

# Biblical Femininity

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you have a Bible with you this morning, then I'd like you to open up to Genesis chapter 3. ! It's been the same passage that we were in last week in Genesis chapter 3, because we are continuing the series that we started two weeks ago. Two weeks ago, we started a series on what it means to be male and female in the image of God.

What does it mean to recognize that God has made His image bearers in two distinct sexes? What does that mean? And how are we to understand what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman biblically?

Not primarily informed by all of the voices around us in the world, but informed primarily by God's Word. What does that mean? How can we understand that?

And so we had an overview two weeks ago to look at what the Bible has to say about being made male and female in the image of God. And then last week, we considered what biblical masculinity is.

[ 1 : 13 ] And several of the ladies said, you were rough on the guys last week. And so this morning, we talk about biblical femininity and see how you feel I treat you this morning, alright?

But we're here in Genesis chapter 3, and I want us to read the same passage that we read last week, which begins in verse 14, and we'll run down through verse 19.

And so if you would, stand to your feet as you find your place there, as we read together. The Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field.

On your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.

He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. To the woman, he said, I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing. In pain you shall bring forth children.

[ 2 : 16 ] Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you. And to Adam, he said, because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it.

Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken, for you are dust. And to dust you shall return.

Father, I thank you for your word. I thank you for its clarity. And I pray that you would give us not only understanding this morning, but hearts that long to live in obedience to what we understand. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys can take a seat. Last week, or two weeks ago, I came across an article.

[ 3 : 13 ] It was an article about a well-known pop star. And in the article, she was asked about her gender identity. And she said, well, I am a woman.

Except for when I'm a man. And I thought, that is one of the strangest statements that, for most of human history, would absolutely make no sense at all.

And yet, we live in a culture where people nod their heads in agreement. As if that is a sensible statement. And so, of course, a couple of years ago, the question went viral.

What is a woman? As sort of a litmus test to see whether or not someone has a more traditional, sort of biologically rooted idea of what men and women are.

Or whether they have bought into modern conceptions of what it means to be male and female that are not rooted in reality, not rooted in biology, and certainly far afield from what the scriptures have to tell us.

[ 4 : 17 ] It's a problem that we are confronted with when we cannot clearly say what a man is or what a woman is. And we may feel that we are sort of removed from that.

That we know what men are. We know what women are. We can insulate ourselves from those broader cultural problems. But when we move out from simple biological definitions, when we move into not simply what is a man, but what does it mean to be masculine in a biblical sense, more confusion seeps in.

Or when we ask the question, not simply what is a woman, but what does it mean to be feminine? What does mature biblical femininity actually look like?

Because it is pretty easy from both a scientific standpoint and from a biblical standpoint to identify what a woman is. We could talk about it, as many people do today, in terms of your chromosomes. Or we could stick a little bit more closely to the biblical portrait of what a woman is and say that a woman is someone who, under normal circumstances, would be capable of giving birth to a child and then providing, nurturing that child with her own body.

[ 5 : 32 ] That's a pretty simple approach. It needs to be said that in a fallen world that that's under normal circumstances. That in a fallen world, many women are unable to conceive or unable to carry a baby to term or unable to then, after having a baby, sometimes unable to sustain that baby.

We know that. We live in a fallen world. We know that things are not as they ought to be. But we could still say, under normal circumstances, a woman is simply someone who can give birth and then sustain and nurture that child.

That's what a woman is. But that doesn't help us to move toward a clearer understanding of how a woman ought to live in the world.

What does it look like to pursue mature biblical femininity? And so since last week we considered what is biblical masculinity, this morning we're talking about biblical femininity.

But before I give you a definition of biblical femininity, I want to remind you of how we defined masculinity last week. So this is what we said last week, that at the heart of biblical masculinity or mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for, and protect women in ways that are appropriate to a man's differing relationships.

[ 7 : 01 ] And if you want to unpack that, go back and listen to last week's sermon. I'm not going to redo all that this morning. This morning I want to unpack for you a description of biblical mature femininity.

And here it is. Here's my description. At the heart of mature femininity are freeing dispositions to nurture life and to affirm strength and leadership in worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships.

