

LESSONS FOR THE SISTERS

Lesson 3

The Revelation of the Bible Concerning Male and Female in God's Economy

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:27; Matt. 19:4b; 1 Cor. 11:3-15; Gal. 3:26-28; 4:6; 2 Cor. 11:2

I. “And God created man in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”; “He who created them from the beginning made them male and female”—Gen. 1:27; Matt. 19:4b.

A. In God's creation there is a distinction between male and female:¹

1. God's creation of men and women is different, and God's purpose for men and women is also different—Gen. 2:7, 21-22:²
 - a. The man was created by God, and the woman was built by God; God's building work is finer than His creating work—vv. 21-22.³
 - b. Man, as the one created by God, is rougher than the female, who was built by God; the female is much finer, because she was built by God.
 - c. Man is man and woman is woman; no matter how much people argue, they cannot make women into men, and no matter how the fashion changes, they cannot make men into women—cf. Deut. 22:5.⁴
2. Since God's creation and purpose for men and women are different, the nature and function of men and women are different; no one can deny this or overthrow this fact:⁵
 - a. In the Bible the romance between male and female is used to illustrate God's divine romance—Isa. 54:5; Jer. 2:2; Ezek. 16:8; Eph. 5:25-32; Rev. 19:7-8; 21:2:⁶
 - 1) The wife is the object of the husband's love—Eph. 5:25; cf. Deut. 24:5.
 - 2) God's love needs an object; the church became and still is the object of God's love—vv. 2, 25.
 - b. God has an arrangement in which He wants two groups, men and women, to portray how He and Christ are the head and how humans should obey—vv. 22-24:⁷
 - 1) God wants men to take the role of Himself and Christ, and He wants women to take the role of the submitting humans—1 Cor. 4:9; 11:10.
 - 2) We should not bring the thought of the equality of men and women into this matter; this is not a question of whether men and women are equal; rather, it is a question of the function of men and women before God.
 - 3) Before the Lord men and women are both redeemed creatures without the slightest difference, but when we come before people, we must differentiate between men and women to portray the role of the head and the role of those who submit—Rom. 3:21-24; 1 Cor. 11:3-15; 1 Tim. 2:11-14.
 - 4) This is similar to actors who are ordinary people off the stage but who play very particular characters in different roles on stage; when they are on stage, there is a sense that they are different in function, but there is no thought of inequality.
 - 5) May God show the sisters that their submission can cause people to sense the authority and glory of God and Christ!

- B. Today, we are still in the old creation;⁸ there is still the distinction between males and females in the church—1 Cor. 11:3-15, 14:33b-38; 1 Tim. 2:11-14.⁹
 - 1. On the one hand, in Christ there are no differences between males and females (Gal. 3:28); on the other hand, although we are the new man, in the church life the differences between males and females are still present (1 Tim. 2:11-14).¹⁰
 - 2. We have a spirit, but we also have the flesh; hence, we must keep the dividing line between males and females in our community and also in our church life—Rom. 13:14.¹¹
 - a. The sisters should not forget that they are females when they contact people; they are not free to speak carelessly; otherwise, their contacting people will bring them many problems.
 - b. It is wrong to speak with a person of the opposite sex when we are alone in a room; we must have a third person present there; this is not only a virtue but also a great protection.
 - 3. While we live on this earth and in our flesh, in no way can you believe that the boundary between men and women can be abolished; there is no such thing.¹²

II. “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus...There cannot be male and female; for you are all one in Christ”—Gal. 3:26-28:

