

Session 3—God’s Design for Humanity: Womanhood

We need to talk about biblical womanhood now. We need to talk about womanhood. We're still in Genesis 2 in our intentional progression of exegesis in the conference. We talked in the last session about biblical manhood. And as we move ahead in Genesis 2—yes, we got into Genesis 3 at the end there, the fall. We needed to do that. We know where this story is heading. Yes, Eden does not stay what it was made to be. But we've got to go back again, and we've got to talk about verses 18 and following because in verse 18 of Genesis 2 we learned that it is not good for the man to be alone. Now, this does not mean, very quickly, that singleness is bad or wrong. We know from 1 Corinthians 7 from a single man, the apostle Paul, who was saved by a single savior, Jesus Christ—He was never married in physical terms—we know we have a good case for biblical singleness. But fundamentally, we also know that it is God's general design for the human race for men and women to come together in one-man, one-woman, lifelong, covenantal marriage, in terms of the design of God. I have a category for divorce if there are allowable circumstances. I think there are, biblically, and even remarriage in biblically allowable terms. There's debate in the Christian community in the conservative evangelical world over that. I don't know where everybody in the room is on that. I know there's some different positions, and we respect those. I personally believe there are grounds for both of those realities.

But we know that in foundational, intentional terms, marriage is good. Marriage is God's design, and marriage is not whatever humanity makes marriage to be. Marriage has been defined from the outset. This goes back to last night, where I tried to assert to you from the biblical text, not from me, that what God has made man cannot unmake. The ancient mark that God has set, man cannot move it. Man can delude himself—don't misunderstand me—into thinking he can move the ancient mark, can't he? Mankind can assault the design of God. Mankind can try to undo the design of God, but do not be mistaken, marriage has been made by God, has been defined by God, and no one can redefine it.

They may tell us they can. Pride month, for example, may be a prime opportunity for people to signal that marriage has changed in America. And, yes, in 2015 our society did allow at the federal level for homosexual marriage. OK, so some of you may have confusion over what I'm saying. You may be thinking, understandably, “But they have redefined it.” They have tried to redefine it. They have passed redefinitions into law. But I'm simply trying to say to you at this point, no one has redefined marriage. No one has

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redefined humanity. No one has actually found a way for men to become women or women to become men. People think they have. They very much think they have, and they're going to tell you they have, yes? And they're going to hold you to the account of their ideology. And you're the bad guy, and they're the good guy.

But we are breathing pure oxygen here, aren't we? And we're trusting in the Word of God, are we not? And we stand on the Word of God, and we say let God be true and every man a liar. And that's what we say. And that's how we live. Not in anger, not in hatred of flesh and blood. We do not wage war against flesh and blood, Paul tells us. But we wage war against the devil. We wage war against principalities and powers. And we stand in the armor of God, Ephesians 6. And we dare to say, no, God is true, and every man is a liar. It is not that God is a liar and every man is right. It is the opposite. And that's—brothers and sisters, you have to have that conviction. You have to have it from the Word of God. God gives it to you as a gift. But you also have to nail that in.

Or to switch the metaphor, you have to be like ship captains of old, when the seas would get wild. This is a very New England-shaped metaphor, as you can imagine. But I mean, some of you know, when you're out to sea as a ship captain, a whaler or something like that, those waves aren't five feet or ten feet or fifteen feet, right? Those waves are twenty, thirty, forty, fifty feet. It's like climbing a hill. It's like climbing a mountain when they come at you. And the ship captains of old in the nineteenth century, they would take a rope and they would tie themselves to the mast when those waves got so big. There's nothing to do. There's no bailing water that's going to get you out of this. There's no rowing that's going to get you out of this. There's nothing for the crew to do. The crew has done everything the crew can do. The last thing to do in very bad circumstances as a captain is tie yourself to the mast, come what may. Here we go. We're looking at a fifty-foot wave. We don't know whether we're going to live or whether we're going to die, but I'm tied to the mast and I'm trusting in that.

In a spiritual sense, that's what every Christian needs to do. Not some of you, that's what every one of you needs to do in 2024 in America. You need to tie yourself to the mast of the Word of God and the gospel of God and you need to know that the waves are high. You know this already, but you need to know they may very well get higher. I don't know. I'm not telling you they will. I don't know what's going to happen. We got an election coming up. Have you heard about that? Did you know that? We have an election coming up. So good, we're already divided, we can be much more divided again in the fall. That's going to be really fun. Whatever happens politically, whatever is going

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to play out there, whatever is happening civilizationally, that is not given to you to know, that's not given to podcasters to know, that's not given to conservative talk show hosts to know, that's not given to pastors and theologians to know.