So let's break this down a little bit. And as we break it down, we will return back to Genesis chapter 3 to help us understand how femininity itself has been affected by the fall.

So first of all, this begins the same way that last week's description of masculinity began by saying that at the heart, at the heart of mature femininity, there is much more that we could say than I'm saying in this description about what it means to be a woman or to live in a feminine manner.

There's a whole lot more that could be said. I'm not trying to cover everything. I'm trying to get to the heart of it. Just as last week we didn't try to say everything about what it means to live a masculine life, this morning I'm not trying to tell you everything that you need to know about how to live as a godly woman in the world.

[ 8 : 30 ] There's much more to be said than I can say in 35 to 40 minutes this morning. Or if we go longer, longer. There's more than I can say in the time that I have this morning, no matter how long I go on.

So I'm just trying to get at the heart of mature femininity. And that word mature is significant. It is important. Because most of the time you will fall short of the biblical standards.

And your aim is to aim towards maturity. You're trying to get to the place as a woman who's following Christ where your femininity is a mature femininity.

But it's a process. And so there are some things that I'll talk about this morning. And you'll be able to say, well, I feel like I can check that box off. I feel like I'm doing okay there. And there will be other things where you'll say, okay, I've got some work to do.

And that's okay. Because we're pursuing mature biblical femininity. That's important. That we're looking to get to the heart of it. And that we're looking to pursue maturity as men and as women.

[ 9 : 35 ] And then, if you'll notice in this description, it should be up on the screen for you. At the heart of mature femininity are freeing dispositions.

I want to talk about both of those words. Freeing and dispositions. First of all, let me say something about the word dispositions. Because I'm not mainly concerned with just outward behavior. Your outward behavior will, most of the time, fall short of the biblical standards. What I am concerned with and what I want to impart to you this morning is a desire.

Is a disposition that you would aim at this. We will not always hit the mark. You will not always be the person that you want to be.

But what I want to encourage and help you to develop is a disposition. A desire to move in the direction of mature femininity.

[ 10 : 35 ] But this disposition is not one that is going to shackle you to some sort of old-fashioned, out-of-date approach to what it looks like to be a godly woman.

It is not binding. It is not restricting. It is, in fact, freeing. Oftentimes, when we read scripture, we read about the enslaving effects of sin.

And we know, of course, that when a person is caught up in any particular sin, they feel as if they're living in freedom. That they can do whatever they want, but at the end of the day, they find themselves to be not freed by their sin, but now suddenly made a slave of sin.

And that's also true when we consider biblical masculinity and biblical femininity. That what would look to the world as restrictions, as things that are binding you and holding you captive are actually the very things that you need to pursue if you actually want to be free.

So this disposition, these desires that I want to encourage in you this morning are freeing dispositions and desires when you embrace them wholeheartedly.

[ 11 : 55 ] But we live in a world where the very things that are definitional of what a woman is, if you seek conformity to living in a way that puts those on display, then you are thought to be overly restrictive, to be taking away freedom from yourself or from other women.

And so you will hear people often talk about freedom for women in terms of the ability to choose whether or not to have a baby once they've conceived one.

The freedom to terminate that life. But that's not freedom. That's slavery. If what it means to be a woman is under normal circumstances, to be able to have children, to conceive and bear children and then nurture those children, to attack the very thing that you are uniquely designed to do, things that no man on the face of the earth can or ever will be able to do, to attack that as something that is detrimental to you, that takes away your freedom, is to fundamentally misunderstand the freedom that is real and is available to women.

We don't pursue freedom when we pursue the kind of freedom that the world encourages us to pursue. We are most free when our lives most reflect the biblical patterns that God has set down for us.

And so I'm encouraging not restriction but freedom. Freedom to be who God made you to be.

[ 13 : 44 ] And so let's look and let's consider what it is. What are the freeing dispositions that are the marks of mature femininity? Well, I have essentially two of them here and these two freeing dispositions I think flow from the passage that we've just read a moment ago.

They are, first of all, a disposition to nurture life. To be a woman, of course, is to be capable of, under normal circumstances, bringing life into the world.

But that ability, that unique design, God's design, is always accompanied by responsibility. is always accompanied by behavior that should accord with the way that you are designed by God. And so, so one of the things that we want to say about mature femininity, it is, it is a disposition to nurture life.

