

The Uniqueness of Womanhood



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This is lecture number one, “The Uniqueness of Womanhood.” In order to gain insight into the role of women in ministry, it is of utmost importance to establish a sound, biblical basis for our thinking. Whether you are a man called to the pastorate seeking greater understanding in order to better minister to women in your congregation and encourage them to be all that God intended, or a woman who desires to be mightily used by God in a ministry that will impact lives for Christ, you must be open to the truth of God’s Word.

Do our preconceived beliefs and notions fit with God’s Word? Or have our various cultures biased our perspectives so that we need to gain a fresh understanding of how we as men and women of God can work together in God’s sovereign plan for His glory, not for our own aggrandizement? The scope of our course will attempt to cover all of the various aspects of ministry to and by women. We will look at both Old and New Testament passages concerning women; key issues of responsibility; feminist views (both biblical and secular); needs in the local church; ministry to hurting women through divorce, death, problem children, and other issues involving older and younger women in mutually compatible relationships; codependency; ministering to homemakers and professional women; basic steps for counseling with women; stereotypes of the sexes (how churches reinforce these positions); women’s ministries (biblically and culturally determined views); ministering to single women; discovering one’s own spiritual gifts; and developing one’s own theory of ministering to women.

A course of this type needs to begin by looking at women—their uniqueness as created by God as well as their similarities with men. How are women uniquely different from men? We’re living in an age where it’s not popular to talk about difference. Women are fighting on every side to be considered the same as men in the home, in the workplace, and in the community. That old song, “Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better,” has become the motto for many feminists today. Numerous articles have been written trying to prove that, with the exception of anatomical differences,

men and women are identical. But is this true? Is woman's struggle for identity in an egalitarian position denying them the very differences in which God Himself instilled within the depth of her being.

I want us to look at what God says about the woman: how she is made in similar ways, and how she is made different from men. I also want to look at good scientific studies showing the development of the female: how she differs from the male in makeup, thinking, reacting, and observing life. We are living in a society that stresses sameness to the point that boys and girls are educated from the same basis, and any observable differences in actions or capabilities are attributed to cultural biases. The argument that what's open to you as a male is open to me as a female makes us begin to believe that we are identical with the exception of a few biological differences. I am convinced that this way of thinking is one of the major contributors to a lack of communication between married partners today. Both men and women go into a marriage with the attitude, "This is the way I perceive the situation, so I'm sure my partner sees it the same way." So what's the problem? The problem is that we don't see things the same way. We think differently from one another, we react to situations differently from one another, we remember things differently from one another, and on and on.

The Bible reveals to us many similarities and differences between men and women. So often we have been bound by tradition to order our lives, but is tradition enough to reveal God's plan to His people? Some proclaimed conservative evangelicals say that it is. But what about Christ going against the tradition of His day? Just because some early church fathers interpreted certain passages of Scripture in various ways, thus establishing traditions for our churches for centuries, does not mean that tradition is on an equal plane with Scripture?

Gratian, a twelfth-century Italian theologian, said, and I quote, "Man, but not woman, is made in the image of God. It is plain from this that woman should be subject to their husbands and should be as slaves." It is views like this one that have created great gulfs of perceptions concerning men and women. Women who grow up under this mindset often choose to walk away from God's directions concerning the roles of men and women, and they bind to the world's view that difference implies inequality and inferiority.

In regard to similarity, we read in Genesis 1:26 and 27 these words of God. “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. And God created man in his own image. In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, he created them.”

We need to first address the word Adam. According to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, the word can mean a human being, an individual, a species, mankind, or the name of the first man. The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says that the word refers to generic man as the image of God in the crown of creation or as a personal name. So in Genesis 1–3, it is the word usually used for mankind. In our Genesis 1:27 passage, the word is clarified to include all of mankind, male and female alike. So we know that both male and female were created in the image of God. Several years ago, while I was speaking at a conference, a young woman came up to me with tears in her eyes saying that she had always been taught that women had not been created in God’s image. So all of her life, she had felt inferior. She claimed that even in the Christian school where she was attending at that time she had not heard that women were equally created in the image of God. Tradition often clouds our understanding of God’s revealed word to us.

