

# Biblical Womanhood

Jim Essian : March 1, 2015

## THE PARADOX CHURCH

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Genesis 2:18-23, 3:16 *Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."*

The first wave of feminism came about in the early 1900s, and it was primarily a good thing. The first wave of feminism focused on the legal equalities for women, the quality of women in their personhood as equal to men. It focused on other legal equalities, and it was by and large a good thing. In Moses's day, when he writes here in Genesis 1, 2, and 3, you have a culture that does not see women as equals. His writings in Genesis 1, 2, and 3 are countercultural to the Israelites where they are in and the nations they're around. In Jesus's day you had women not seen as equal. So the New Testament is being written in correcting the views of society in regards to men and women. You have women not being uplifted into equal status as men, and yet the Bible is doing that. Even now in our day in some cultures women are not seen as equals. And so you have the first wave of feminism that pops up. This movement is stressing that women are equal with men; they should have legal equalities, and so on. It was a good thing. It was the Bible correcting cultures that do not see men and women as equal. We affirm that it was a good thing.

But then their daughters started to rebel against what came of that. You had women in the 30s and 40s and 50s, products of first wave feminism, who, though equal and saw themselves as equal and could vote equally, were still refining their identity as moms and as wives. Now that's obviously a very valuable thing, moms and wives; it's a valuable calling. But a calling is one thing, finding your identity in it is quite another. So the daughters of those moms, did what I've heard some daughters tend to do at times, rebelled against their moms and their moms' understanding and ways of doing things. That brought about the second wave of feminism in the 60s.

Hannah Anderson says this: they, the daughters of the women who grew up in the first wave of feminism, they believe that in order to discover full identity women simply needed to be freed from the bondage of biological roles. Personal fulfillment was found in autonomy, whether that meant sexual autonomy in the form of birth control and abortion, where economic autonomy through education and a career path. So listen, women now in this generation, our gals, they're the first to have grown up with empowered mothers. Our gals, you guys, are the first to grow up being told you could be whatever you wanted to be. The first generation in any culture of women that could say that, who are products of the first wave feminism. Hey we're equal, we should be able to vote. Then also products of the second wave feminism that says we need to be free from this box of being a mom or this box of being a wife, and we pursue our identity and other things. You are the first generation to have the choices that you have, the empowerment that you have, and the autonomy to make the choices that you want to make. So it would seem that if any generation of women with a strong sense of identity would be you, would be this one. And yet it doesn't seem to be the case. Hannah Anderson continues to tell us why. She says if it were simply a matter of making our way in the world we should have no issues. But we do. Instead of defining themselves by their homes and family, women now are compelled to define themselves by their education, professional accomplishments, and independence from men. While the domesticity of the 1950s may have truncated identity in one respect, subsequent feminist thought simply locked it off in another. She's basically saying you can't find your identity in being a mom or a wife, but you also cannot find your identity in being strong, independent in a sexual being. We cannot find identity in either one of those things, otherwise we will fall far far short of what God has designed women uniquely and distinctively to be.

The problem isn't that women needed to be freed from their biological roles or that box that society had put them in, but, in fact, the problem is we need to be free from the desire, the need, to find your identity in something else, to be defined by something else and not God. That's the problem. To be defined not by what you have done or are doing but by who God is and

how He made you. There's this unique design that God has created in women, and, in part, they are to display the glory of God, reflect the character and goodness of God, in such a way that we wouldn't have it if there was no such thing as womanhood. We would miss out on the glory of God if women aren't biblical women. If men aren't biblical men, we don't get a glimpse of the glory of God and an understanding of who God is. And if we don't have biblical womanhood, then we lose out on a piece and understanding and experience of God. We miss out on God. When men are being biblical men and women are being biblical women, male and female he created them, we have a glimpse of the glory of God. And so the problem simply is finding your identity in God or not in God and not in His design for you. If your identity is found in God's design, what does that look like? That's the question that I want to answer.

First a couple of things before we get into Genesis 2.

One, men, in particular husbands, if you see your wife, especially today and this week, as someone to fix and to solve, you will not be very helpful at all. I promise you, your wife doesn't want to be fixed or solved. She wants to be known and loved. This sermon is meant for you to know her, for you know how God has uniquely designed her, for you to know what she struggles with, the lies that she believes. This is for you to know her. Know her and love her this week, not fix and solve.