To want, to want to protect life. And then secondly, it is a disposition to affirm both strength and leadership in worthy men.

[ 14 : 59 ] We cannot get away from the fact that in the opening chapters of Genesis, manhood and womanhood are set against one another as complementary, complementary opposites in a lot of ways.

that when God's, when God determines to create woman or announces that he's going to create woman, he looks and he says that there's no suitable helper for Adam. Suitable helper.

That is, one who corresponds to him. One who is different from him in all of the right ways. Of course, we've said, and I've said this in the last two weeks, that men and women are more alike

than we are different because we're all human beings made in the image of God.

But if we're focused narrowly, not on what it means to be human, but assuming our common humanity, our common being made in the image of God, assuming that, then if we're focused upon what makes us male and female, what makes us men and women, you can't separate that from the reality that masculinity and femininity are defined as they are contrasted with one another.

So that when God creates a woman, he creates a counterpart for the man. He creates one who is suitable and corresponds to him in all the right ways, is different from him in all the right ways.

[16:25] And so last week, as we looked at our definition of mature masculinity, it had largely to do with the way that men treat women, that they are to lead, provide, and protect women.

Now, of course, we could expand that. We could say, well, what about the children? But there is a common responsibility among all adults, men and women, to lead, provide, and protect children.

What is it about manhood that's different?

What is it about masculinity that sets men apart and how we are different from women? Well, it is that in regards to women, we are called to lead, protect, and provide.

Of course, not the same way with regard to all women. It's the definition that we've offered says in ways that correspond to a man's differing relationships, right?

So when we talk about femininity, we're going to see that in large measure, not entirely, but in large measure, femininity is going to be defined in contrast to masculinity.

[17:31] And that cannot be avoided. So while the first aspect or the first disposition that I want to encourage in all the ladies is a disposition to nurture life, the second is related entirely to the contrast between men and women.

And that is that I want you to have a disposition, a desire, to affirm strength and leadership in worthy men.

And again, not the same kinds of strength or the same display of strength or the same style or same type of leadership in every circumstance, but in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships.

A woman will not seek to affirm leadership in her neighbor in the same way that she would want to affirm leadership in her husband. They're not the same at all.

But there are ways more broadly outside of simply our own homes outside of even just the church in which men and women can pursue mature masculinity and mature femininity.

[18:42] And so we want to highlight, we want to know and recognize that there are differing relationships and a woman is not going to seek or want to affirm and encourage strength in the same way in all different men any more than she's wanting to encourage the same kind of leadership in all men.

But nevertheless, there is a disposition broadly and in general to affirm strength and leadership in worthy men. There are plenty of men that are not worthy of having strength or leadership affirmed in them.

There are plenty of men who are nothing more than abusive, whose lives are lived in opposition to true biblical masculinity. And we're not saying that women need to affirm strength and leadership in unworthy men, but in worthy men.

Men who are pursuing the kind of masculinity that we talked about last week, in those men, women should want to affirm and help them to pursue the strength and leadership that God desires to draw out of them.

Well, let me show you all of this in the text because that's what really matters. What matters is what the Bible has to say and not what descriptions and definitions I give you. So let's focus narrowly this morning on verse 16.

[19:59] Because in verse 16, this is the verse in which God actually addresses Eve. He addresses the woman. He has addressed the serpent in verses 14 and 15. He will address the man beginning in verse 17 going all the way down through verse 19.

So the serpent and the man, they receive a lot stronger rebuke, a lot more detail from God as he responds to their participation in the fall.

But he doesn't have nothing to say to the woman. And you'll notice that what he says fits with our description of biblical femininity.

Note, first of all, he says, I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing. In pain, you shall bring forth children.

And just as we saw last week, man's calling and ability to provide and to protect has been affected by the fall in a negative way so that now, rather than the abundance of the garden, he will toil.

[ 21 : 03 ] It's by the sweat of his brow that he will be able to provide for himself and others. Thorns and thistles will get in the way of his work of producing crops. His work of providing now comes with a great deal of labor and pain.

Well, women's role of nurturing life is now accompanied by increased pain, increased difficulty. It's a clear sign to us that the role of women in bringing life into the world and in nurturing life is not a mere aside. When God comes in judgment, God addresses the very things that lie at the heart of who Adam and Eve are as a man and a woman.