What we do know is that we've got to stand on this, yes? So tie yourself to this. Go deep in this. Drink of this. Draw near to God and experience His love through this. And know that whatever happens in your own localized life and in your community and in your country and in your world, whatever shakes us, whatever seventy-foot waves we face and we are headed toward, if we stand on the Word, we stand on the solid rock and we will be secure and God will get us all home. God is going to get every last one of you who is a believer in the Lord Jesus home. You're going home. You're going to be safe. He's going to keep you. He's that strong and that sovereign and that good. So let God be true and every man a liar.

God has said it is not good for the man to be alone. We know this is true, at least for many of us, that God uses that “not good-ness” that you feel in some undefinable way in your bones when you're starting to be in those teenage years or late teens or early twenties. So many of us know that it is not good for us to be in this state, man and woman alike. Marriage is getting delayed and more delayed in our society. The average age of marriage is getting higher and higher. And many young men and young women are languishing because of that in this civilization. Again, I wouldn't be one who would push for marriage at a certain time. And I wouldn't say you got to get married as soon as you possibly can, but I would say we've got to know that God's plan for many of us to enjoy a happy life for His glory is for us to enter marriage, and so we want to honor that and know that that is true.

The Lord said that the man needed a helper fit for him in verse 18 of Genesis 2. This is pre-fall. This isn't God saying to the man that he's an idiot or a goofball or he can't get anything done without a woman to hector him and lead him and tell him what to do. That would be feminism talking, not the Bible talking. The Lord did, however, see that the man was not made to be self-sufficient. Men aren't made, most of us, in terms of marriage, to be a loner. We're made needing a helper. So it's like God looked at Adam and said, “Bro, you need help. You need some help. I'm going to provide help to you in the form of the woman.” Specifically, of course, the help is going to come in multiple dimensions, but it's going to come through, you know, them coming together in marriage and bearing children as God leads and then living out that dominion mandate, taking dominion of the whole earth together.

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But we don't want to gloss over this reality. We want to know that God has defined womanhood. Manhood is defined as stepping up for the good of others, taking responsibility for the good of others. Manhood—definition. There you go. In your notes, ready? Manhood—taking responsibility for the good of others. Biblical manhood in a nutshell I believe. Womanhood is helping and nurturing for the good of others, helping and nurturing for the good of others. You don't want one or the other. In terms of a family, you need both. You don't only need your kids to have a father. You need your kids to have a father and a mother, in ideal terms. Of course, we know terrible crises happen and these sorts of things. I'm talking about the design of God, the plan of God, the way God has formed things to be.

This tells us that the skills and abilities that the man provides are essential. They're essential. This tells us that the skills and abilities that the woman provides are essential. One is not more essential than the other. This is why we use the term complementarity, as I said last night. I love that term. I prefer it over patriarchy. Some people in here may claim patriarchy, some of our friends may claim patriarchy. If so, I'm not here to start a war, you know, at the break with people throwing coffee at each other or something like this. Please don't do that. You can throw berries at—you can throw huckleberries at one another. I've been told about huckleberries and I'm with you. I want you to know I hear you and I see you. I like huckleberries. I'm not going to start a war of berries between the coasts, New England and Northwest. I will say that huckleberries are very good and I had a huckleberry milkshake when I came out like ten years ago, and I was like OK, I could do this on a regular basis. So just be seen, be heard. I have huckleberry tea right down there. That was given to me and I'm looking forward to trying it at one of the breaks. So yes. Oh dear. Jim, what was I talking about? I got into huckleberries. My time is up. All right. Let's talk about Rose Lane. Does anyone remember what I was saying? I got going on huckleberries. Gene—squirrel—what was I talking about? [Audience member answers] Pineapple shouldn't go on pizza. That's exactly what I was talking about, thank you. As if we're not confused enough.