Secondly to the gals. I'm a man preaching a sermon on biblical womanhood. So I've been praying a lot. Here is where I got with all of this: I want for you what I want for my daughters. I have two little girls, and I have one on the way. God knows that I don't know anything about girls. He's just going to show me by throwing a bunch of them in my house. And what I want for them I want for you. I want you to be strong. I want you to feel loved. I want to be ferocious women of God. John Piper said that "wimpy theology makes for wimpy women." And so I want you to know God and all the things of God and know the Scriptures and the Word of God. I want you to wrestle with some of these things even when, and it's going to happen, some resistance crops up in your heart when we talk about some of the things we were going to talk about. But I want you to know He wants you to worship Him. I want you to be strong women of God because you know Him. I want that for you, and I want that for my daughters. I've seen that in my wife. She's just grown into this unbelievable woman of God and it's amazing. I want that for my girls, and I want that for you. So listen. I'm your pastor. and I'm preaching the Bible. And the Bible has this thing where sometimes it says things you don't like, and so I'm going to say things you don't like at times. I'm going to say them authoritatively because that's what I'm called to do, and I don't know how else to do it. But, at the same time, I'm a brother to you, and I

love you, and I want so badly for you to know the Father's love. I want so badly for you to be shaped and formed and changed by His Word and His design for you and His hope for and His purpose for you so you might be freed up. I want you free. So I love you, and I'm for you, and I want for you what I want for my girls.

So let's jump into Genesis 2. Genesis 2, starting in verse 18: *Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.*

Up until this point, God has said that everything is good about His creation. Everything that He's created He says this is good. But here He says it's not good. Why isn't it good? Because Adam has been called to fill the earth with God's glory, to display the glory of God and the character of God, to subdue the earth, to rule over creation, to build it out, to cultivate it; and he can't because he is alone and God is not alone. This goes back to week one. God is a Trinity. He's not alone. It's always been a loving Father to a beloved Son with the Spirit of love poured out between them. God is not alone; He is in this perfect, harmonious relationship. We call this the dance of God; they are loving each other and serving each other and exalting one another. God is not lacking for anything; He's the happiest being in all of the universe. There is nothing that God needs from you; He is perfectly sufficient. And for Adam to glorify God and reflect who God is he can't do it alone. So it is not good that Adam was alone. He needs a helper suitable or fit for him. Now, we're going to talk about what that means in a second, but here's what we know it doesn't mean. We know that "helper fit for him" doesn't mean the cow or the donkey or the antelope or whatever. That's what we know so far. Up until verse 20 "help" or "fit for him" isn't the dog. God comes to Adam and says I want you to name all the animals and see if we can find a helper fit for you. And so he just brings Him the animals. God is like, "What about this one?" and Adam was like, "that looks like a dog," and God's like "man's best friend." Adam's like, "Come on, you spoke to galaxies into existence. I know you can do something better than the dog. Unless you have something like Photoshop or airbrushes or laser hair removal. If we could find something better as far as a helper fit for me that would be great."

So God goes on in verse 21 finding a helper fit for Adam. *"So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man*

*said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

So God creates woman from man's side. Matthew Henry said this: "not made out of his head to top him, not made out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected and near his heart to be beloved." Even how God created the woman is a picture of what the relationship is to look like. Woman is not to walk out in front of man as the third wave feminists would say you should. And woman is not meant to walk behind the man as some sort of subservient domineering role. She's to walk alongside the man as his helper fit for him, as a friend and companion, as an equal. That is how she is to walk. It's beautiful.

Then we see that God brings the woman to the man; God's a father walking his daughter down the aisle. I just love that. I know now some of you don't have a good relationship with your dad. I know some of you he abandon, he abused you, he wasn't there, he was difficult to please. That relationship is somehow fractured or broken. I'm sorry. You have though a loving, amazing, perfect Father. Eve didn't have a dad, and yet God the Father walks her down the aisle to see Adam her husband.

Adam sees his wife. Remember he just saw cow and dog and antelope. He sees his wife. He goes into poetry and starts to sing to her. "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." This is woman. He's singing to her. This is poetry. Adam is doting on his wife. He is enthralled with his wife. He is amazed by his wife. He just wants to speak sweetly and tenderly and kindly to his wife. This is not a man ready to dominate his wife. Does this look like a man who is ready to rule over his wife with a the heavy hand? Who's looking to take advantage of some woman? Is that what this looks like? He's doting on her. He is amazed by his wife. He is amazed by her, singing to her. This is why to this day women still love musicians. Skinny jeans and incense and poetry. They love them. I can't even sing! Men, dote on your wife, sing to your wife, love on your wife. You could have had a cow. Seriously, He gave you a woman. She gets hairy, smelly you, and you get her. It's amazing. You should be really really thankful. Sing over your wife. Adam sings to Eve. So this helper fit for him becomes woman.

