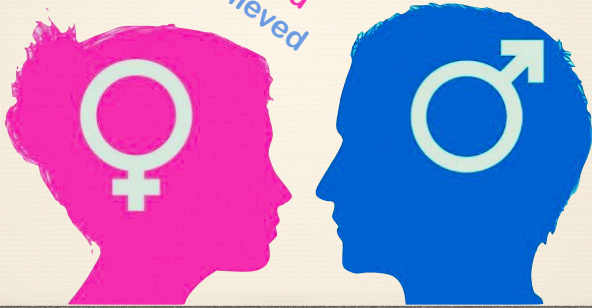


Rules for the roles?

culture & tradition
Scriptural teaching
gender differences
ascribed or achieved



Traditional Gender traits and roles

| Male | Female |
|---|--|
| Aggressive, active, strong, competitive | Passive, quiet, gentle, noncompetitive |
| Courageous, dominant | Compliant, submissive |
| Reserved - emotionally distant | Emotional - easily hurt |
| Non-nurturing | Nurturing |
| Logical, rational, objective | Illogical, emotional, subjective |

(from a Gallup poll of personality characteristics associated with gender; see Davidson/Moore)

1. Is this descriptive?

2. Is this nature or nurture?

3. Is this prescriptive?

“Women always worry about the things that men forget; men always worry about the things women remember”

Princess Diana

When a man opens a car door for his wife, it's either a new car or a new wife.

Phyllis Diller

Nature can be altered by nurture.



Natural
Juniper tree



Damaged
by fire



Distorted by
environment



Designed by
man

What we see may give hints of God's designed purpose and also the conditioning of a "fallen" environment.

Examples

Matthew 19:8

“Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.”

1 Corinthians 7:26

“²⁶ I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. ²⁷ Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸ But if you marry, you have not sinned;”

What can we reasonably conclude?

- Both nature and nurture play a part in “traditional gender roles.”
- The Scripture's teaching should lead us in discerning God design (nature).
- There are some ancient cultural influences imbedded in the Biblical teaching that must be accounted for and not confused with God's design.
- We must be most careful with respect to the power of our modern culture's influence on our reading of Scripture.
- Prescriptions on gender behavior cannot be divorced from Biblical principles of faith, grace, and love in application.

Three common mistakes in responding to Biblical teaching that seems occasional (tied to ancient culture).

- **Ignore Biblical principles and applications that do not fit modern culture's values.**
- **Failure to discern between major and minor principle.**
- **Insist that a Biblical culture's expression of a principle is appropriate for every culture.**

In the beginning - - -

Genesis 1

"²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

1. **Mankind is a spiritual being** - created in God's image.
2. **Mankind is a sexual being** - created male and female.
3. **Mankind has a stewardship** - procreation and management of the creation

Each of these represent an ethical challenge - mirroring God's image, channelling sexual energy, managing the environment.

God's design plan for the family:

- **Personal fulfillment** - It should be a place where we know we belong and are safe.
- **Procreation** - It should be the incubator for the development, with dignity, of the next generation of citizens.
- **Pastoral care** - It should be a place where we develop and display ministry care for the earth, culture, and kingdom.

Model - A part of that ministry is to model Christ's relationship with the church. (Eph.5:32)

Some of the topics in considering family ethics

Relational intimacy

- **Marriage and romance** - Covenants and expectations
- **Divorce and remarriage** - When and why
- **Fornication** - Sexual behavior outside marriage

Procreation

- **Abortion** - Civil rights
- **Child rearing** - Christian family life

Team ministry

- **Gender roles** - Male / female
- **Gender identity** - Homosexuality

A possible family mission statement

- **We will help each other realize the deepest desires of our heart - reconciled to God, others, and our calling.**
- **We will nurture each other to health and maturity as citizens of our country and disciples of God's kingdom.**
- **We will work as a stewardship team of alien ambassadors for God's kingdom on this earth.**

Are prescribed roles a part of God's design?

Genesis 2:18

"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'"

"alone" The emphasis can be understood to include both emotional and functional needs.

"helper suitable" in Hebrew means "an ideal counterpart that strengthens." The emphasis is not on rank but on function.

1. **Men and women are social beings** - They are incomplete on their own.
2. **Men and women are distinct in many ways** - They are not designed to compete with but to complete each other.

This suggests a special relationship - a need for a social team and complementary roles.

The challenge of understanding the Biblical teaching on “gender roles”

1 Corinthians 11

“³ But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and **the man is the head of a woman**, and God is the head of Christ. ⁴ Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head. ⁵ But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved. ⁶ For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if **it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved**, let her cover her head. ⁷ For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but **the woman is the glory of man.**”

“⁸ **For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;** ⁹ **for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.** ¹⁰ Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹ **However, in the Lord**, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. ¹² For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God. ¹³ **Judge for yourselves:** is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered? ¹⁴ **Does not even nature itself teach you** that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, ¹⁵ but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶ **But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.**”

This passage makes a point that is loaded with culturally sensitive applications.

The challenge of understanding the Biblical teaching on “gender roles”

- **The Biblical emphasis** - with respect to relationships.
 - A spiritual relationship with Christ is the emphasis.
 - A social relationship within the Christian community is also a major concern (less so with the world).
 - The so called “house rules” though mentioned, are not a major issue and may be culturally sensitive.
- **Cultural lenses** - We must realize that we read everything through a cultural lens.
 - The culture in which the Bible was written
 - The culture from which we are reading it

We read the Bible through cultural lenses.