- A. Before the Lord and in Christ there is no distinction between male and female—v. 28:¹³
 - 1. In the world the male occupies one role and the female occupies another role; in church administration the male also has his place and the female her place; within the family the husband has his place and the wife has her place—1 Tim. 2:12; Eph. 5:22-25; Col. 3:18-19.
 - 2. However, in Christ and in the new man, both the man and the woman have the same stand; there is no distinction between them—Gal. 3:28.
 - 3. In Christ, the man does not occupy a special place, nor does woman, because Christ is all and in all; in this respect a man is no different from a woman:
 - a. The sisters’ place in some areas of service is different from that of the brothers; but this pertains only to the matter of authority—1 Tim. 2:12.
 - b. Today, in Christ, there is no difference between the two.
- B. According to life, all the believers are males; however, according to love, we all are females:¹⁴
 - 1. According to life, all the believers, including the sisters, are sons of God and brothers of Christ—Gal. 3:26, 4:6-7; John 20:17; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:11-12; Rev. 21:7.
 - a. As a help to the sisters, we need to point out that in God’s household there are no daughters; God has only sons, not daughters—Gal. 3:26.¹⁵
 - b. In the flesh you are a female, but you have received the life of God’s Son; therefore, even the sisters are sons—1 John 5:12.¹⁶
 - 2. On the other hand, as to the relationship between us and Christ, we all are females; even the brothers are females:¹⁷
 - a. We all are virgins betrothed to Christ; we are the bride of Christ and the wife of the Lamb—2 Cor. 11:2; John 3:29a; Rev. 21:2, 9; cf. S. S. 1:3b; 4:8-9.
 - b. The relationship between the Bride and the Bridegroom is a matter of love, not a matter of life; according to love, we all are females.¹⁸
 - c. We are living sons of the living God, whereas we are the loving Bride of our dear Bridegroom.

C. How wonderful that the church is both a man (Eph. 2:15, 4:24; Col. 3:10) and, at the same time, a bride (Eph. 5:23-27)!¹⁹

Excerpts from the Ministry:

GOD'S ORDER IN CREATION

The arrangement of God's will for men and women is different. In the order of God's creation, there is a difference between men and women. First, He created the man, and then He created the woman. Furthermore, the woman is out of the man and for the man; the man is not out of the woman or for the woman. Although men are born through women, they are only "through" the woman, not "out from" the woman as the woman is "out from" the man. God's creation of men and women is different, and God's purpose for men and women is also different. According to His creation, the woman is out from the man, but the man is not out from the woman; according to His purpose, the woman is for the man, but the man is not for the woman. "Therefore the woman ought to have a sign of submission to authority on her head" (v. 10). She should have something covering her head.

God's creation and purpose for men and women are completely different. Man is man and woman is woman, just as bronze is bronze and iron is iron. No matter how much people argue, they cannot make women into men, and no matter how the fashion changes, they cannot make men into women. Since God's creation and purpose for men and women are different, the nature and function of men and women are also different. No one can deny this or overthrow this fact. (*Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 2, msg. 19, p. 254)

THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE BROTHERS AND THE SISTERS

There is [a] boundary that needs to be strictly kept. That is the boundary between the brothers and the sisters. This is also a great boundary. There is one thing we must admit: while Christians live on earth today, the place where they have the most opportunity to contact the opposite sex is the church. Between the brothers and sisters, they meet in the meetings, in the service, in the gospel preaching, and in their witnessing work. For this reason, in their administration of the church, the elders must draw a boundary between the brothers and the sisters. This is not a boundary of separation, but a boundary of distinction. This boundary must never be removed or annulled. Whenever you annul this boundary, you will involve yourselves in immense trouble.

In Christianity there are some zealous ones with little spiritual experience who suggest: "We are all brothers and sisters in the Lord. Since we are all spiritual, we do not need to distinguish the brothers from the sisters." I want to tell the brothers and sisters that I have seen the fruit from such a concept. I have heard even more about such things. They bring untold problems to the church. In some places, it is the elders who are reaping and eating their own fruit because the elders themselves have led the church this way. Their way of administration is to cause the brothers and sisters not to have any boundary. This is altogether wrong.

While we live on this earth and in our flesh, in no way can you believe that the boundary between men and women can be abolished; there is no such thing. This is the devil's teaching. In some places, some teach that we are all spiritual, and that to talk about the boundary between male and female is to have defiled thoughts. Some almost condemn me by saying that it is because my thoughts are filthy and unclean that I am talking about the boundary between the brothers and the sisters. No. Even if thousands of people would rise up to say that my thoughts are unclean, I will still stand up to tell you that you need a boundary between the brothers and the sisters. The elders in every locality must set up a firm boundary between the brothers and the sisters; they should never remove it.