And one of the things that he addresses for Eve is her role in bringing life into the world. That her responsibility to nurture life will now be made much more difficult because of her sin.

But not only that, the other half of our definition, that she is to affirm strength and leadership in worthy men. That is now made much more difficult.

[ 22 : 22 ] Notice what it says there. It says, Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you. Now, there's been a lot of debate over especially the first half of this statement and what it means.

Your desire shall be, the ESV says, contrary to your husband. husband. Literally, it's your desire to be toward your husband or for your husband.

And what does that mean? What does the writer, what does Moses mean when he describes this enmity that now is going to exist between men and women? What does he mean by that?

Well, some have said that this desire is just a sexual desire. That women will be sexually drawn to men, but men will in turn be abusive towards women.

Well, there is a clue. Moses, who wrote Genesis, has provided us with a clue to understanding this passage, to determining if that actually is the meaning.

[ 23 : 24 ] Is it just talking about the presence of sexual desire in women and how it will be frustrated by men's behavior? I don't think so. Because if you turn one page over in your Bible to Genesis chapter 4, we find a phrase that is very similar.

same vocabulary, even the same basic sentence structure. Chapter 4, verse 7, where God is speaking to Cain and warning Cain.

He says, if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Now, it's this last little phrase here that I want you to pay attention to. It's desire.

Sin's desire is contrary to you, literally, toward you or for you, but you must rule over it.

You see how those are parallel statements? In chapter 3, God tells the woman that your desire will be toward your husband, but he will rule over you.

[ 24 : 27 ] And now, in chapter 4, we are told that sin's desire is contrary toward you, but you must rule over it. So the point here in chapter 4, verse 7, seems to be that Cain is being warned that sin is going to try to control you, to exercise undue influence over you, to be a master over your affections, your behaviors.

Sin is going to try to be a master. That's exactly how Paul describes sin in Romans chapter 6, where he says, don't let sin rule over you. Don't let that happen. It is a danger.

And Cain is being warned about that danger. Sin wants to master you. Sin's desire is toward you. That's what that means. But you must rule over it.

You must turn and conquer sin. You have to show yourself to be stronger and in control of sin. So now when we go back to our passage in chapter 3, what we're learning here is that as a result of the fall, women's desires will often be to obtain mastery or control over men, particularly here, mainly husbands.

That will be a desire that is present within them. a sinful desire. A desire that results from the fall. A desire that runs contrary to God's design for men and women and how they're supposed to relate to one another.

[ 26 : 08 ] But then there's the added note, but he shall rule over you. In other words, this desire for control will be met by the oftentimes, the normally superior strength of men and men will in turn dominate you.

I don't think that the second half of this phrase is describing good godly leadership that we encouraged last week. I think it's talking about the reality that we see in the world all around us throughout history that men tend to dominate and abuse women.

That is the common experience of most cultures throughout most of human history. And the only reason why we see some relief from that in western cultures today is because there's still the remnants of a Judeo-Christian foundation that continue to hold back some of that, but it's crumbling at a very fast rate.

So we're seeing more and more abuse in the world. We're seeing more of both of these things. We're seeing an increase in perhaps not the desire but the ability of women to exert control over men.

But then we're seeing oftentimes men respond in what the world would call toxic ways that are controlling and that are oftentimes abusive.

[ 27 : 40 ] Several years ago when my boys were a little bit younger, now they're 16 to 20, but I think at the time they probably ranged in age from maybe 10 to 14, something along those lines.

And I remember saying to Allie that I'm concerned about what our boys are going to face as they become young men because there's been such a strong push against biblical masculinity. masculinity. There's been such a strong condemnation not only of the abusive style of masculinity but of the good and godly type of masculinity so that a word that originally just meant father rule, patriarchy, has now become almost a curse word and has been twisted to meaning something else. I said I'm concerned that the pendulum is going to swing really far in the other direction and the timing may hit when our boys are entering into adulthood and figuring out and navigating what it means to be a man and there's going to be this wave of actual real toxic masculinity that's going to sweep through.

I'm not a prophet, it was just a fear that I had. And now, what do we see among all of these podcasters that have gained these massive platforms?