It was why the term *complementarity*—thank you so much—*complementarity* as a term. Why that term? Because it emphasizes that both sexes bring essential skills and abilities to the table. That's why I love that term. I do think that patriarchy, “father rule,” I do think it's getting a substantial reality right about biblical manhood, as we were talking about. Men have headship in the home, headship of their wife. Specifically, men are called to be elders and teachers and preachers in the local church. And so we recognize headship in the home. We recognize spiritual headship in the church as well. And we're

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not soft on that in any form. I don't love though that everything reduces to the rule of the man, of the father, because I read Genesis 3:16–20 as saying not that the rule spoken of there is positive. I think that the rule in Genesis 3, the man will rule over you, as God says to Eve, I don't think that's speaking of happy rule, the kind we were talking about last session. So I don't love “father rule” in that sense.

I do, though, prefer that the sexes are complementary. They fit one another. They work together with one another elegantly in the design of God. The man brings strengths to the table, the woman brings strengths to the table. I personally think that honors Scripture, even though I know *patriarch* is a biblical word. I honor patriarchy; I'm going to overlap a lot with many in the patriarchal world on core issues. So let that be said. But the woman is a helper. That's her identity. Let's talk then about—how many do I have?—six realities of biblical womanhood. I had many about manhood. Now I want to talk to you about six about biblical womanhood in this session.

First, the sexes are made by God. The sexes are made by God. And what that means for womanhood is that we can define what a woman is. Did you know that? It's so weird today. Part of living in this upside-down society is that we are told that we need to respect women and listen to women. Remember #MeToo? What was basically the tagline of #MeToo? Believe all women, right? But then in hearings for major public officials in this country, for the Supreme Court, it was stated that a woman, womanhood, cannot be defined, right? So we're being told we have to believe all women at the same time that we're being told we have no idea what a woman is. And so we need to replace the term *woman*, in fact, with the term *birthing person*, or if you'll excuse me, *menstruating person*. And I am—I don't know about you, but I'm not bringing that one home to my . . . “Hello, birthing person. How was your day?” Uh, you can try that one out if you want. I will not be. I like living in my house and I like my marriage.

Womanhood is made by God. Womanhood is defined by God. Like manhood, womanhood is indissolubly connected to the body. The woman has a womanly body. We don't have to get into the weeds here, but the man is a manly body and the woman is a womanly body. And so what this means is that if you have a woman's body, you're a woman—made by God, I mean—and if you have a man's body, you're a man. There are only two options. There are no other options. There's no in-between categories There's no extra gender categories. On Facebook now there's over seventy-five gender options. You can be lots of different things. You can be felisgender. That's when you think you're

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a cat. I'm not kidding. You can be daimogender. That's when you have the gender of a supernatural being. OK, there's lots of different genders. I'm not kidding. These are real options today supposedly. There are only two sexes. God made manhood; God made womanhood. If you have a manly body, you are a man. If you have a womanly body, you are a woman.

There is a tiny percentage of cases where a child, through no fault of their own and no fault of the parents but just through the fallenness of the world in our biology—which is a very real reality, right? Sin and fallenness warps everything in this world, including our biology, including, sadly, the bodies of some, a tiny minority, of babies, and those babies are born with both male and female genitalia. The condition is often called intersex. A better term is disorder of sexual development, if you'd like to read more about that.

There's an ethicist at Midwestern Seminary where I formerly taught named Alan Branch. If you want a resource on this—I get asked about this at conferences, and understandably so, because the Left will take the intersex condition and they will say, “See, there is such a thing as a third gender,” or something like this. “It's this group of people who are born with both anatomy of the man and the woman, and that blows all your categories, Christian.” And what we say and Alan Branch has said in his helpful work—Alan Branch is his name. He's got a few books out on intersex, or he has termed it better as disorder of sexual development, DSD. When that occurs, you go to the genetic level and you look at those genes and you look at chromosomes, and if it's XX and XY, then you know what that child really is, and you then do shape the body to fit that chromosomal reality.

That is a hard situation, to be sure, and we don't take that lightly. But even there—hear this—even there, at the genetic level, there is clarity. You understand? The Left doesn't tell you that, but there is clarity at the genetic level, praise God, and you raise that child according to the genes. Something has tragically gone wrong, and that's going to be a hard condition. It often is. And that's where, listen, we are a people of truth. We are absolutely a people of compassion, and we want to help babies and children born with that kind of condition, again, through no choosing of their own. But that is not—you understand the point?—that is not a third gender or something like that. That is a warping of the body. That's a malfunctioning of the design of God. God has made men, and God has made women. That's all there is. Today, there are lots of people who are very confused. Today, there are lots of people in broken homes. Today, there are lots of people rebelling against the design of God, and they are telling us there are not two

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sexes. But we confess that there are two sexes made by God. That's it. That's all there is. And so we know what a woman is, and we honor and celebrate that reality.

