

The Christian and Feminism

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I. What is Feminism?

A humanistic response to the historical oppression of women. The Feminist would like to eliminate the distinction between male and female, or in more radical forms, have a female dominant society.

This power struggle between the sexes was predicted as a result of the fall in Genesis 3:16

II. Different by Design

God's design is an ordered universe.

- Beginning with God we find three persons with differing roles (The Father plans, the Son executes the plan, and the Holy Spirit applies the plan to the hearts of men)
- In the angelic realm we are told there are "principalities and powers in heavenly *places*". (Eph 3:10, Eph 6:12)
- In God-ordained human civil government there is hierarchal authority (Rom. 13:1)
- In any effective military structure there is a strict code of discipline as to rank and command
- In the Assembly there is a defined government
- Between men and women there is also a divinely appointed order.

In all of the above example there is no idea of differing values or superiority-vs-inferiority, but only order of operation.

God's design is a balanced Universe

Atomic structures held together by opposite forces, Magnetism(N&S poles), Electricity (+/- potential) In the same way we have the complimentary characteristics of Masculine and Feminine. (Gen.1: 27) And God created Man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Psalm 139:13-14 "For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works! Thou knowest me right well."

This "wonderful" design includes our gender.

A. In Creation

- Just as Eve was fashioned so as to correspond to Adam in a physical way, so she complimented him socially, intellectually, spiritually and emotionally.
- The word translated "help" is used of God. It means to support or succor, and is in no way a statement or inference of inferiority.
- Headship was established before the fall.
For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).
" What cause? We can understand the reason only when we explain the command. Man is to leave his parents, not in the sense of avoiding his responsibility to them (e.g. Mark 7:10-13; Ephesians 6:2-3), but in the sense of being dependent upon them. He must cease to live under their headship and begin to function alone as the head of a new home.
- The divine origin of marriage means it is no mere social invention (or convention), but a divine institution for man. Because God joins a man and woman in marriage, it is a permanent union: "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matthew 19:6).
- The fact that Adam preceded his wife in creation and that Eve was brought forth from Adam also establishes the reasons why the husband is to exercise headship over his wife in marriage (I Corinthians 11:8-9; I Timothy 2:13). The role of women in the church is not just Paul's idea, restricted to the time and culture of the Corinthian or Ephesian Christians. The biblical role of women is established on the biblical account of creation (see also I Corinthians 14:34).

B. Throughout the whole of Scripture.

Throughout each dispensation (the different eras of God's dealings with man) God-ordained leadership has always been male. Adam, Noah, Moses, Kings, Prophets, Apostles, Elders....

Note the exceptions:

Deborah the prophetess – She insisted that Barak lead the army at the command of the Lord (Jud. 4)

Jezebel – Her husband, king Ahab was spineless – so to speak (1 Kings 21)

C. Common sense (I Cor. 11:14) “Nature itself teaches”...that it is a shame to blur the distinction between men and women (hair length is the example)

III. The Way Things have Become – The modern view

A. The response to historical abuses.

The goals of feminist movement are not all bad. In many societies (most actually) women’s civil rights have been trodden on, or are non-existent.

It is only fair that women should have equal pay for equal work, voting rights, equal standing under the law etc.

B. Unfortunately the Feminist movement has gone far beyond equal rights to:

Rejection of Christianity because the Bible refers to God as “Father” – full acceptance of Humanism

Denial of gender uniqueness – Social pressure is blamed for “role modeling”

General despising of all things masculine – Many radical feminists are lesbians.

Child rearing deemed to be a menial task to be hired out.

Ironically, the freedom that allowed the Feminist movement to happen in the first place, is the freedom and elevated position found only in societies heavily influenced by Christianity!

IV. Problems that Result

Personal - Identity crisis

Men are afraid to be men because of social intimidation, so they abdicate leadership.

Women are embarrassed to be “Keepers at home” (Titus 2:5) – “Keeper” means manager or steward

Family - Conflict and blurring of roles, children w/o a full time mother

Interestingly, the scriptures equate a women’s greatest power and influence with her raising of children. (1 Tim 2:15)

Note how many times the scriptures record regarding a king, “And his mother’s name was...”

Societal - A diminishing (and even minimizing) the value of motherhood

There is actually a slow swing back towards traditional single breadwinner families as many women find their career is less fulfilling than promised, and someone else is raising her children.

In the Assembly – Chafing under the scriptural boundaries for men and women.

As more church denominations are ordaining women to the ministry, assembly women might ask “Are we being unfairly suppressed?”

And is a head covering really necessary or is 1 Cor. 11 really a 1st century cultural situation?

V. What should be our response?

Recognize that an infinitely wise God has designed both men and women for a purpose.

In both places that the Scriptures record “God created man (mankind) in His own image” these words are followed by, “male and female created He them”. (Gen 1:27, 5:2)

Actively support sisters that are following the scriptural model of managing a home and raising their children.

Recognize the scriptural roles of men and women in the assembly and follow them.

Men – Public participation

Leadership roles (elders and public teachers)

Women – Silent participation in public gatherings (1Co 14:34, 1Ti 2:12)

Gospel work (Php 4:3) “help those women which laboured with me in the gospel”

The primary “social workers” of the assembly - “Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchoa ...for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. (Rom 16:1-2)

Establishment of a Godly environment by appearance and character (1 Tim 2:9-10, 5:14, Titus 2:3-4)

Teaching (Titus 2:3-4)

As an Assembly, obey the scriptural mandate of the head covering as a public display of the spiritual truth of headship as taught in 1 Cor. 11.