What does this mean? Helper fit for him? This seems to be really important. This is how she was designed. This is uniquely woman here. What does it mean that she's a "helper fit for him." Let's just take that phrase apart. "helper" and "fit for him."

Gals, when you hear the word “helper,” is that a negative connotation to you when you hear? Just be honest with your heart, be honest with yourself. Do you hear “servant”? Do you hear “slave” when you hear “helper”? The Hebrew word for “helper” here is *ezer*. No less than five times in the Old Testament God is our *ezer*. He's our helper. When God is not the subject of *ezer*, it is referring typically to a military reinforcement. That's what *ezer* is. There's some help that needs to happen for the army, and so they send help. They send an *ezer*. When you think of *ezer*, of “helper” in Genesis 2, you shouldn't think of a position of weakness but of a position of strength that comes alongside to help what is lacking in something. Does that make sense? Helper was a very strong position to complement, to come alongside and fill what has been lacking.

What this means is that Adam (we talked for this last week) is the man who has been given primary responsibility to fill the earth, subdue it, rule over it, cultivate it, build it out to God's glory, in particular, in the home and in the church. Adam's been given this primary responsibility, but he is lacking some things. He can't do it on his own, so God creates a helper for him that she might fill what is lacking in Adam that they can then accomplish this task, this great calling that they've been called to. That's what this means. It's not necessarily a slave role or a subservient role; it's a complementary role that says, “You're missing something and I have that what you are missing. I'm coming alongside you to help you. You have been given primary responsibility in this task and I want to help. I've been designed to help.” That's what helper means; it is not a weak position at all.

“Fit for him.” The Hebrew for “fit for him” is denoting his complement. It means it's just like him but it's opposite. So Eve's created just like Adam except she's his opposite. It's this complementary relationship that they now have. She's the missing piece of the puzzle. She fits him. She's his opposite. It is not just in her physical body that she's his opposite but in her very essence, her personhood. She is the complement to the man. It is this idea of complementarianism.

If anybody asks you what kind of church we are in regards to this issue, you can tell them we are a complementarian church. It will most likely offend many people. It's very countercultural. We had a gal that was coming to our church and really liked it, and her parents started to inspect the kind of church that we were so they could give their blessing to her. They found out that we are a complementarian church and told her she can't come here anymore.

Complementarianism teaches that men and women are equal, of equal value and significance, equal in worth. They were both made in the image of God to display the glory of God. Without women we don't have part of the glory of God, without man we don't either. Men and women are equal, and yet God has designed them distinctively woman and man. There are differences in their function and in their role. When men are biblical men and women are biblical women, it's beautiful, it's awesome.

My wife, she is an unbelievable helper fit for me, and she does all these things that were thought by regards to help. But if you have this understanding that complementarianism is barefoot and pregnant and weak, then you don't know my wife. My girl is strong. Now, she is barefoot and pregnant right now a lot because she is literally pregnant and barefoot sometimes. But she's not weak.

When men are biblical men and women are biblical women and they show this to work in its beauty, then you see it for what it really is. And so “helper fit for him” means she's his complement, not just in assistance but in fellowship and companionship as well.

So what does this look like? This is coming before sin, before the fall. This is not a product of a broken creation. This is God's perfect design. So what does it look like for a woman to be a helper fit for him?

We talked last week that the man was given primary responsibility to fill the glory of God across the earth. He's been given primary responsibility in particular in the home and in the church. In doing that he is to provide and to protect. The woman, as his complement then, is to help him in his task as the one who is primarily responsible and to receive and affirm his providing and his protecting. That's the difference.

