AND NURTURING.

The woman is called the "helper" of the man in verse 18. This does not mean something inferior, as people often think today. In our culture, we often associate "helping" with low-ability jobs and undistinguished tasks. But this is not at all how the Bible presents helping. Helping in the biblical picture is exalted. Like serving, helping means you have the strengths and skills that others need. In the Bible, God is called the "helper" of his people, and Jesus identified Himself as the divine "servant."

Women are gifted by God in so many wonderful ways. Women are specially formed by the Creator to help, nurture, bear life, care for children with special intuition, and offer wisdom about all sorts of matters. Womanhood is thus not a "lesser" reality than manhood; it is distinct, equal to manhood, and women bless the world in too many ways to count.

## THIRD, THE WOMAN IS COMPLEMENTARY TO THE MAN.

In the creational account, the woman is not made to be alone. The Bible does teach in 1 Corinthians 7 that some people are called by God to singleness, and this is God's good plan for them. But most people are called to marriage. This is according to God's design from the beginning.

In the biblical vision, a woman is made—as God leads her—to be a wife. She is made to follow a husband's godly leadership in the home through a submissive life. She does not compete with him; she complements him. Sexually, socially, and in their roles, the man and the woman beautifully fit together as God saves, grows, and matures them.

## CONTEMPORARY CONFUSION AND THE LGBTQ AGENDA

Sadly, many people today have lost sight—or openly rejected—the truths we just covered. They have been fed lies, and they are buying them. They do not think that the body determines identity; they think that feelings (and desires) determine identity. If you feel like a woman, you are one; if you naturally desire the same gender sexually, then that desire should be affirmed. You are your feelings, our culture tells us all; you are your desires.

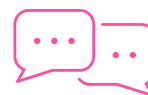
We are watching today as our society awkwardly morphs to fit this new understanding of identity. As just a few examples, we are seeing the following trends play out all around us:



- **Boys are playing girl's sports against girls, and causing them real physical harm.**



- **Boys are entering girl's locker rooms and restrooms, violating the needed privacy of girls.**



- **A new code of language has been concocted around "preferred pronouns" and gender identity.**



- **The bodies of children are being warped and mutilated through exploratory surgery and powerful pills.**



- **In law and public policy, "discrimination" has been reinterpreted as failing to affirm someone's feelings and declared self-understanding.**



- **Being a Christian and standing for manhood and womanhood is now seen as "hateful."**

We have to educate our children about these lies. As fathers and mothers, we cannot pretend that everyone agrees with the Christian worldview or even what we could call the traditional sexual ethic. Many, it is now clear, do not. You and I may lament this, but our chief role is not to wring our hands in anxiety over these trends. Our calling is to train our children in God's ways, to lean on God's grace, and to stand for the truth of God's Word.

For more information, visit our resource page [Transgenderism: Truth and Grace](#).



## WHAT FATHERS AND MOTHERS TEACH ABOUT THE SEXES



We really have two major tasks today. We have to walk our kids carefully through the gender confusion playing out all around us, as we've covered above. Our second duty is this: to help our kids know and even celebrate the goodness of God's design. To do this, we can communicate simple truths like these:

- **God made you a girl or a boy for His glory.**
- **It's excellent and unique to be a girl or a boy.**
- **Dad and Mom love that you are a girl or a boy.**
- **But we can't do anything we want with our bodies, as our sinful nature tells us we can.**
- **We need to use our bodies in a way that glorifies God according to Scripture.**
- **The gospel empowers us to live the way God wants us to live as boys or girls.**
- **Our identity is not based in how we feel; it's based in:**
  - a) **God's design and**
  - b) **the body God gave us.**

There is no perfect formula for training our children to affirm the truths listed above. There is not one foolproof method that will ensure that they grow up to be godly men or women. Instead of an equation, God has created the family. The family is where children learn the goodness of God's design as their father and mother both teach this, but also live it out with real joy and conviction.

If our child is indeed dealing with a clinical diagnosis of gender dysphoria, we also must understand the depth of this mental and emotional struggle. Yet, even in these situations, the spiritual reality of God's design is still present. This is where God's grace, the giftedness of a caring Christian counselor, pastoral guidance, and the unrelenting love of parents must come into play.



Our goal is this: we want our kids to understand the Lord's plan for the sexes. We want them to know God's perfect truth. But in order for this to happen, we need God's grace to work in their lives. All this drives us to prayer. We pray that, as God works in their heart and mind to save them, that each child will rejoice in being a boy or girl. From there, we pray that they will live as a man or a woman in adulthood to the glory of God. In cultural terms, this may feel impossible, but let us not forget what Scripture tells us: with God, all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

## CONCLUSION

"What is a woman?" Many people either don't know how to answer this question today, or don't want to answer it. This is a sad season. However, that should not be our primary response to our modern gender confusion. Our primary response should be to speak the truth, stand for the truth, and watch as God graciously works to lead people out of turmoil and into hope, love, and peace in Christ.

This is a hard time, yes. But as fathers and mothers, we need to know this: it is a harvest time as well. It is a time when the clear light of God's Word shines very brightly. This is true as we raise our children in strange and distressing days. It may seem that the darkness threatens to snuff out the light; it may, at times, feel that way to you and me. Christian parents need to remember daily, however, that light has come into the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:5).

It never will.



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