Galatians 3 says that in Christ there is no more distinction between male and female. But in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, it says that in the church we must still distinguish the boundary between male and female. There is no distinction between male and female in Christ, but there is still the distinction between male and female in the church. If in the church we make no distinction between male and female, then Paul is actually contradicting himself in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, because there he clearly says that brothers do not have to cover their heads when they pray, but that the sisters do. In addition, the sisters should not speak in the meeting. You can see that there is still a distinction between male and female in the church.

Some have checked with me in a serious way: "Brother Lee, why does the church not come up to the standard of the age? In most social gatherings today, men and women sit together. Why do the men and women sit separately in the church meetings?" Dear brothers and sisters, you cannot deny that David loved the Lord more than you do and was more spiritual than you are. But even David could fall. How much more can we fall also? Today, we are still in the old creation, and it is still possible for us to fall. God has not removed the boundary between male and female in the church. When you and I administrate the church, we must not give the impression that we are all in the Lord and that it makes no difference whether we are brothers or sisters. This indifference is detrimental and must never be permitted. We must learn to draw a boundary here. (*The Elders' Management of the Church*, msg. 9, pp. 149-151)

PAYING ATTENTION TO THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN MALES AND FEMALES

The first relationship in a community is the relationship between males and females. This relationship exceeds that of a parent and child. God did not first create a parent and then a child. He first created a male and then a female and only through them were descendants brought forth. The relationships within a community began with the descendants of Adam and Eve, but the first relationship was that of a male and a female. This is also a very personal relationship. A parent-child relationship is not a matter of our own choice, but the male-female relationship involves a choice. We must be clear concerning this and keep a dividing line between male and female. We should not think that we cannot be influenced to make a wrong choice because we have a regenerated spirit. Our body is fallen and is still the flesh. Romans 7 says that nothing good dwells in our flesh and that sin dwells in our flesh (vv. 17-18).

John 1:14 says that the Lord Jesus as the Word became flesh. The flesh belongs to sin, yet the Son of God became flesh. How can this be? The proper answer is in Romans 8:3, which says, "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh." This verse says that although the Lord Jesus became flesh, He was only in the likeness of the flesh of sin and did not have the sin of the flesh. This was typified by the bronze serpent lifted up by Moses for the sinful Israelites (Num. 21:9; John 3:14). The bronze serpent was in the form, the likeness, of a serpent, but it did not have the poison of the serpent. This bronze serpent bore God's judgment for the poisoned Israelites and dealt with the serpents that poisoned them. Although Christ did not have the flesh of sin, He was crucified in the flesh. Thus, through His death on the cross God condemned sin, which was brought by Satan into man's flesh. Only the Lord Jesus was without the flesh of sin. The Bible does not say that man is spirit. It says that man *has* a spirit (Job 32:8) and that man *is* flesh (Gen. 6:3). Since man is flesh, it is necessary to keep the differences between males and females. We should never abolish such differences.

Colossians 3:11 says, "Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all." First Corinthians 12:13 says, "In one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit." If we read these two verses carefully, we will discover that they do not mention males or females. However, Galatians 3:28 says, "There cannot be Jew nor Greek, there cannot be slave nor free man, there

cannot be male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” On the one hand, in Christ there are no differences between males and females. On the other hand, although we are the new man, in the church life the differences between males and females are still present. We have a spirit, but we also have the flesh. Hence, we must keep the dividing line between males and females in our community and also in the church life.

SHAMEFASTNESS BEING GREATER PROTECTION

When we share and testify in the meetings, the sisters should always remember that they are females and that whatever they do should be done with modesty, that is, shamefastness. Modesty, or shamefastness, is a female virtue (1 Tim. 2:9). The Bible says that if a woman prays or prophesies with her head uncovered, she disgraces her head (1 Cor. 11:5). This does not mean that the brothers can act immodestly. Both males and females should have a proper shamefastness. The more modest we are, the higher the standard of morality we will have and the greater will be our protection. A proper person should be very modest and be limited in the places he goes, the people he knows, and the things that he says. The basic principle of the Christian life is to walk according to the Spirit. When we walk according to the Spirit, we will have no need for anyone to teach us, but His anointing will teach us concerning all things (1 John 2:27).