So what does it look like to be “helper”? It means you receive and you affirm his providing and his protecting. This goes across all sorts of different relationships. I'll try to give you some examples of them. Let me try to give you sense that you already know that this is true. Gals, have you ever just had a moment or a season, a week, a sense in your heart that you want to feel safe? Maybe you didn't feel safe and you wanted to feel safe? Or maybe you weren't sure if you're feeling safe and you want to feel safe? Have you ever had this desire for a moment, maybe for a season, where you just wanted to be cherished? You want be wooed? You want to be pursued? You want to be cherished like there's a desire in you. That's not a bad desire. That's how you were designed. That's unique to you. Men don't have that. I've never had a conversation with some dude and he's like, “You know what, Pastor Jim? Here's the problem. I just really need to be wooed. If I were just cherished.” I've just never had that because we don't

think like that. There's no category for that for us. But there is for women because it is innately in your very essence, how you created. You were created to receive the provision and protection. You were created to affirm to help us in that. This is how you were created. This is what it means to be a helper fit for him; you are going to affirm, you are going to receive these things from the man.

Let me give you a couple of examples of how this might work as you're eager to use your intellect, your gifts, your strength. All these things that you've been gifted with and given are meant to receive, to affirm, and help the man as he pursues biblical manhood.

So, if you remember, I talked about this last week for the single men. A single man can actually live this out outside of the marriage relationship where he takes primary responsibility to provide and protect for the women around him. We said that if a man is doing that then the women in our church and the women in our homes and the women in our city, in our neighborhood and on our campuses should flourish.

I'll use the example where there's a gal who is struggling or burdened in your city group or in your circle of friends. You as a single man as you pursue biblical manhood are the first to pray for her. You pray over her; you pray with authority; you pray protection; you pray over her out loud, not with her, not for her, over her. You do that.

In a similar way, for the gals, you can, as a helper fit for us, receive and affirm and help us as we pursue biblical manhood in the calling design which God has created us to be in. I'll give you a couple of those.

One we talked about it last week is raising the bar; you raising your expectations of men helps us. It helps us to pursue our biblical calling as biblical men to take responsibility to provide and protect, to lay down our lives for the church and for the home. When you lower the bar you don't help. You don't help because then it's easy for us to get over the bar, and we don't have to pursue those things. You set the standard here, and you encourage us in that. It's not that you're a fierce, strong, walled up woman. That's not what I'm talking about by raising the bar. I mean that you raise the bar and you hope in us. You know that we can do it. We are designed to do it. With the help of God we can do it in power by the Spirit. But you have to raise the bar; that helps us. That affirms our unique design as biblical men to be men. To raise the expectations, to raise the bar, that helps us.

Secondly, encourage men in their strengths. I know you know all of our weaknesses. I know you do. I know you know the weaknesses of men around you. I know you and your girls talk about the weaknesses of the single men around you. I know married wives are talking about the



weaknesses of their men, not always in a bad but maybe sometimes. But you talk about it. I know that. That's fine. I get it. We're bad. We have a lot of work to do. Would you encourage men in their strengths as they're pursuing this, as they're running after this?

Thirdly, with your words you have such great power over men. You can cut a man down with your words. Wives know this. Yet, at the same time, you can you can speak so much confidence and strength and boldness into a man. Help us.

Those are ways in which you can come alongside outside of the marriage relationship with brotherly love helping the men that are around you.

One more example that can show you the differences between men and women in this that I was thinking about this week. I received a lot of these lately so this was easy. By far the most criticizing emails that I get are from men. And by far the most encouraging emails I get are from women. I'm not saying that women don't criticize, and I'm not saying that men don't ever encourage because they do. I have gotten some encouraging emails from men. I don't know that I've ever gotten a critical email from a woman. I have gotten a lot of all of these emails recently because we're talking about the things were talking about. Here's why I was thinking about this; because the man was designed, if you remember, to protect and to provide and to guard and to defend. When he sees something, whether real or perceived, right or wrong, that's off he wants to fix it. He wants to battle against it. He wants to correct. Sometimes he does, and sometimes he's right. A lot of times he's wrong. But a lot of times he's right. There's this sense in him where he wants to do that.

But for the gals it seems to be different. There seems to be an inclination, a disposition, a sense to encourage. I get a lot of encouraging emails from my sisters in this church. Thank you. That's strength where there's lacking, and I needed that. I'm thankful for that.

I keep saying sense or inclination or disposition when I talk about unique womanhood or femininity because I'm trying to free you up from putting this in a box of what it looks like. From culture to culture and relationship to relationship this will look differently. A wife helping and affirming and receiving for her husband is going to look different from a Christian sister to Christian brother or a female boss to male subordinate. It's going to look different, but there's still going to be this sense, this inclination, to build up, to affirm, to receive, and to help. "Helper fit for him."

Simply, the man is called to seek, to serve, and to love his wife by taking responsibility to provide and protect. The woman is called to serve and honor the man by helping him do that.

