

Reconciliation with Men!

Your Reconciling Mission

Jeremiah 31:27-34; Ephesians 5:22 - 6:4

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A corporation installed a supercomputer. The supervisor asked five underlings to name it. Two men and three women met but could not achieve consensus. The men thought the computer should have a girl's name because:

- ☞ No one but their creator understands their logic.
- ☞ Even the smallest mistakes are immediately committed to memory for future reference.
- ☞ The native language used to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else.
- ☞ As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your paycheck on accessories for it.

The women reasoned it should be named after a man because:

- ☞ They have a lot of data but are still clueless.
- ☞ It is always necessary to have a backup.
- ☞ They'll do whatever you say if you push the right buttons.
- ☞ The lights are on but nobody's home.

This humor thinly cloaks the truth that there is a great deal of pain between the sexes. Do some of you remember the bitter gender fights in the early 1970s? One of the more humorous yet influential skirmishes was a tennis match labeled *The Battle of the Sexes*.

Over thirty thousand people piled into Houston's Astrodome, the most ever for a tennis match, to see Billy Jean King play against Bobby Riggs.

Riggs was unknown in the tennis world until he boasted that he would win the singles, doubles and mixed doubles championships at the 1939 Wimbledon. He heavily bet on himself to do it at 200 to 1 odds. He won them all. His tennis playing, however, was cut short by World War II and military service. He returned to tennis more as a hustler than a professional doing exhibitions. Riggs saw the sexual tension of 1970s as a money-making opportunity. He made disparaging remarks about women's tennis and challenged the top 5 players to play him. Margaret Smith Court took the challenge and lost in two straight sets on Mother's Day 1973. Shortly thereafter, King challenged Riggs to a winner-take-all match with a prize of \$10,000.

King had won her first Wimbledon championship in 1966 and received a gift certificate for tennis clothes rather than prize money. She was spearheading the charge to change all that.

King won *The Battle of the Sexes* in three straight sets. She dominated smashing shots that Riggs could not reach. Of the 34 points she scored in the first set, 26 blazed by Riggs untouched. Women's tennis and athletics were never viewed the same.

The battle of the sexes dates back further than that tennis match, however. It goes back to the curse of Genesis 3. In Genesis the serpent, woman and man are all cursed. Each suffers in humanity's fall. One of the two curses that women face is phrased this way.

Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you (Gen. 3:16).

We misunderstand Scriptures when we think the biblical role of a man is to rule over a woman. Christians aren't called to perpetuate curses. We are called to liberate people from curses. We don't liberate people, however, by ignoring innate differences or trying to make people act all the same. There is no unisex. God made us different. God made us male and female, not for our pain but for our good. The sexes were created before the fall. Sexual differences existed before the fall.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule" So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule..." (Gen 1:26-28).

Both to men and women, God said, "Rule." No where did God say, "rule over one another." God made the man and the woman in His image, and he told them to rule the earth. When men rule over women, they violate women's standing as people made in the

image of God. We don't reflect God as slaves. We reflect God as rulers, as partners in His rule. Our sexual differences reflect the breadth and depth of the God who made us.

Child studies reveal differences between boys and girls in verbal skills and social patterns. Observe the average preschool girl at play, and you'll hear a small child talking and relating. Watch preschool boys, and you'll hear guttural sounds rather than conversation. From their little mouths come the whine of a lift or the sputter of an engine.

Physiological studies reveal significant differences between the sexes in the distribution of skeletal muscle. Men generally exhibit more physical strength and seem more suited for physical tasks of provision and protection.

Sociological studies show also distinct differences between the sexes in goals and perspectives. In general men like to conquer tasks and women like to experience things. Men like to conquer trips. Women like to experience and discuss them. Men want to conquer 500 miles. They want to negotiate those miles with the fewest stops possible and without asking for help. Those miles are a test of their skill and acumen. They will conquer. Women want an enjoyable and interesting trip. Women like to experience shopping. Men want to conquer it and move on.