Dr. Allen Ross, in his book *Creation and Blessing*, makes the point that since God is a spirit and does not have an image, we as men and women are the image of God on the earth. Part of our confusion has come from our trying to bring God down to our own level of thinking. In the battles between the various groups today, the argument is made that God is both male and female. Therefore, provision for gender-free language should be made. A great point is being missed here because God is neither male nor female. He is spirit. The anthropomorphic language used to enable us to understand God is sometimes kept on the literal level to the point that we lose sight of who God really is, and we make Him too human.

Scripture presents God as if He had ears, eyes, arms, hands, and feet. And it describes Him as laughing and mocking, sitting, standing, coming down to see, changing His mind, grieving, and many other human activities and feelings. The Bible makes it very clear that these anthropomorphisms are merely figures of speech. Figures of speech are powerful tools to explain in greater depth what is being revealed, but these figures of speech are meant to portray certain aspects of God’s nature.

And so we cannot change them, for in so changing we would change what God is trying to portray of His nature.

There are many descriptions of Christ, which are good examples of figures of speech. For example, John 10:9 says, "I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." We know, of course, that God is not a literal door. But the figure of speech portrays Christ as the way through whom one must go to the Father. The dominant theme of Scripture is that God is omniscient, that He is omnipresent, and that He is omnipotent. There are passages in Scripture that use masculine and feminine images of God. These passages have given rise to much controversy today, claiming that God is both male and female, that inclusive language should be used in reference to Him, that interchangeable language will suffice. But we need to look at these passages more closely. There are passages in the Bible that use feminine images to describe a characteristic or an action of God.

It has been noted that, without exception, every feminine reference to God is a simile, which is a comparison by resemblance using like or as. Whereas the masculine images are metaphorical, which are comparisons by representation, using the word is. An example of a simile would be Luke 13:34, and I quote, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather you children together just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it." Isaiah 42:14 says, "Now like a woman in labor, I will groan." An example of a metaphor would be, God is our Father (Matthew 6:9). Another one would be, God is king (Psalm 5:2). All human titles which God has chosen to describe Himself are masculine: Father, Lord, King, Prince, Son. Because the Bible makes it clear that God is neither male nor female, these titles must be metaphorical. Unfortunately, Bible students have often stayed with the figurative level of the titles and never inquired into the actual meanings of the metaphors.

Since God chose to use these metaphors, they must be retained by those who live by the authority of Scripture. To change the metaphors would be to change the meanings. Since God revealed Himself through Scripture, we must look to Scripture, not to other sources, to see His true nature. And if the Word reveals that God is a spirit, then He can only be known spiritually. That is when the spirit of God shines in our hearts to give us knowledge of God, as 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." The secular world today doesn't want to accept this.

Therefore, there are certain things we need to establish in order to understand the true nature of God. Dr. Ross names three things that we need to see in relation to God.

The first point is that God is a person. He has intellect, sensibilities (which provide a capacity for sensation or feeling), and a will. The revelation from Scripture which we see is of a personal God who created everything by divine will and superior intelligence and who takes pleasure in granting humans the ability to know Him personally.

The second point is that God is a spirit. John 4:24 clearly says that “God is a spirit.” The widespread use of anthropomorphisms, which are the human descriptions so necessary for understanding the revelation of God by us as humans, makes it difficult sometimes to see the divine nature as spirit. The Bible always safeguards God’s infinitely superior nature, however, by its revelation to us. Nowhere is God ever equated to human beings, because God is eternal. He’s unchanging. He’s omnipotent. He’s omniscient. He’s omnipresent. Unlike man-made gods, our sovereign God safeguards His divine nature as spirit by prohibiting any kind of image.

The third point is that God is one. Isaiah 44:6 says, “This is what the Lord says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.” We need to note here that there was no dividing the Godhead into male and female principles. The confusion comes because it is necessary for God to reveal Himself to us in the anthropomorphic language that I mentioned before. But the truth of Scripture shows us that we, male and female, created as God’s image on this earth, are to be His representatives to a lost and dying world. Dr. Ross stated it well when he said, and I quote, “God has prepared human beings, male and female, with the spiritual capacity and communal assistance to serve Him and to keep His commands so that they might live and enjoy the bounty of His creation.