Let's see what happens when that goes bad. Genesis chapter 3 in verse 1. *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?”’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.”’ But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”*

You have Eve here obeying the serpent. She's listening to the serpent's words. She obeys the serpent. She obeys creation. She gives some to her husband who obeys her, and he eats as well. The whole authority structure that God had created gets inverted here and everything breaks.

If you remember in Genesis 1, God is over all things. He is sovereign over all things. He has authority over all things. God does. And He created man to have rule over, dominion, kind of co-rulership over, creation. So it's God-man-creation; that's the authority structure that God set. Within man he has male and female. He creates Adam first and Adam names Eve. Adam's given primary responsibility in this task. The authority structure is God-husband-wife-creation. Husband and wife, not man and woman. Men don't have general authority over women. I'm not talking about equality; I'm talking about headship. The authority structure gets inverted and everything breaks. Maybe you find that oppressive. Maybe you find that archaic. But when the woman listens to the serpent, creation, and the husband listens to his wife and disobeys his God, everything breaks. That's the first thing to notice.

The second thing I want you to notice is whom the Enemy attacks. He attacks the woman, and how does he attack her? He attacks her through lies. Verse 1, “did God actually say?” That's a lie. Verse 4, “You will not surely die.” No, God said they would. That's a lie. The biggest attack on women is through lies.

In our 4+ years of ministry here to the women of the Paradox Church we've seen this happen time and time and time again. It seems that the Enemy attacks women in three different spheres of their person, of their essence, who they are. An attack of lies on a woman's sexuality, an attack of lies on a woman's performance, and an attack of lies on a woman's relationships. Sexuality, performance, and relationships.

First, your sexuality. Have you heard these lies?

You've already sinned sexually in the past so it's okay for you and your husband or your boyfriend to do this.

Your past is too ugly and shameful. You are dirty.

You're a woman so your sexual sin is worse than that of a man's.

You already gave yourself away to someone else so you don't deserve a godly husband.

Have you heard these? It is always this accusation. It is you, you, you from the enemy attacking you. It's a lie. When women believe this lie against their sexuality they begin to believe it and live out in. It becomes their identity. If you believe that you are dirty, and you believe you're used up, if you believe that your past is too shameful or broken or wrong or whatever, then you begin to live out in that. You begin to do things that are then devastating to you.

We have women who through their sexual abuse believe those lies and live out of it. Not even their own sexual sin but somebody else's sexual sin against them. They believe they're damaged goods. They walk out in it and it's crushing. And it's not true; it's a lie.

First Corinthians 6: *"Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, ... will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."*

Yes, you were those things. You did those things, but in Christ you are washed. Do you get that? The cross of Christ both compels us not to sin anymore and at the same time washes us clean from the sin that has defined us. It gives us a new identity. We see the cross. We see that our sin is really bad; it's a big deal, and Jesus had to die for it. We also see Jesus died for my sins and I've been washed clean. I am no longer defined by what I've done. I'm defined by whose I am. You are His. You were washed. Those are lies. You are clean. You're His. You are holy and pure and blameless before Him. Do not believe that lie.

What about performance? Have you heard these lies?

You are not a good enough wife. you are not a good enough friend.

You are not a good enough mother.

You are not a good enough student.

You are not enough.

You'll be happy when you lose weight. Men will notice you then.

You need to look a certain way, make up, clothes, accessories.

Your appearance has to be a certain way for you to have value.

You can't tell anyone about your abuse or your sin or your fears because then people will know that you're not as perfect or as strong as they thought.

Do you believe those lies? Have you heard those? Where it's all about what you do and how good you are and how pretty you are and how smart you are and how educated you are and how well of a job you do as a mother and wife and in your sexual prowess and in your the ability to make money and in your ability to do it all.

Everything is about performance performance performance. Have you heard those lies? When you believe the lie about you needing to perform here's what happens: you begin to fall into comparison. You constantly compare yourself with other women. You're constantly comparing yourself to the standard that culture has set for women, and it looks nothing like what God has called women to look like. It's this bar, and you will never get to it when you're comparing yourself to other women.

For some of you, social media is a measuring rod for am I good enough.

Nope, she's prettier than me.

Nope, she's a better mom than me; look how happy her kids are.

Nope, she's smarter than me.

I'm not good enough today.