These sexual differences are not flaws to be overcome. They are gifts to be enjoyed. They have purpose. Fathers may not be great at knowing and expressing how they feel, but they are uniquely equipped to serve as a source and security for a family. They are equipped to provide and protect.

When the Apostle Paul wrote that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He wasn't saying that the husband is the ruler of the wife. He was saying that the husband is the source or provider for the wife. Paul was a Jewish rabbi. The Jews never used the term "head" to describe leadership. In Hebrew you would never say someone is the "head" of a corporation. You would talk about the "head" of a river. The husband was the source/provider for the woman, even as Jesus is the source/provider for the church.

As women mothered children, their dependency on men became a curse. Men, corrupted by sin, held the purse strings and thus the power. Men, corrupted by sin, used their strength selfishly rather than to see their wives and children fulfill their potential. Equipped to bring security, we sowed insecurity with our tainted and perverted love. What was meant for good became a curse. As a result, married women often feel used, abused and trapped.

Fathers are to serve as generous sources of provision and security, and also as spiritual models. When a father and mother attend worship together, 80 percent of the children continue to worship as adults. When just the mother attends, 30 percent of the children continue as adults. When just the father attends, 70 percent of the children continue as adults. Fathers make a tremendous impact on the spiritual vision of their children.

Fathers serve as self-image "shapers". Children's confidence and security seem to hinge on their relationships with their fathers. Indeed, the key indicator as to whether sons and daughters will be passive or aggressive, promiscuous or drug abusers is their relationships to their fathers.

Jesus used the term "father" as a spiritual analogy for our relationship with God. He called God "Father," and taught us to relate similarly. If we've had problems with our earthly father, we'll need some healing to fully grasp the love of our heavenly father.

Because there are differences, the Bible teaches us to relate differently. It tells wives not to fight against their husbands, but to respect and build them up. Their husbands can become great sources of provision and security. The Bible tells husbands to invest their lives in making their wives flourish. Do for your wife what Jesus did for the church. The church will be Christ's glory, your wife will be yours. The Bible tells children to obey and honor parents. In doing so, they will be protected and prosper. The Bible tells fathers to not act as slave-masters with their children but as tutors. Don't exasperate them, bring them up: relate, train and instruct in the Lord's way.

The problem is we all fall short. We live with broken relationships. Men, we must admit that we've become a curse to women. A great many suffer with such resentment and hurt. You can hear it in their voices. Often their words are laced with bitterness.

Three years ago, I met with 30 to 40 leaders from around the world who are spearheading the advance of the Christian church in this new century. Some were oblivious to the pain of Christian women. Tension thickened in our meeting as hurt spilled out of some of the women's mouths and as some of the male leaders became defensive. A pastor from Singapore interrupted us. He knelt and wept. He sobbed and sobbed. He confessed his sin and the sins of Asian men against women. He begged for forgiveness. Soon other men did the same. I couldn't say a word. My nose was running, and my tears were streaming. In that crushing agony, reconciliation began.

Men, if our relationships are to be healed, *we must face the pain*. We must become sensitive to our hurtful ways. *We must take responsibility* and acknowledge the actions and attitudes that leave women wounded and embittered. We must *seek to correct* those things. We must seek assistance if we have trouble changing. We are called as Christians to bless women, not curse them. We're called to make our wives flourish. We must *seek their forgiveness* and acknowledge that we can't repay the debt. We must rely on them to release us from our debt.

Women, you can be healed. Your desire for your husband is good, and you can help him. *Fully forgive*. Destroy his record of sins. Use it against him no longer. Instead, *accept his hand of friendship*. Communicate honestly how his actions affect you, and learn how you affect him. *Affirm and appreciate whatever your husband does well*. What you praise will be repeated.

As reconciled believers, we have a reconciling mission. We can't force reconciliation, but we can invite it. Oh, how we need to invite it. Let's pray for it.