Second, the woman's identity, as I've already been at pains to say, is helper. Helper. Now, we don't mean by that, again, that every woman is going to be married and express helping in marriage. But I think, I am at pains to say, the woman being called the helper of the man tells us vital truth about the nature and gifting of women. Women are gifted in ways, frankly, that are hard to sum up all that this comes to be. Women are gifted to help. Women are gifted to—the common term we use in Christian circles is *nurture*, which basically means develop living things, sustain living things, bring living things to flowering and fruition.

And you see that, of course, and we know that a major part of that helping ability, that nurturing capacity, is through childbearing and child-raising. That's a major area of gifting God has given to women. And again, it's hard to even map out all the ways that a God-glorifying woman nurtures life and brings her children to flourishing and all the emotional connection and all the physical connection and all the handling of difficult problems and all the ways she makes a home and sets it up and brings beauty into it and creates an environment that if it was led by men would be very utilitarian and pragmatic and bare bones and there probably wouldn't be a lot of flowers and a lot of beauty in the home and a lot of cultivation of the surroundings, but the woman comes into this and helps.

And the woman also helps in spiritual terms. She is, I believe, made to be, at least in ideal terms, made to be a wise voice in her husband's life. She is supposed to help him. That's not a threat to his manhood. That's not a threat to his leadership. That's a blessing of God that she would have God-given wisdom and she would bring that to bear on all sorts of things that the couple faces together. In a sinful world—we've already talked about the fall of Genesis 3. Don't misunderstand, a woman is going to be tempted not to submit to her husband and she's going to be tempted to take over the home. At least that's going to be a common temptation. That's what the Lord God tells us. He tells the man and the woman that, just as He tells the man that the man's temptation, one of them, is going to be to be domineering and harsh to his wife, as we talked about prior. So it's a real thing, as feminism calls for women to try and usurp their husband, wear down their husband, harangue their husband, be upset with their husband at all times—he's never doing things right. These kinds of dynamics are out there and alive and sadly well, and they are poisonous. And tragically, feminism, like bad

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manhood, has had a major effect on our world, and even before the ideology of feminism, just that unruly, unsubmitive spirit of a woman, it's caused a lot of damage, just as men have caused a lot of damage. So that's not what God has called the woman to be.

But God also hasn't called the woman to be, as I'm at pains to say, mute and thoughtless and agency-less in the home. And so the woman being a helper, as a reality, there's so much to say about it. But in fundamental terms, it means that we in the church honor womanhood. We know that women bring all sorts of skills and abilities to the table. And we know in the context of marriage, for example, and marriage in the home and the kids, wow, there is so much that women are gifted uniquely of God to do, and we love that, and we celebrate that.

And celebrating that is not squishy or weird or bad. That is what we should do. Because, as I am at pains to say, God's design is beautiful. We are just surrounded by the perversions of God's design and the attacks on God's design. And we ourselves struggle to live out God's design, even as regenerate people. But God's design is good, and God's design is good for us. And I pray that your church and any other church that's represented here—I think you're mostly from this church, but any other church that's represented here—will show this to the world.

Hey, we have a missionary moment right now. Every Christian marriage is a missionary marriage. Every Christian family is a missionary family. In fact, it's one of the best ways to be a witness in a fallen world. Every single man or woman who is living to the glory of God is a missionary single, because there is so much chaos and brokenness and fallenness all around us in marriage and family. And even the marriages that are intact, even the couples who are still married, there's just a lot of chaos and wreckage out there. There's a lot of unshepherded, undisciplined, unloved kids out there. And just to have Christian homes—you don't have to be superstar husbands and wives, superstar dads and moms. You just need to be normal Christian men and women. That's what we all need to be. That's what we are. And that's what we need to be. The world doesn't need spectacular all-stars as husbands and wives. The world needs men and women who are saved of God and by the power of God are striving to live out this glorious design that we're talking about. And that will be evangelistic. That will be powerful in this community, in this region, in this state, just being a husband and wife who love each other and, through thick and thin, forgive each other.