It's a day in and day out comparison game and it's exhausting. Let me be very honest with you, it's idolatry. You're worshiping creation and not the Creator. You're worshiping the god of beauty and the god of performance and the god of you being awesome. It's idolatry. It's a big deal and it's going to be exhausting for you because the god of beauty and the god of performance and the god of you being awesome will never be pleased. They will never be satisfied. There are not enough sacrifices you can make for them. You'll be exhausted.

The God of the Bible is a much better God. He loves you not because you're awesome but despite your awesomeness. He's a much better God to worship. The one true God, the real God, the God of the Bible, the God who loves you despite you. This false god of performance will never be satisfied, and you will constantly be running and sacrificing and serving him. It will never get

you anywhere close to finding yourself or living out your God-given identity as a woman. Do not believe the lie that you have to be good enough. You won't be. God loves you anyways.

What about the lie of relationships? Have you heard these?

You aren't valuable or likable, that's why you don't have deep friendships.

You won't be accepted if people really knew you.

Don't be known because and then you won't be accepted.

No one is fighting for you.

You're the only one with the struggling marriage, the only one in the whole church.

God will give you a husband when you're a better Christian.

You need a spouse to have significance and wholeness and comfort.

You'll be able to love God more when you're married and being led by godly husband.

When you believe these lies in robbing relationships where you don't feel valued, you don't feel pursued, you don't feel like you're worthy of having a husband or having deep friendship, this turns into complacency and self-pity and a self-fulfilling prophecy where you don't think you are worthy of these relationships and so you don't pursue them. You're not looking for a husband, you're not looking for deep friendship even though you're empowered by the same Spirit that men are and are called the same task of making disciples as men are. You are called to be on mission with God that more and more people might meet Jesus. You called to serve and love this church and several of the people in this church. You don't do that because you're looking for others to pursue and love and serve you instead of you pursuing and loving and serving them. You've been empowered by the Spirit of God to love and serve those that God has put around you, and there will be deep friendships that are cultivated through that. It may take a long time, but you're unbelievably valuable to the God of the universe. Don't think twice about that not being the case.

There's lies against your sexuality, lies against your performance, lies against your relationships. Here's by far the biggest lie in my experience as a pastor and a husband and a father that women hear and women face. It is the foundation of really all of these things. It's this lie: that God is not really good. Do you believe that lie? That God is not really good? That's basically what Satan is doing in verse 5: *"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Satan is saying: God is withholding goodness from you. He's not good. Or, and this is worse, He's not good to you. So God's good, He's just not good to me. This is almost more devastating. Or He would be good to me if I stop doing this and I started doing this, then God would be good to me. But that's the lie; that God is not good.

God is good, and any time you believe the lie that God is not good it will always lead to fear. It will always lead to fear and anxiety. It will lead to self protection and a hardness of heart because: "I don't know what can happen but I know that something can happen. Here is what I know God's not good so it can't be good. I'm anxious because I don't know what's going and I don't know what's going to happen to me. I don't know what's going to happen in this relationship, what's going to happen over here. But God isn't good so I'm anxious and stressed out. I'm fearful, depressed. I have an eating disorder. I'm struggling with all these anxiety ridden conditions."

It's the lie that God is not good. It's a lie. He is good. The Bible speaks to women in regards to this fear thing over and over.

Peter says in 1 Peter 3 to be like that godly woman Sarah, Abraham's wife, who did not fear anything that is frightening. Why? Because God is good.

The Proverbs 31 woman laughs at the time to come. She's not afraid of what can happen. Why? Because God's good.

James says that every good and perfect gift comes from the Father above.

Paul says that God's working all things for your good.

The psalmist over and over and over speaks of God's goodness.

In Psalm 84, "he withholds no good thing."

In Psalm 34, "you should fear God alone nothing else and those who do will lack no good thing."

Psalm 105, "for the Lord is good and the steadfast love endures forever."

He is good. Whatever you're not receiving right now that you think that you should is for you good. I promise you. He would not even keep to Himself His own Son but gave Him up for you

that He might make you his daughter. There is nothing good that God will withhold from you. Everything He does is for your good. He is good to you.

So please listen to me. I want this truth to set you free from this lie, to set you free from finding your identity in these these other things. The God of the universe, the God who rules and reigns and is the sovereign over all things, He owns all things. Anything that you might want, anything that you desire, anything that you are pursuing, anything that you have a craving for deep within you: He is Lord over it and you are His daughter. He loves you. As much as I want good for my girls, He wants infinitely better for you. He is infinitely wiser, and He knows exactly what is good for you. It is a divine impossibility that He is withholding any good thing from you right now. He is good and He is good to you.