Although a likened spirit in capacities, male and female were created uniquely different from one another. After God had created the man, He said in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him.” What is this helper which God made for Adam that was suitable for him? The word helper is the most well-known word used in Genesis to describe women, but probably misunderstood. In our culture, this word usually refers to someone of lesser or inferior value or worth. Such as a plumber’s helper, who must do the more menial jobs the plumber does not have time for.

Or mommy's little helper: when we give our small children tasks to teach them how to help, but give them things which won't harm them or their surroundings. Even St. Thomas Aquinas in 1273 said, and I quote, "God foresaw that woman would be an occasion of sin to man. Therefore He should not have made woman. . . . It was necessary for woman to be made, as the Scripture says, as a helper to man; not, indeed, as a helpmate in other works, as some say, since man can be more efficiently helped by another man in other works; but as a helper in the work of generation."

A similar connotation has often been assumed for our Genesis 2:18 passage. But this is not the concept for helper in the Old Testament. The term is used in the Bible for God Himself. He is the great helper of His people. First Samuel 7:12 says, "Thus far the Lord has helped us." Psalm 22:11 and 19 says, "Be not far from me, for trouble is near. For there is none to help. . . . But thou, O Lord, be not far off. Oh thou, my help, hasten to my assistance." Psalm 46:1 says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." God alone was able to meet all of their needs and ours. In Genesis 2, God stresses the importance of the helper. It is the Lord who first concluded that man was incomplete without woman. God based the creation of the woman on His observation that it is not good for the man to be alone. The passage makes it rather clear that Adam, by himself, could not fulfill God's plan for the human race.

Woman was not merely a supplement to the man. To call her a helper was to say that her nature, her disposition, and her abilities supplied what was lacking. In the same way, by implication, he supplied what she lacked. In Harris's, Archer's, and Waltke's Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, the word ezer, the word for helper, is used so that the source of the help includes both material and spiritual assistance. Our term helper in Genesis 2:18 is qualified by the expression "corresponding to him." In other words, "She will be a fitting helper." We need to note that Eve was not an independent creation, but derived her nature from man's in order to correspond perfectly to Him. In Genesis 2:7, it says that the Lord God formed man. The word translated formed describes the work of an artist who skillfully molds a masterpiece by careful design.

Leupold states that the use of the title Yahweh Elohim suggests that this was a work of God that significantly displayed the faithful mercy of God as well as His awe-inspiring power. The word for mold used here specifically describes the activity of a potter, as in Jeremiah 18:2 and following. With the same deliberate planning, God constructed the woman. So both the man and the woman share the joy of being God's special handiwork.

Both share the same nature, that spiritual and moral capacity imparted by God. In all of this, the woman corresponds to the man. She is his peer in capacities of intellect, moral worth, and sensibilities. Both male and female received the breath of life from God. Dr. Ross stated that this word for breath is used in the Bible for God and for His life imparted to man, never for animals.

He goes on to say that the inbreathing is what constitutes humankind as the image of God. What is open to man as a human being is open to her. So we see that God's creation of man and woman has a purpose which was expressed in Genesis 1:27. They were made in the image of God. When we look at the New Testament, we see that it provides us with a guideline for how and where women's special gifts, given by God, are to be used. Biologically, woman is the compliment of man. This is so basic that it should do away with at least some of the purposeless comparisons between man and woman. Man and woman cannot be validly compared. Even the chromosomal arrangements are different for the sexes.

As some of you might know, the female has in every cell in her body (with the exception of the sex cells)—whether muscle, skin, blood, nerve, bone, or any other kind of cell—a pair of X-chromosomes. In each cell of the male's body, with the same exception, is an X and a Y chromosome. A normal embryo inherits twenty-three chromosomes from the mother and twenty-three from the father. The twenty-third pair determines what sex the baby will be. If the twenty-third pair are two X chromosomes, the embryo is a female. If the pair are an X and a Y, then the embryo is a male. Remember that once the basic egg cell is fertilized, the sex is determined instantly. And from that point, as differentiation of the various types of cells occurs, each cell will have an XX or an XY pair. Hormones cannot change the chromosomal makeup of the cell, but they do determine many secondary sexual characteristics.