[ 29 : 13 ] What do we see among many of the male influencers in the world? We see that the only things that matter are the accumulation of more women, more money, and more toys.

An unbiblical form of masculinity. Because you see there's just a narrow window there in which men in any culture can be pushed back and marginalized.

So we said last week that men are physically stronger in general, right? More broadly. Men are stronger, capable if they decide to, of abusively insisting and asserting their dominance over women.

women. And what's warned about here in Genesis is exactly what we're seeing unfold. And it has happened time and time again throughout history.

We're seeing it unfold. That the more that women fight and push against genuine biblical mature femininity and pursue control, and strength and power over men, the stronger will be the eventual pushback from men.

[ 30 : 40 ] Not men pursuing godliness, not men pursuing and trying to get back to a healthy balance, but men who in their sinful desires have just had enough.

This is what we are warned about in scripture and it is a pattern that we see repeated throughout history. It is not that women do not have any power and influence in the world.

Their influence and their power is at its greatest when they understand the role that God has given to them.

So, we do live in a fallen world. world, we do live in a world in which many women are unable to conceive children or carry them to terms.

And so, if I am saying to you that mature femininity is a disposition to nurture life, what are we to say to those women who have been unable to have children?

[ 31 : 44 ] Or what do we say to women who are beyond the years of raising their own children? They have moved past that. How do you pursue mature femininity if raising children and having children is either in the past or has never been in the cards for you?

How do you pursue that? Well, that is not only a question that we need to answer simply because we live in a fallen world and because life moves on. It is also a question that we need to answer because we live in a unique time of human history from a biblical standpoint.

That we live in the overlap between the present age and the age to come. Between this world and the world to come. That we live in an overlap.

Picture it like a Venn diagram, right? That in this age we have the creation mandate to be fruitful and multiply and that's normative for people.

That's still in force. We've not exited this age. So for the vast majority of people God's will, God's desire is still for them to get married, have children and all of those sorts of things.

[ 32 : 58 ] That's sort of the normal course of things. But we also live in that overlap. In the age to come, Jesus tells us there will be no marrying or giving in marriage.

Which means no more having of children. And Paul tells us that even now in the overlap of the ages, he himself did not get married, he did not have children, and he says I wish that more of you were as I am.

Because Paul experienced that as a kind of freedom for ministry that he knew he wouldn't have if he were married and had children. He was granted this freedom by God. Which means that because we live in the overlap of the ages, there will be some people who not merely because of life circumstances, and not merely because of a physical inability, there will be some people that God actually calls not to be married and not to have children, or to be married and to not have children.

That can happen. That doesn't mean that the normal course and that what most of us ought to pursue is marriage and children. We should, but we should also recognize that in the overlap of the ages there will be those, few though they may be compared to the whole population, there will be those that God calls not to get married, or not to have children.

So how can women who either are unable to have children or since they call from the Lord not to be a part of that this age normal progression of things, how can they pursue mature femininity?

[ 34 : 34 ] How can they nurture life? And the answer is made clear for us in the New Testament. We'll return back to the Apostle Paul, since we don't have any women telling us in Scripture what their experience of not having a family and children is like, we have to look to the Apostle Paul.

The Apostle Paul, though he had no physical children, he describes himself as having spiritual children. That Paul was able to nurture spiritual life in others.

Listen to these verses. 2 Timothy 2, verse 1, Paul speaking to Timothy addresses him, You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Or Titus, chapter 1, verse 4, Paul speaks to Titus, he says, To Titus, my true child in a common faith. Or the letter to Philemon, Paul appeals to him, he says, I appeal to you for the sake of my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in imprisonment.

That there is spiritual parentage, spiritual motherhood that women can pursue when God either does not allow them or he calls them to a life where they do not have children.

[ 35 : 59 ] You are not unable to nurture life simply because you don't or can't have children. You are able, you are called to nurture spiritual life within others by leading people to faith in Christ so that they are born again and by then discipling them so that they grow and become healthy.

Listen to this encouragement from the Apostle Paul. Titus, chapter 2, verse 3. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior and not slanderers or not slaves to much wine.

They are to teach what is good and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands that the word of God may not be reviled.