Look at verse 16. *“To the woman he said, ‘I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’”*

The pain in childbearing we will cover here in a month or so.

I want to just focus on the second part: “your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.” This is what happens when sin comes into the world. This is what happens when the authority structure gets inverted. This is a product of sin, that your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.

Let me try to help you understand what's happening. What's happening is that no longer will the woman desire to find her identity as a uniquely designed woman, to help and to receive and to affirm the man, but now she's going to rebel against that. It is going to become this broken, twisted, weird desire where she wants her the man but she wants to rule over the man. He's going to rule over her, but now it's not going to be a loving rule and a biblical responsibility where I lay my life down for her kind of rule. Sin is twisted in him now where he's going to want to dominate. It's going to be not doting on his wife and singing to his wife, but I need to accomplish or I need to fix her. I need to have her. I need to dominate her, to rule over her. It's going to be avoidance in the fight or abuse within the fight. It is going to be something that doesn't look like how it was designed to be because of sin, because this authority structure got inverted. It's all broken. When men won't be biblical men and women won't be biblical women everything gets jacked up. That's what we see here in 3:16.

And yet the hope of the gospel comes in. Just a few verses before, God is talking about Jesus showing up. The seed of the woman is to crush the serpent's head. It's this hope of the gospel where Jesus comes as the perfect man. He comes as the perfect man to provide and to protect. He takes responsibility for your sin. See, that resistance that cropped up in your heart a few times during the sermon, that is Eve's sin all over again. It's rebellion and sin. It's Genesis 3:16 actualized. Jesus came to take responsibility for it. He provides and He protects. He restores and redeems. It's beautiful. Hosea says that He comes to woo you. He is going to speak tenderly to you. He is going to make you His own again. This is an unbelievable love story. That's the story of the gospel. This is what we're talking about. When men will not be biblical men and women will not be biblical women as God has designed them to be, everything is going to get broken. But in Christ everything gets redeemed and restored and recreated. There's great hope, and it's an amazing story.

We need to talk about this *50 Shades of Gray* thing. You're welcome that we're not doing a *50 Shades of Gray* sermon series because every other church apparently in town is. "50 Shades of \_\_\_\_\_" or whatever. But we need to talk about it because it's just *Twilight* repackaged. And millions and millions and millions of women are reading books and watching these movies and being captured by them. Do you know what they're about? They are not about sex. *50 Shades of Gray* is not about sex. These stories are about women that are unremarkable and ordinary and plain. They have serious identity issues. They don't think that they're awesome. They are shy typically. They don't feel worthy, and yet this man is pursuing them. This man is loving them, and this man has come after them. This man is almost rescuing them, and there is even this domination it seems. The men are afraid of this domination and are afraid of hurting her in both of the movies and books. There's a sense that something is broken.

*50 Shades of Gray* is Genesis 3:16. It's this twisted love story where deep within your heart is this godly desire but also this distorted desire to be rescued, to be loved, to even have someone rule over you. It's a twisted love story. That's why it's captured the hearts and minds of our women, because there is something deep within you that Ecclesiastes 3:11 says cannot be filled up by some story of some man but only by some God who is eternal.

So we have a better love story. Do know that? There's a perfect man who came; His name is Jesus. He does love you even though you're ordinary. He does love you even though you're not remarkable. But His love is a different love; His love is a perfect love, and it says that perfect love casts out fear. He will rule over you, but you can submit to Him because He is good. He's good to you, and He will protect you and provide for you because He loves you. He laid down His



life for you. You no longer have to be defined by all these other things. Now you can be defined by the fact you're His. It's a far better love story.

And so, I invite you to believe the truth that is Jesus and to stop believing the lies you've been hearing. I invite you to submit your life to Jesus and let Him rule over you. It is a loving, good rule for your good always. I invite you to know Jesus and love Jesus and worship Jesus. You are designed to receive, so receive Jesus. You were designed to affirm, so affirm Jesus in response and worship. This is what you are designed for; you are designed uniquely by God to be redeemed by Jesus. You've been empowered by the Spirit of God to do unbelievable things and to provide strength where it is lacking, to receive, to affirm, and to help. Begin to live out this unique way in which you are designed. It's a beautiful thing. Be freed up from finding your identity in all these other things. Find your identity in this, you are His.