Aside from physiological differences, one's intellectual ability is the arena in which sex differences are most hotly disputed. The stakes are really high. Research findings can influence funding and policy decisions in everything from education to employment. Males and females should not be thought of as competitors and rivals, but as counterparts which God molded. And yet we are living in a society in which equality of the sexes is most striven for. A popular view since the 70s has been that men and women are different anatomically and chemically, but not psychologically.

Many women claimed that the seeming disparities in mental abilities, emotional makeup, attitudes, and even many physical skills were merely the product of centuries of male domination and male-dominated interpretation. But too much scientific research has begun to surface which directs otherwise. Scripture implies that there are other fixed differences between the sexes. Because of God's divine plan, Scripture lays down specific social roles for the sexes, in marriage and in the church. But backing these roles, there are genetic differences which channel a person into proper avenues. The masculine role typically involves leadership and the feminine role involves submission, which does not imply inferiority. Some of the major problems in this area stem from carrying over, into all facets of society, the role distinctions described for the corporate body of worship and the home.

God clearly provides equal dignity and worth for both man and woman. As Galatians 3:28 plainly states, "There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In other words, when standing before God, He does not see gender distinctions. God does, however, designate role distinctions for our lives to run smoothly here on this earth. We will address at length these role distinctions in a later lesson. Let me just say for now that these distinctions do not imply inferiority. Both men and women must see themselves as whole people.

A biblical view of sexuality involves the total person. Men must sense their God-given adequacy and, as a result, be able to choose to sacrificially give whatever is required to lead in the home and in the church, able to function in every sphere of manhood with a strong character of loving leadership. Women must sense their God-given security and know that they are therefore able to assertively, with a quiet confidence, take their place of ministry: submitting to their husbands, following the spiritual leadership of men in the church assembly, and functioning assertively and decisively in apt spheres as Proverbs 31 describes. The proverb implies many things, especially that the woman's husband encouraged and enabled his capable wife to reach her potential. That his confidence in her gave her room to be all that she could be. For in that culture, in order for a woman to have the freedom that this woman had, she would have to have had a husband's approval and encouragement.

In your required reading from Stephen Clark, you have seen a detailed account of various differences noted between men and women. But remember that these differences are not absolutes, as research has proven. One of the areas of greatest difference between the sexes is found in the way a woman integrates her

personality and the way a man is able to differentiate. A woman has a unity of her personality in that she responds to situations with her heart, her intellect, and her temperament. A man has the specific capacity to emancipate himself with his intellect from his present circumstances. A woman confronts decisions, activities, and relationships as an entire person. On the other hand, a man's emotions, intellect, and body are more differentiated. Men tend to respond with their personalities functioning in a more differentiated fashion. Their personalities tend to be more compartmentalized into intellectual, physical, and emotional components. Men have more distance from their emotions and a greater capacity to detach themselves from immediate reactions; whereas women respond to situations more immediately and spontaneously and find it harder to distance themselves from the way they feel.

Research has shown that there are intellectual differences between men and women. Women display a greater sensitivity to the concrete and personal dimensions of their environments; whereas men show a greater tendency to abstraction and a sensitivity to structure. In other words, relative concreteness versus relative abstractness, subjectivity versus objectivity. Numerous studies done through Harvard University have uncovered some interesting observations. Studies show that men are better at math than women. Men are better at visual spatial ability as well. Women are better at verbal skills. Women are more attracted to people and men to objects. Of course these findings are receiving much opposition from feminists across the country. Research has also shown that there are differences in orientation. Men's social behavior is more goal-oriented and female social behavior is oriented more toward helping and caring for personal needs. These trait patterns do not, however, imply an ability difference. These studies aren't saying that men can achieve goals more effectively and that women can care for personal needs better than men.

Research has revealed certain social differences. In nearly all studies, the male of the human species appears more aggressive than the female. Several months ago, I was driving home behind two men in two different cars. The man in the car in front failed to start off quick enough from the stop sign to suit the man in the car in front of me. So at the next stop sign, the impatient man bumped him and started pushing him through the intersection. This triggered a chain of reactions that ended with the man in the front car getting out of his car with a baseball bat and bashing in the hood of his intimidator's car. At that point, I pulled around both men to avoid further conflict.