The saints who have a heart to serve full time should learn the lesson of not being careless when contacting people and being careful concerning the setting in which they contact people. In particular, the sisters should not forget that they are females when they contact people; they are not free to speak carelessly. Otherwise, their contacting people will bring them many problems. Not only will they suffer loss but they will also cause the Lord’s name to suffer shame. In human communities as well as in the church, we must remember that there is a difference between males and females. It is wrong to speak with a person of the opposite sex when we are alone in a room. We must have a third person present there. This is not only a virtue but also a great protection. (*The Vision, Living, and Work of the Lord’s Serving Ones*, msg. 16, pp. 138-140)

THE ANNULING OF DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE

The fourth distinction that has been abolished in Christ is that of gender, that is, the distinction between male and female. In this world the male occupies one role and the female occupies another role. In church administration the male also has his place and the female her place. Within the family the husband has his place and the wife has her place. However, in Christ and in the new man, both the man and the woman have the same stand; there is no distinction between them.

In Christ, the man does not occupy a special place, nor does the woman, because Christ is all and in all. In this respect a man is no different from a woman. Please remember that in spiritual matters there is no distinction between male and female.

We have mentioned that the sisters’ place in some areas of service is different from that of the brothers. But this pertains only to the matter of authority. Today, in Christ, there is no difference between the two. A brother is saved through the life of Christ, the life of God’s Son. In the same way, a sister is saved through the life of Christ, the life of God’s Son. Every case in the Bible where the Chinese version translates “sons and daughters,” the original word is children. This word does not differentiate between male or female (even though its usage is masculine). I am born a child of God and grow up to be a son of God. A son is male. Yet this description fits both the brothers as well as the sisters.

In the whole New Testament, only 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 speaks of sons and daughters. “Therefore ‘come out from their midst...and I will welcome you’; ‘and I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to Me.’” After we have believed in God and are delivered and

separated from the world and its polluted and unclean influence, God will receive us like a Father, and we will be His sons and His daughters. This is a matter between God and an individual; it is not a matter of what a person is in Christ. This is why it says sons and daughters. When a person suffers for God, incurs loss for His sake, and experiences hardship because of Him, God will become a Father to such a one as an individual. If you are male, God will receive you as a son. If you are female, God will receive you as a daughter. God will receive you as His sons and daughters. He is the all-sufficient Lord. He has everything. This is a matter of what a person is before God. It has nothing to do with what he or she is in Christ. In Christ, we are all God's children, and there is no distinction between male and female. This distinction does not exist at all.

Once I asked a certain craftsman in Shanghai, who was a brother in the Lord, "Brother, how are the brothers in your place doing?" He replied, "Are you asking about the male brothers or the female brothers?" This answer could not have been put better. It is one of the truest words ever spoken. Male brothers are brothers and female brothers are also brothers; there is no distinction in Christ. What this brother said was absolutely correct; he was simply stating the biblical truth. When we come to the Lord and touch Him, we transcend all male and female distinctions. We are beyond gender. Before the Lord and in Christ, there is no distinction between male and female. (CWWN, vol. 48, "Messages for Building Up New Believers (1)," msg. 8, pp. 121-122)

We should not hold the concept that we cannot be an apostle like Paul. The apostles are examples of what all believers should be. Paul was not an extraordinary person, and he did not reach a state that no one else can attain. The concept that the apostles are unique is a Roman Catholic tradition. This tradition is related to the concept that Peter was the unique successor of Christ and therefore the first pope. What a devilish concept! Far from being unique, Peter is an example of one who followed the Lord. In particular, he is an example to Jewish believers in Christ. Paul is a pattern especially for Gentile believers. In 1 Timothy 1:16 he says, "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Since Paul is our pattern, none of us should say that we cannot be like him.

