

Role Reversal

The great American novelist, Harper Lee, once said, “Many receive advice, only the wise profit from it.” A great quote, in my opinion, when it comes to what we do when we are given guidance from another. This is especially true when it comes from those who have the benefit of experience. When I got married in December of 2022, to my lovely wife Sarah, there was plenty of advice to be shared and it certainly was welcome. After all, marriage was something that was very new to me. Yes, I had some understanding as to what it would take and the adjustments that would be necessary, but who am I to turn down the advice of those who have much more experience as married people than myself? The piece of advice I got the most, bar none, was one line, somewhat comical, and always given from fellow husbands, which said, “Happy wife, happy life”. Now, of course I want my wife to be happy, of course I want her to be fulfilled in our marriage, that should go without saying. But something funny happened when I shared this information, this advice, with her. She told me that it didn’t make any sense, and she explained that if the goal of our marriage was only to make her happy, well then it wasn’t a very successful marriage. After all, marriage takes both of us, it takes a full commitment from two people, not just one, to make it work. So, we have adopted a bit of a different saying, “Happy spouse, happy house”.

One of the main reasons that we adopted this saying is because of how we look at our roles within our marriage. I, as the husband, have certain responsibilities, and she as the wife, has certain responsibilities. We look at each other as complementary to one another, each bringing different abilities, talents, and priorities that make a whole (Gen. 2:18). This means that there are certain chores around the house that she does more than I do, and vice versa. As I was thinking about this, I started to think about the roles of men and women in our society, how our society

views them and the unique gifts both men and women possess. It should not be controversial to say that men and women are created differently. When God created men and women scripture is pretty clear that He created them as two distinct and different things, **“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”** (Gen. 1:27) We are not meant to be the same, we are not meant to think the same, look the same, or behave the same.

And yet, our society around us doesn't seem to feel this way. In fact, it seems the world around us wants to reverse the roles of men and women, and more so, is pushing for this to be the case. It seems that we, as a society, are attempting to feminize men and masculinize women in a strange sort of role reversal. Traditionally masculine traits such as courage, toughness, competition, stoicism, and aggression are shunned and called toxic, and certainly, there is a line that should be drawn when it comes to using such traits. Not everything needs to be a competition, and aggression certainly needs to be tempered. But consider, for a moment, where we would be if, during the second world war if the men storming the beaches of Normandy and the islands of the Pacific theatre weren't aggressive, or tough, or courageous, or stoic in the face of the momentous tasks that were at hand. But now, we are trying to eradicate these traits in men and boys. We want men to be vulnerable, sensitive, and passive. We want them to be softer versions of themselves. The same thing is also happening to women. The traits that make women so unique like compassion, empathy, gentleness, and sensitivity, are not good enough for our society. Now, we want women to behave like men. They are to be ruthless, cutthroat, aggressive, and crass, all for the sake of equalizing the playing field. Not only that, but women are being discouraged from having children for the sake of their careers. And studies are beginning to

show that the career route isn't always as fulfilling as it seems to be, that once women reach a certain age, there is a longing and a desire for something more than working.

Ultimately, we, as Christians, need to ask how this view of men and women compares and contrasts with the examples we are given in the scriptures. One of the best examples of these traits being used well comes in the story of Ruth and Boaz, found in the book of Ruth. Ruth is a short book, only four chapters, and yet the story that is found in it is a beautiful story of love and a demonstration of the differences between men and women and how they complement each other. Ruth shows great devotion to her mother-in-law (Ruth 1), she is empathetic, she is sensitive, and she is compassionate. It is these traits that get noticed by the man Boaz and causes him to put her under his protection (Ruth 2:5-13). Boaz uses his masculinity to protect Ruth and ultimately to redeem her and become her husband (Ruth 4), which is not some small detail. After all, Ruth becomes the great grandmother to king David and is part of the lineage of Jesus. When we think about what the relationship between men and women should look like, I think there is another example we can lean on, that being the example of Christ and the church (Ephes. 5:22-33). The church, as Christ's bride, is submissive to Him, it is not aggressive, it is not seeking its own way. And Christ, as the groom, is the church's protector, the one who gives Himself up for her, the one who stands in harms way on her behalf.

I think, looking at the roles of men and women through a biblical lens would be very beneficial to our society. I think it is important that we, as Christians, understand that, just because men and women are different, doesn't mean that they are less than or greater than one another. The relationship between men and women shouldn't be a power struggle, that's not biblical. After all, the blood of Jesus covers us all equally (Gal. 3:28). It does, however, mean that we are different, that we have different roles to play in a healthy society, and I don't think I

need to point out that our society, at least right now, isn't very healthy. In fact, I think it is only getting sicker. I think, as the church, we have a duty to point these out, and to live within our roles as men and women, to be examples to the world of the beauty of God's creation. Think about what we demonstrate by doing this. We show the world the example of Christ and the church, we share the Gospel with a world and a society that has a desperate need for it, all by living within the vocation that God has given us as men and women.