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Even that, you may say, “Ugh, our communication isn't great. Mmm, we're not always, you know, living in flowers and roses on a daily basis in terms of this marriage. We've had some ups and downs with parenting. We've had some challenges.” You may have raised your kids. Your kids may be out of the house. There may even be some regrets about that. There may be some hard things. You may not have a great relationship with all of your kids, but I'm here to say that God uses those kinds of people. You actually, weirdly, are almost more equipped to minister to fellow sinners if you yourself have battled sin. God doesn't need perfect, unscarred people to go out and reach the world, and too bad you guys messed it up. You would have had it if you had a perfect marriage and a perfect family like you were supposed to, but now you can't really be a witness. No, it's those of us who have a testimony. It's marriages where you are battling to stay in the game together, to keep loving each other. It's when you're having to forgive each other through small things, medium things, and some big things that you now have a testimony to bring to people. That's how God has set this all up. God wants us forgiven sinners to go to other sinners and not say, “I'm better than you, and I have it figured out, and you are a stinker.” God wants us to say, “I'm just like you. I've messed a lot up too. I need God to save me just like you do, and I have good news. God will save you and God will work in you just like He's working in me.”

If having chaos and turmoil in your past at any level disqualifies you from being a witness, then the apostle Paul never should have been in ministry, should he? Because the apostle Paul helped kill people in the name of God. But part of why the apostle Paul is so important for us is that the apostle Paul demonstrates really the key principle of the whole Bible, the forgiveness principle, the principle that we're just a sinner who needs grace, and God gives it to us and then God changes us for His glory. And so if you, even now I mean, even today at this conference, if your marriage and family isn't in the perfect place, you can pray, and God can grow that marriage and work in your family and work in your home, and God can heal things with kids who are estranged, and that can actually be not you and your husband or your wife or your family being set to the side, living in shame and sadness, that can actually now be you and your loved ones going, “We're no longer living under the delusion of perfection. We're no longer trying to make everybody around us think we didn't drive to church and we didn't get into a mild disagreement”—that husband and wife are then doing the whisper disagreement. Some of you know about this, maybe a couple of you, like, “No, I thought we were going to park in the other lot.” “Well, you said that we were going to have the kids wear their dresses today.” “Oh, OK, well, I misunderstood that.” The kids are going, “Daddy,

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Mommy, are you guys OK?” You're going, “Yes, we're doing great. How are you guys doing?” And then you pull up to the church and your wife is like, “OK, well, I guess we'll just do it this way.” And you say, “OK, that sounds good.” And then you walk into church smiling and holding hands together, right? No one's ever had that experience, I'm sure, in this room. We all have. We all have.

We need a lot more realism and honesty in our marriages and our families and in our churches. We need to not approach each other as if we're all batting a thousand on the legalistic scale. And we need to be real with each other. Our marriages aren't perfect. Wives can be unsubmitive. Husbands can be too strong or too weak. And we need to then press into that with one another and say, “You look like you might have had a hard morning. Are you guys OK?” Not like are you about to drive to Spokane TV station and enact divorce proceedings in front of the watching world, but like are you guys OK today, you know, kind of mid-level? Let's talk through that. You don't always need to say everything is great. Everything's great. You can actually say to a brother or sister in Christ, “Yeah, we've had a rough morning. It's been a little challenging.” And you can say that not merely when you're twenty-six and you're newlywed, you can say that when you're forty-three. You can say that when you're fifty-five. You can say that when you're seventy. I don't know if the seventy-year-olds really need to say that because you guys do seem like you're doing pretty good, but you may need to say that, honestly, and that's OK.

I'm not Mr. Squish, but it's OK to not be OK all the time. And sometimes people, especially women, sometimes women are trying to hold everything together and things aren't ideal and they hold it together and they hold it together until they break. And that's not good. And so I'm not advocating some weird secular psychotherapy. I'm trying to say do the biblical thing and be real about sin and real about your need for grace and real about the need for help. Sometimes men, we don't want to get help. We don't want counseling. We don't want to talk to a wise older couple because we feel like we've failed in the “we have a great life” sweepstakes, and like, “Man, we're not one of *those* couples. I've never had to go to marriage counseling with my wife. No, we're in the good box. Those other couples, they've had to get help. And they're actually in the dependent box. I'm over here in the independent box.” Some of us men need to humble ourselves. And we may not need crisis counseling. Praise God if that's true. You may though. You may need that. And if you do, get it. Get it.