Paul is encouraging the older women in the church, women who perhaps don't have children or they've raised their children in their past those years, but he is encouraging them to train the young women to become nurturers of spiritual life.

And that's what every Christian is called to. Most Christians will be called like most people in the world to get married and have children, but every Christian is called to nurture spiritual life in others.

[ 37 : 39 ] And ladies, your calling, I mean, that's a, we have a direct command in the New Testament from the Apostle Paul. You are commanded, if you are a mature woman in the faith, you are commanded to train up the younger women.

it's not suggested for you, as if this is something you can contribute to in the church, it's commanded of you, that this is what you are supposed to do, to train them up.

And so I would encourage you, if you are a young woman or if you are young in the faith, to seek out an older woman or a more mature Christian woman to be mentored, because that's the pattern that the scripture lays out for us, for women in the body of Christ.

I think that a lot of the difficulties that we face within the church would be resolved by mature Christians mentoring younger Christians.

A lot of the difficulties. And I will say this, many of the problems that are faced within the church, like not theological problems, I'm not talking about doctrinal debates and issues, that's another issue, set that aside.

[ 39 : 00 ] Aside from doctrinal issues, most issues within the church that create division are relational issues. And people's feelings get hurt.

People say things to others that hurt other people's feelings and bitterness wells up and frustration wells up. And in my experience, the vast majority of the time, that happens among the women. Rarely, rarely do I have a man come to me and say, this other guy over here, he really said something that hurt my feelings. But rarely a week goes by that I don't hear that from at least one lady in the church.

And we're a healthy church. We're a church with strong, loving relationships. relationships. But that's not just my experience. It appears to be Paul's experience as well.

Listen to this, Philippians chapter 4. Paul's writing to a church that compared to most of his other letters, this is a healthy church. But listen to what he says in verse 2. He says, I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche, those are female names, women's names, to agree in the Lord.

[ 40 : 15 ] Yes, I also ask you, true companion, and this is a male that he's appealing to, probably a leader in the church, help these women, help them, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

These are Christian women. These are women who work side by side with the Apostle Paul. They've done ministry, they've done good things, and yet, here they are at odds with one another, and it threatens the unity of a healthy church.

So what does Paul do? He encourages the leaders and the mature people in the church, help these women. If every younger woman in the church was being mentored by an older woman in the church, we would not see nearly as many as the frustrations that we often see women experiencing in relationships with one another.

You know why? Because if you're being mentored by another lady in the church, and by mentored, I don't mean you get together once a month, I mean regularly talking, regularly praying for one another, regularly speaking truth into the life of the other person, and you as a young woman come to your mentor, and you say, so and so did this, said this, did that, this is what unfolded, she will know you well enough to know if that's your sin or someone else's sin.

She'll have a close enough relationship with you to be able to say to you hard things, hard things, and you'll be able to receive them because you know she loves you, you know she wants what's best for you.

[ 42 : 05 ] Ladies, Paul commands it, older women train the younger women, and younger women should seek out the older women to be disciplined by them.

It will transform your relationships, not just with that individual, it will transform your relationships with many, many people, especially other women within the body of Christ.

This is not optional, this is commanded. You can nurture life, life. Whether you have children or not, whether your children are grown and gone, you can be a nurturer of life if you will pour into the spiritual growth and development of other believers, especially other women around you.

But that's only half of our definition. The other half was that women are to have a disposition to affirm leadership in worthy men.

I said earlier that women do have power, women have influence. The question becomes, how will women use that influence?

[ 43 : 26 ] Will they use it, will you use it to affirm strength and leadership in godly men? or will you use it to get your way and to have a say in everything?

How will you use it? We speak of the power that women have biblically. It generally comes in two forms.

One, it comes in the power of a woman and her sexuality to influence men. And then two, it comes in the power of women to use words in ways that influence men.

And I say in those two ways because when we look to the book of Proverbs, this is interesting about Proverbs, the book of Proverbs personifies wisdom as a woman and personifies sin as a woman.

There are two primary women that are set before us in Proverbs. there is wisdom that we are to pursue. Wisdom whose words nurture spiritual life in others.

[ 44 : 46 ] And then there is the sinful woman, the sensual woman, who entices and draws in both with her physical abilities and prowess and with her words.

