

Male and female he created them

A Bible study on God's loving gift of the interdependent and complementary partnership of male and female

Lesson #2C: Unique gifts belonging to male and female in creation

Review: Selfless Leading

- 1.) From whom is all leadership/authority derived? Why is it important that we never lose sight of this truth?
- 2.) Who is the paramount example of leadership found in Scripture? How does this inform us about what true leadership consists of?
- 3.) Explain: God's entrusting us with different degrees and spheres of authority is not a matter of variable status but responsibility.
- 4.) Why will a wise leader not seek to "go it alone"?

Defining selfless yielding (functioning as a helper) from Scripture

By working through the passages about selfless leading, we have really already gone a long way toward defining selfless yielding since it is almost impossible to talk about one side of the partnership without talking about the other (so tightly has God intentionally woven the two sides of this partnership together).

But there are a couple challenges still needing to be addressed. Just as with the concept of leadership, so also with the concept of yielding (often translated in English Bible translations with the word "submission"), human sinfulness has caused error and misunderstanding on every side to cloud the beauty of what God designed. So, once again, we will seek to walk a careful biblical middle ground between distortions that either overstate or understate what Scripture means by selfless yielding.

➤ Read Psalm 27:9

How does it help us to see the beauty of serving in a calling of selfless yielding—often referred to as being a "helper"—when we find that God himself is the one most often referenced in Scripture in terms of offering "help" or being a "helper"?

➤ Read Galatians 3:26-29

What is the beauty of Paul's words in Galatians 3:26-29 as we live in the midst of a world so confused about what gives any of us our status (worth, value) in life?

➤ Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

How do Paul's words here provide gospel power to overcome our sinful nature's tendency to play favorites?

➤ Read Acts 5:29

One of the greatest challenges for believers who take seriously honoring those in positions of God-given authority is knowing when to say, "I'm sorry, I cannot follow your leadership here." At times those who abuse others prey on the tender conscience of those they seek to control and harm.

In Acts 5, the Jewish Sanhedrin, a clear authority in Jewish culture, was forbidding the apostles to speak about Jesus.

What does the apostles' response teach us about when we would refuse to follow the direction of a God-given leader?

What misunderstanding does this answer regarding what selfless yielding is all about?

Here's how the proposed restatement of our synod's doctrinal statement on male and female seeks to draw together these scriptural insights to define selfless yielding:

- *When God calls someone to reflect his supporting love by serving in a calling of selfless yielding (helper), he entrusts that person with the responsibility to submit to the authority of a God-given leader. Helpers are to use all their wisdom and gifts to support their leaders in a way that calls to mind how God is helper to us all (Psalm 121). Since God designed head and helper to function interdependently and not independently (1 Corinthians 11:11), God intends helpers to have a beneficial influence on those leading them.*

- *Selfless yielding to a God-given leader does not indicate a lesser status in God's eyes. Scripture affirms an equality of status before God by proclaiming that all believers are one in Christ (Galatians 3:26-29).*

Where do these paragraphs help you understand selfless yielding? What further questions do these words raise for you?

Here are some additional useful points to keep in mind about selfless leading and selfless yielding:

- *All people, male and female, are under God's authority. It is interesting to note that one way to define the sinfulness of human beings by nature is to say that they refuse to recognize the great blessing it is to be under God's authority in their life (Romans 8:7). All sinners, male and female, are by nature predisposed to look on all authority with skeptical eyes. Since our sinful human nature does not trust God; it therefore does not trust him to lead wisely and well.*
- *Because some try to paint this interdependent and complementary partnership of male and female in the most negative light possible by making it an absurd caricature of itself, it needs to be stated that every female does not need to consider every adult male to be her God-given authority. Selfless leading and selfless yielding do not function as freefloating abstractions divorced from specific earthly callings and settings. God designed the principle of the interdependent and complementary partnership of male and female to function in his world wherever women and men partner together in concrete relationships in the midst of their callings in life. They form these relationships to find God's blessing in those relationships for themselves and others. Male and female often find themselves entering these partnering relationships such as when they decide to get married or when choosing a particular place to work. Our next two lessons will seek to lead us to apply such selfless leading and selfless yielding in just such concrete relationships at home, in church, and out in the world.*
- *God does not entrust all males with specific callings of leadership. Also, all males, almost without exception, will find themselves under the authority of God-given leaders at work, at church, or in government.*
- *Women will also find themselves serving in callings as selfless leaders. for example, when entrusted with leadership over other women or over children. Callings in the world where females find themselves in authority over both adult males and females will be discussed in the final lesson of this Bible study.*