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But you may also just need regular kind of discipleship instruction, and that's normal. We've got to normalize the body caring for the body and people speaking into one another's life. I don't mean every last little thing, but at least at the level of encouraging each other and being real. Yes, we preach the ideal. Yes, we preach the design of God, but we also know we're not going to hit it at all times. And we need God's grace and God's forgiveness, and we even need the sheep. We even need people to speak into our marriages. We need people to speak into our parenting. We're not perfect parents. We don't have it all right. We need feedback from godly couples in the church who say, "Do you need a little help training your child to be obedient, in a loving way, but obedient, because, I don't know, do you know how to do that?" And we need to be honest enough and humble enough to say, "I could use some help here." That's not you failing, Christian. That's you being a person who needs God's grace. We need women who understand themselves as helpers, just as we need men who understand themselves as leaders, protectors, and providers.

Third, the woman of God has plenty to do. She has plenty to do in the Bible. I'm moving now out of Genesis and I'm in Proverbs 31. I can't read the whole chapter. That would be a wonderful thing to do. Let me just quickly spritz through several realities of the Proverbs 31 woman. Don't hear me reading Proverbs 31 as, "Women, this is everything you should be doing and you're probably not and so you're failing." Here, read Proverbs 31 not as an indictment upon you, women, and not as you going to your girls as they're twelve to sixteen and going, "You better be all these things all the time." Hear this instead as a celebration. You understand? Please hear this. Hear this as a celebration of godly womanhood. You may not do everything she does. That's not the point. It's not an imperatival section. There's not commands in it. It's like a beautiful painting. It's like a beautiful painting of godly womanhood in action. It doesn't mean you do everything she does. It does mean that God celebrates biblical womanhood. God loves womanhood. That's what it means.

Verse 15: "She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens." So she works very hard. She's a hard worker. It's not the case that men work and women don't work. It's not the case that because men might be the provider, as I think we are called to be, and we earn the salary, at least most of it—women can contribute in different seasons and we have some gray areas and some Christian freedom. But fundamentally, it's not that the woman doesn't work if she doesn't earn a salary. She works hard. Work does not equal salary earning, as in our Marxist system. That is not true.

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Some of the most valuable work done on planet Earth does not draw a penny, right? A woman who is working day and night to raise, keep alive, and feed little children isn't drawing a salary from anyone that I'm aware of. You don't become a millionaire by having a bunch of kids, right? Kind of goes the opposite direction, doesn't it? Yes. But that is just about some of the most valuable work on planet Earth, work that has no salary attached to it. So men are called to work hard. Men are called to be hard workers, and women are called to work hard by God. God honors hardworking women in this celebratory way in Proverbs 31.

She makes wise decisions. Look next at Proverbs 31:16: "She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard." All throughout the Scripture, as we were talking about with planting gardens in Jeremiah 29, wherever there are gardens being planted, or vineyard here, there's celebration, there's joy, there's happiness. My wife and daughters got one of those little box gardens, you know, in the backyard. And so we don't—we're in the suburbs, and so we don't have a lot of gardening territory, but we've got a little one. And even that speaks to things being cultivated and nourished and brought to life. That's what the Proverbs 31 woman is doing.

She considers a field and buys it there in verse 16. This isn't a play by play of commands upon Christian women. This is a celebration. It's a portrait. And it's showing us that the man, the godly man, trusts in his wife to make decisions. There's an overcorrection going on right now in conservative evangelical and Reformed circles, where, again, as I've said, men overcontrol. They're domineering. They're making every decision for their wife or they're following behind her, saying, "Why did you make that purchase? Why did you spend two dollars at Target? Why did you spend a dollar at Kum & Go?" You know, that sort of thing. A Christian man is shepherding and leading his home, including financially, yes. And he may have to speak into certain things, but this guy, this dude, trusts his wife. He trusts his wife. She considers a field and buys it. Don't shoot your arrows at me. That's the Word of God saying she does these things. Of course, she's doing these things with her husband we can infer, right? That'd be an interesting conversation. "Honey, I bought, you know, a million dollars worth of property in Alaska today." OK, I don't think that's exactly what Proverbs 31 is saying. But nonetheless, I think you understand the point.