And while the Proverbs is not written mainly to teach us about mature femininity, that Solomon would use these as his primary ways of explaining to us how we can pursue wisdom and be encouraged in wisdom and how we can be drawn away from wisdom, that he would personify this as two women shows that this is the common experience.

this is what we often see. Let me show you that. I won't spend a whole lot of time on this because I'm running out of time. But I do want to show you a bit of this.

Proverbs chapter 1. The first time we see this, the lady wisdom. Verse 20, Wisdom cries aloud in the street.

In the markets she raises her voice. At the head of the noisy streets she cries out. At the entrance of the city gates she speaks.

[ 46 : 00 ] Lady Wisdom, she speaks and she cries out so that she might instruct and lead and guide others.

But more than that, it's not just that she's standing there speaking and crying out. We see more than that. Turn over a page to chapter 2. We see the opposite.

He says, verse 16, You will be delivered from the forbidden woman. This is if you listen to the voice of lady wisdom. You will be delivered from the forbidden woman. From the adulteress with her smooth words.

Who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God. For her house sinks down to death and her paths to the departed. None who go to her will come back, nor do they regain the path of life.

Listen to the words of lady wisdom and you will have life. But if you don't listen to the words of lady wisdom, you will fall prey to the words of another woman whose ways lead to death.

[ 47 : 06 ] Chapter 5, we read another warning. Verse 3, verse 8, keep your way far from her and do not go near to the door of her house.

Do women have power? If they didn't, then these illustrations would make no sense at all in the book of Proverbs. Do women have power and influence in regard to the men around them?

Absolutely you do. The question is not whether or not you have power and influence. The question is how will you use it? mature femininity uses it to affirm strength and leadership in worthy men.

Immature femininity, ungodly womanhood, seeks to use sensuality and speech to exert control over men and even over others around them.

But good and godly femininity use the same good gifts in order to affirm strength and leadership in men.

[ 48 : 33 ] Your words, your words when spoken with kindness and when aimed at encouragement can transform a man's whole outlook.

Wives, if you want to see husbands change, then start to encourage them. Begin to encourage them, begin to say kind words to them.

Instead of just reminding them of all the things that they didn't do, begin to speak kind words and be thankful and remind them of the things that they did do. You'll see a man transformed.

That's human nature. I mean, if you've raised kids, you've probably discovered that if you brag on a kid and tell them that they're good at something, next thing you know, they're good at it.

I mean, not with everything. If you can't shoot a jump shot, you can't shoot a jump shot, right? But if you tell a kid they're really good at sweeping the floor and you're so proud of them, then the next time they sweep the floor, they'll want to live up to it.

[ 49 : 36 ] Words matter. Words change and transform people and women have powerful words able to change the course of men's lives, either for the worse or for the better.

And God has also granted to women sensuality that is not always a sinful bad thing that is reserved for marriage.

That when used rightly forges bonds within marriage that are very difficult to break. That when used rightly can create a closeness within marriage, will cause your husband to long to hear what you have to say, and your influence grows.

But the problem is, is that even this good gift from God is easily abused. You probably know this, but it bears repeating, that biblically the only, place that is appropriate and not sinful for any sexual behavior is within marriage between a man and a woman.

There's no other appropriate avenue. There's not. There's not, well, but we've been dating a long time. There's not, well, but we're engaged and we're going to get married.

[ 51 : 05 ] It's just within marriage. And within marriage, it's a good gift. And women have been granted a good gift and a way of relating and influencing their husbands that's powerful.

But not when it's applied outside of marriage or not when it's used in sinful ways. You know, there's a reason why Paul feels the need in 1 Timothy to address the women regarding a particular issue. In 1 Timothy, he addresses the men first and encouraging them to pray and be devoted to prayer. But listen to what he says. 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 9.

He says, likewise also, so I want the men to pray and lift up holy hands, don't fight with each other, he tells the men. And then he says to the women, likewise also, that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness, with good works. It's addressing the issue of the natural allure that women have and how are you going to use it? How will you use it? Will you dress immodestly to catch the eye of others around you?

[ 52 : 38 ] Will you dress in ways that are ostentatious to grab other people's attention or will you dress modestly? It matters.