Although the brothers may believe that they can be today's apostles, the sisters may find it very difficult to believe that this also applies to them. As a help to the sisters, we need to point out that in God's household there are no daughters. God has only sons, not daughters. Christ, the firstborn Son of God, has brothers, but He does not have sisters. This indicates that, according to life, all the believers, including the sisters, are sons of God and brothers of Christ. For this reason, in his Epistles Paul addresses the brothers, but not the brothers and sisters. The sisters, of course, are included in the term brothers.

According to life, all the believers are males. However, according to love, we all are females. Christ is our Bridegroom, and we are His Bride. The relationship between the Bride and the Bridegroom is a matter of love, not a matter of life. Love is the unique requirement of married life. Therefore, we are living sons of the living God, whereas we are the loving Bride of our dear Bridegroom. How, then, would you answer this question: Are we, the believers in Christ, males or females? The proper way to answer is to reply that according to life we are males, but according to love we are females.

Paul was made an apostle not according to love, but according to life. It was as a matter of life that he was made a pattern for all the believers, the brothers and the sisters as well. This indicates that by taking Paul as our pattern, we all, brothers and sisters, can be God's sent ones today. Paul's status was that of an apostle, and ours should be the same. Hence, as we study the formation of Paul's apostleship, we are also studying the formation of our own apostleship.

All of us in the Lord's recovery need to be sent ones. At the least, a young sister can be sent by the Lord to her parents to testify to them about the Lord Jesus. Are you ready to be sent by the Lord? We all should be prepared to be sent forth by Him. Concerning this matter of apostleship, our minds need to be renewed. (*Life-study of Galatians*, msg. 5, pp. 41-42)

Study Questions:

1. What are two specific ways we can see that the nature and function of men and women are different based upon God's creation and purpose for male and female?
2. Why is it important to understand that even in the church the distinction between male and female is not nullified?
3. What is the significance of the fact that in Christ the distinction between male and female has been abolished?

References and Further Reading:

1. *Words of Training for the New Way*, vol. 2, msg. 7
2. *The Organic Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ to Be the Organism of the Processed and Dispensing Triune God*, msg. 3
3. *Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 2, msg. 19
4. *The Elders' Management of the Church*, msg. 9
5. *The Vision, Living, and Work of the Lord's Serving Ones*, msg. 16
6. *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, vol. 1, msg. 8
7. *Life-Study of Galatians*, msgs. 5 and 21
8. *The Central Thought of God*, msg. 13
9. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 42, "Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (2)," msg. 46

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- ¹ Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 2, ch. 19, p. 69.
 - ² Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, vol. 2, ch. 19, p. 254.
 - ³ The Organic Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ to be the Organism of the Processed and Dispensing Triune God, ch. 3, p. 39.
 - ⁴ Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, vol. 2, ch. 19, p. 254.
 - ⁵ Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, vol. 2, ch. 19, p. 254.
 - ⁶ Elders' Training, Book 11: The Eldership and the God-Ordained Way (3), ch. 1, p. 9.
 - ⁷ Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, vol. 2, ch. 19, pp. 251-252.
 - ⁸ The Elders' Management of the Church, ch. 9, p. 151.
 - ⁹ The Elders' Management of the Church, ch. 9, p. 150.
 - ¹⁰ The Vision, Living, and Work of the Lord's Serving Ones, ch. 16, p. 139.
 - ¹¹ The Vision, Living, and Work of the Lord's Serving Ones, ch. 16, pp. 139-140.
 - ¹² The Elders' Management of the Church, ch. 9, p. 150.
 - ¹³ Messages for Building Up New Believers, vol. 1, ch. 8, pp. 121-122.
 - ¹⁴ Life-study of Galatians, ch. 5, p. 42.
 - ¹⁵ Life-study of Galatians, ch. 5, p. 41.
 - ¹⁶ CWWN, vol. 42, "Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship," ch. 46, p. 374.
 - ¹⁷ The Central Thought of God, ch. 13, p. 120.
 - ¹⁸ Life-study of Galatians, ch. 5, p. 42.
 - ¹⁹ The Completing Ministry of Paul, ch. 5, p. 38.