Verse 22: "She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple." We kind of sometimes have a poverty mindset in the church where you're not supposed to have anything nice. It's bad to have nice things. There's sort of an undercurrent of

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that in some conservative evangelical churches. In this text, the Proverbs 31 woman is actually kind of nicely clothed. I don't think she's sinning obviously. The Bible is celebrating this. This doesn't mean on the basis of this weird theologian coming into town this weekend, ladies, go out and, you know, buy up Nordstrom Rack or whatever it is. Is that a thing, Nordstrom Rack or Pinterest things or—I'm going to stop and not try to do that. Whatever it is that is nice clothing in your mind. I'm not saying go empty the checkbook. I am saying that this woman's home is a home of beauty and refinement. And that's praise. This is praise. This is praise of a godly woman. They're clothed like royalty, honestly.

Now, we know, of course, we should be careful with our money and we know we should do things like save wisely, and we know 1 Peter is going to talk about women not adorning themselves in a gaudy kind of way, attention-drawing way, so there's different texts to bring in, but this text at least honors women who bring beauty to the home and have the instinct to beautify the home. That is a God-given thing that women do.

Her core is character. Verse 25: “Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.” That's not because she's living a self-driven life, and she, unlike you ladies, is so strong in herself that she, in God, laughs at the time to come. It's that God has worked in this woman, and God is working in this woman, and she doesn't fear the future. It's not because of her. It's because of God saving her and changing her and transforming her, and now, unlike so many women around her, she doesn't live gripped by anxiety. She doesn't live in the thrall of fear. Instead, because God is her God, and God is a big God, and God is a kind God, now she can laugh at the days to come. That's not a slash at your tires, ladies. That is an encouragement to you to pray to God to make you that kind of woman more and more by His grace.

She teaches her children. Verse 26: “She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.” She's a teacher. There's a lively discussion in evangelical circles about women teaching and women preaching, and there's lines to draw here, but fundamentally, in the context of the home, many of us complementarian men are just men who are trying to practice biblical manhood and are doing so imperfectly, but we want our wives to teach. We're not trying to shut teaching down in the home in that sense. We understand we need to be the shepherd of the home, not in a formal but in an informal way, but we want our wives to be godly women, and we want that godliness to be transmitted to our kids. My wife is, in fact, homeschooling our kids. You have freedom there. You have Christian freedom with what you do with

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education. You can do different things, but at this stage, we're doing that, and I am grateful that I can come home at the end of the day and know that this godly woman has transmitted godliness to my kids. Praise God for that. What an incredible blessing that is.

Last thing, she shows us true beauty. Last thing to say, there's so much more, but she shows us true beauty. Verse 30: "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." Women are often those who battle with a desire to be beautiful and seen as charming by the world. You can absolutely, easily lose your soul on social media today. You can do that man or woman alike, young man or young woman, but wow, because of how girls and women often struggle with body image and beauty, social media needs to be handled very carefully with girls and young women because it can easily, so easily, become about comparison and not measuring up and all sorts of problems that then result. Whatever you do, don't just hand your girls a phone and assume all's going to go well.

If your teens have a phone, fathers—not just mothers. Fathers, you have to be plugged in, you have to be engaged. You probably need some controls on that phone. That is a good form of control. You need to have an ongoing conversation with your kids about what they're seeing and what they're thinking. I've had so many wise counselors say to me that the key with your kids is not first and foremost the rules you write on a chalkboard in your home. There can be some rules, but the key is a gospel-driven home, and then flowing out of that is all sorts of healthy communication. And I don't know about you, but as I go through life—I'll wrap this session up in just a minute. As I go through life, I think communication really is almost the key to so much, flowing out of the Word of God, flowing out of the design of God, I mean, according to these biblical truths.

But a husband and wife communicating, a lot of communication— isn't it amazing how much communication it takes to have a healthy marriage? Isn't it incredible? Does it ever just—do you ever just stop and go, How much more can we talk about this marriage? I mean, this is incredible. We have talked about everything. And it takes more and more and more and more.

And I think that the same is true with parenting, fatherhood and motherhood. So much of the key is not just your kids being silent and over here and doing their thing and you assuming all is well. So much of the key as a father or mother is you getting communication going, not just once a week but regular communication and honest

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communication that, yes, is spiritual communication but communication that helps your kids understand that you know that they're just like you. You know that they're a sinner battling sin, and that's normal. So if there's ever sin in their life, you can deal with that. You can handle that. You can talk them through that. Here's how God will work in you to help you with that. And so you're trying to communicate with your kids honestly but spiritually, and you want them talking to you, and you have to go after them and have that back and forth. And it's not going to be perfect, and it's not going to be ideal, and some days they don't want to talk, and some days you're in a bad mood, and so let's adjust the equation for reality, but fundamentally we need so much communication. Husband to wife, wife to husband, father to kids, mother to kids, kids to father and mother, honest, biblical, healthy communication. I'm struggling with this. I need help with this. What did you see on your friend's tablet? What are your friends talking about? What have they been watching? Why do you think that's not a good thing to watch? Why do you think that is a good thing for us to—just, I mean, ten thousand things we need to talk about. And that's so much of where these dynamics play out.