It's an issue that Paul brings up in one of his letters. It matters a great deal. You have power, ladies. What will you do with it? The scriptures call women to be modest in public and around others. modest both in terms of what they expose but also modest in what they put on. How are we doing there? When you get dressed, are you thinking primarily about what will look the best on me? What will capture more people's attention and get the most compliments? Or are you thinking, what company's godliness in what I wear?

We often talk about women needing safe spaces and for good reason. We are warned right in Genesis about how men can exert their strength and power in an evil way.

[ 53 : 51 ] And so we do need to seek for women to have places where they feel safe and the church should be one of those places. it is a massive tragedy that women have been abused at all in churches.

I mean it is a heart breaking, gut wrenching tragedy to read another article about a woman who's been abused by someone in the church. The church should be safe.

Of all places where you do not feel that some guy is going to hit on you or corner you, the church should be that place above all others. you should feel safe.

But rarely do we talk about men needing safety. Of all places the church should be the place where no one is dressing in a way to draw a man's eye and cause him to lust.

Well you're not going to corner him and overpower him. But the power that women have, how do you wield it? Church should be a safe space for women where they don't have to worry about men wielding their strength.

[ 54 : 59 ] Church should be a safe place for men where they don't have to worry about women yielding their unique strength in a way that's harmful. How are we doing in these things? I'm not interested in giving you a dress code, I'm not interested in listing off things that you should and should not wear.

I mean Paul does a little bit of that with some cultural items, but I'm not interested in that. I just want to ask you the simple question, are you wielding the influence and power that God has given you with your words and with your physical body?

Are you wielding that power in a godly way that nurtures life and affirms strength and leadership in worthy men?

I'm not sure that I can preach on biblical femininity without reading something from Proverbs 31.

And so I want to turn to Proverbs 31 real quickly and read you just a handful of the verses that describe for us what a godly woman looks like.

We can't cover all of it too much. Verse 10, an excellent wife who can find. She is far more precious than jewels.

[ 56 : 13 ] The heart of her husband trusts in her and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not harm all the days of her life.

Verse 20, she opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. She nurtures life. Verse 26, she opens her mouth with wisdom and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Verse 30, charm is deceitful and beauty is vain.

But a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates.

grace. It is a great responsibility not just to be made in the image of God but to be made as a woman in the image of God.

[ 57 : 17 ] It is a great responsibility that you bear. You are called to godliness and when godliness is expressed in women in uniquely feminine ways, everyone around them in their lives benefits.

Everyone. more than that, the whole world benefits because the woman is not told in Genesis 3 that because you have done this I am not going to let you do what I made you do.

You are not going to have any more children. The pain increases in bearing children but the blessing of bearing children is not taken away. The blessing of bearing children is not taken away because it is by means of a woman bringing a child into the world that redemption is made available.

Verse 15 that the seed of the woman the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. That's the promise. If women aren't women Christ never comes into the world.

Women. because of your unique abilities as women salvation is available to men women and children. Women because of the way that God has designed you and the things that he has called you to pursue Christ came into the world.

[ 58 : 51 ] Yes he came into the world in a miraculous way born of a virgin but nevertheless born of a woman Paul describes Christ born of a woman why does that matter because that was the plan all along was always the plan women are not less significant than men because their roles are different it is through women no man needed to interfere so that Mary could conceive and have a child it was through the woman that he came into the world and for all of our failures as men and women for all of our shortcomings because Christ came into the world the slate can be wiped clean!

we can have a new and fresh start all those who put their trust in Christ their sins are washed away forgiven completely and you get a new start in Christ if you've not put your faith in Christ never mind all this stuff about masculinity and femininity never mind all that for now if you've not put your faith in Christ trust in him be conformed!

to his image be what you were made to be as a human being and then you'll sort out the rest as you go along but do not leave without having put your faith in Christ and if you're a follower of Christ and you listen to these things and you hear what God's word says but you see failure here failure there shortcoming right here I'm not measuring up if you feel that and sense that then do what Christ said to do confess your sins God is faithful and just and he will forgive you your sins but also set that burden aside take his yoke upon you it's a lot easier it's a lot lighter than the yoke of guilt that you would otherwise carry let's pray and