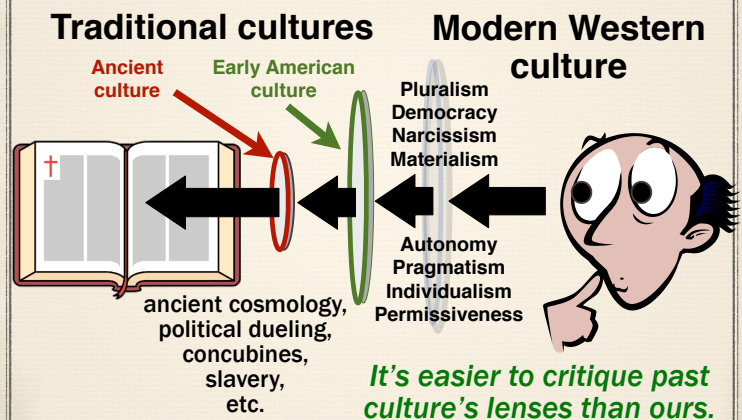


Illustration of spiritual astigmatism (ANCIENT lens distortion)

In 1 Cor.11 there is evidence of ancient cultural factors in the application of a principle?

1. “Head covering” was and is a near eastern custom associated with modesty.
2. “However in the Lord” suggests that there is a contrast between the culture and the kingdom with respect to how far gender distinctions are applied.
3. “Nature’s teaching” may refer to gender distinctions reflected differently in various cultures.
4. “We have no other practice” confirms that “head covering” was the common practice at that time & place.

The cultural application may be occasional but this need not negate the principle behind it?

The “headship” debate

“³ But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and **the man is the head of a woman**, and God is the head of Christ.

- “HEAD” (kephale) can refer to **source or beginning** as in “trail head” or the “head of a river.” This passage is referring to the Genesis text, which pictures the woman coming from man.
- But “HEAD” (kephale) when used, in the case of living beings also denotes **superior rank**.
- The word implies “authority” as in **Eph.5:22-24** where Paul relates it to the wife’s subjection to her husband.
- In **Col.1:18** Paul links Christ’s “first born from the dead” status with headship and supremacy. “And he is the **head** of the body, the church; he is the **beginning** and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the **supremacy**.”

*Illustration of spiritual astigmatism
(MODERN lens distortion)*

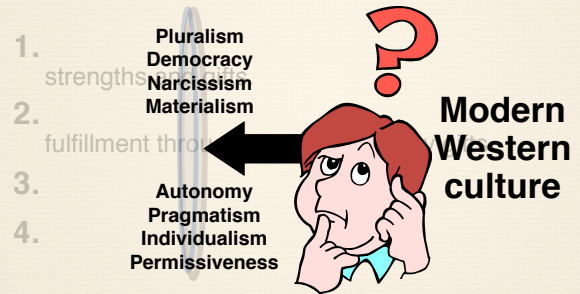
Why do we find some Biblical teaching, like gender roles, puzzling if not offensive?

1. They do not seem efficient or respectful of human strengths and gifts.
2. They do not seem to respect our need for personal fulfillment through the full use of our gifts.
3. They do not seem to respect our right to choose.
4. They do not seem to respect our individual uniqueness.

Is our modern cultural sense the problem?

*Illustration of spiritual astigmatism
(MODERN lens distortion)*

Why do we find some Biblical teachings, like gender roles, puzzling if not offensive?



Is our modern cultural sense the problem?

1 Corinthians 1

“²⁶ For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise **according to the flesh**, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the **foolish things of the world** to shame the wise, and God has chosen the **weak things of the world** to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸ and the **base things** of the world and the **despised**, God has chosen, the things **that are not**, that He might nullify the things that are, ²⁹ that no man should boast before God.”

1. God's choice of Israel, Levites, Apostles, church, etc.?
2. The life and ministry of Jesus?
3. The “fullness of time”?
4. The justice of God?



Conclusion

- There seems to be solid Biblical evidence for ascribed gender roles in family, and ministry that are to be followed sensibly.
- The abuse of this teaching lies largely in its carnal application.
- Most women prefer to see men in leadership positions who are strong, sensitive, and spiritually qualified.
- When we keep our eyes on Jesus we tend to be more concerned about selfless service than power and position.

“The only thing worse than a man you can't control is a man you can.”

Jean Kerr
(Author)

*Deal with the King before we
try to deal with the Kingdom*

- We must realize that Christian ethics and doctrine may not make much sense to those without faith.
- We must come to Christ before we try to follow after him.

Take our baptism seriously

- We must find our life (security, significance, serenity) in Christ by faith.
- We must position ourselves on the far side of the cross as alien ambassadors in this world.
- We must resist the pressure to see things as the world sees them.

Read both the Scripture and the culture carefully.

- We must realize that Christian ethics and doctrine may not make much sense to those without faith.
- We must come to Christ before we try to follow after him.

Respond to what we learn diligently.

- Knowledge helps us find our way but it is not our destination.
- Seeing, knowing, and believing without action is no better than blindness, ignorance, and disbelief.
- Christian ethics is not just about knowing WHAT to do but also WHY and HOW to do it.