Fourth reality—we're almost done. Fourth reality, the woman of God respects her husband. Ephesians 5, moving ahead to the New Testament: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (v. 22). And then verse 33: “Let each one of you [men] love his wife as himself [in that Christlike, self-sacrificial way], and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” If there are some challenges in your marriage, there's a bunch of things to do. Men need to love their wife in a Christlike way. They need to pray for that. That's no easy thing, but God will help us to do it. And then wives need to think hard about are—am I, let me change the pronoun, am I respecting my husband? Does he feel not just like he can make the decision and I will be quiet and go with it, but does he feel respected? Verse 33, she respects her husband. Does he feel respected by me? Am I showing respect toward him? Am I showing honor to him?

First Peter 3 indicates that that is part of how a godly woman trapped in a marriage to an unconverted, harsh man—that's how she's going to help win him to Christ by the grace of God, not by going toe to toe with him and battling him into the kingdom, but actually by showing respectful, loving submission, actually by honoring him where she can. Not in sin, don't misunderstand. Don't follow a wicked husband into sin. Don't submit to sin, just like with the government. Submit to the government as much as you possibly can, but not where the government calls you to sin or violate your conscience. It's the same thing in marriage. Same thing in marriage. So a godly wife respects her husband.

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Can I encourage you? Talk about this honestly but lovingly, carefully together, husband and wife. Honey, do you feel like I love you in a Christlike way? Let me reverse that. Honey, do you feel like I respect you in an Ephesians 5-like way? OK, well, maybe there's going to be some yes and some no. How can we grow in this? How can I love you better as my wife? How can I respect you more as my husband? Not in an angry way, not in raised voices, not in shouting, but in calm conversation. Brew the coffee, sit out on the deck. You certainly have the advantage of natural beauty all around you here for your conversations. And just sit out there and talk. Get a couple hours and just talk. You might be amazed at what comes from that. And then at the end, hold hands and pray together. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. And then schedule it again for a couple days from now. And then schedule some time with each of your kids to do the same thing. Pour some apple juice, get some fruity pebbles. I don't know what this is. I don't know where I'm going, but you know, sit out there and talk. And you might be—and then pray with them. Very, very simple.

OK, I've got to go to my last truth here. The woman of God has a gentle and quiet spirit. First Peter 3—I'm going to close with this. Gentle and quiet spirit. A gentle and quiet spirit doesn't mean that all Christian women have the same personality, I don't believe. I think it goes back to that Proverbs 31 woman and the God-centered fearlessness she has about her life. She does not fear what is before her. She does not live in anxiety. She lives in, by the grace of God, imperfectly, God-centered trust.

And the gentle and quiet spirit she has in 1 Peter 3:4, “Let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious,” that context is with an unbelieving husband, which is for a Christian woman—some of you may be in this position. That can be a fearful reality because you're under a man who doesn't love Jesus and who doesn't repent of his sin. And that's not a fake challenge. That's a very real challenge. But Peter is saying, in that context, don't live gripped by fear and anxiety at your core, and you're not eating, and you're not sleeping well, and you're gripped. Your life is a fearful, anxious life. That's the temptation.

Instead, unburden yourself to God. Cling to God. Depend on God. Pray to God when you feel fearful, as you will, and God will help you trust Him by the power of His Spirit. And that will then, as we conclude, that will then result in a demeanor that is very different from women who are not saved, women who are not born again, women who do not have the Holy Spirit living in them, helping to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).

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It's not that you're going to stand out because you're some perfect rules follower and you're legalistically battling a thousand, as I've already said. It's because these women, sadly, are not saved and they don't have that peace, the peace of salvation. And you, by God's sheer grace and grace alone, you are saved. And so even though you too, like them, have challenges and trials and hard issues before you, you are known by God and you are loved by God and you are forgiven by God eternally. God loves you, and that's the gentle and quiet spirit that will come forth in you, even though the days are evil.

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