In the area of nurturance, women are more nurturing than men. The research certainly doesn't imply that all men are aggressive and that all women are nurturing. Just that these traits are more frequently found in men and women respectively. This aggression-nurturance gulf shows up in many different areas but is hotly contested by groups today. They have argued that the nurturing nature of women is not biological in origin but has been drummed into women by a society that wanted to keep them in the home. But the signs that a woman's tendency to nurture is partly inborn are too numerous to ignore.

These differences, just being recognized by modern scientists, have been implied from Scripture all along. Studies have revealed emotional differences. There is a difference in the way men and women experience and exhibit fear and anxiety. Also a difference in the way they experience frustration. Males tend to respond more emotionally to frustrating situations. Intellectual differences which have been shown from very early ages are hotly contested, because if women are basically better at verbal skills than men are, and if men are basically better at mathematical skills than women are, job opportunities would be shifted dramatically.

Areas of physical difference are often much more obvious, especially in the areas of size, strength, and primary and secondary sex characteristics. But research is showing in addition that men are more susceptible to certain serious physical disorders. Also, the rates of maturation are different between the sexes. Studies are investigating male and female hormonal rhythms and brain differences. Research is developing ways of viewing the brains of men and women and uncovering various things that are different.

Women, apparently, transfer interactions between the right and the left halves of their brains at a more rapid rate than do men. Women's brains remain in more active states even when resting than do the brains of men. I'm sure that some of you men are not surprised at this. Further studies are continuing to be conducted to chart the results and possible ramifications of these findings. Daniel Levinson's theoretical hypothesis concerning seasons of life is different for men and women. His study identified three major eras in the male cycle, each approximately twenty years in length. He found that maturation and adjustment during a man's life between the ages of 35 and 45 depended greatly on the individual's growth in a novice phase from age 17 to 33. This is the time when a young American man resolves adolescent conflicts, creates a place for himself in the adult society, and commits himself to stable, predictable patterns.

To achieve complete entry into adulthood, according to Levinson, the young man must master four developmental tasks: 1. Defining a dream of adult accomplishment, 2. Finding a mentor, 3. Developing a career, and 4. Establishing intimacy.

At the beginning of the novice phase, which is ages 17–33, the dream is not clearly linked to reality. It may consist of a specific goal, such as winning a Pulitzer prize or a grandiose role such as becoming a movie producer, business tycoon, famous poet, or famous athlete. A man may have more modest aspirations in his dream such as being a master craftsman, a village philosopher, or a loving family man. The most important aspect of the dream is its ability to inspire him in his present activity. Ideally, the young man begins to structure his adult life in realistic, optimistic ways that help realize the dream. Hopeless fantasies and utterly unattainable goals do not encourage growth. Besides being unrealistic, the dream may not be realized because of lack of opportunities, excessive parental pressure, individual traits such as guilt or passivity, or special talents needed.

Consequently, a young man may enter and master an occupation that holds no magic for him. Many parents often try to vicariously live their lives over through their sons and daughters seeking their own unfulfilled dreams rather than the dreams of their sons and daughters. According to Levinson, such decisions bring about continuous career conflicts in adulthood and are responsible for a lack of excitement and a limited self-investment in work. Levinson believes that those who struggle to fulfill some version of the dream, however, are more likely to achieve a sense of fulfillment. It is important to note that the dream itself undergoes change.

The young man entering the early adult transition hoping to become a basketball star may later find satisfaction as a coach, thus incorporating some but not all elements of the youthful dream. In achieving the dream, the young person can be aided enormously by a mentor. The mentor can still instill self-confidence by sharing and improving of the dream and by imparting skill and wisdom. As a sponsor, the mentor may use influence to advance the career of the protégé. The major function of the mentor, however, is to provide a transition from a parent/child relationship to the world of adult peers. The mentor must be sufficiently parental to represent a high level of achievement, yet sufficiently sympathetic to overcome the generation gap and establish a peer bond. Besides forming the dream and acquiring a mentor, the youth also faces a complex socio-psychological process of career formation. This is a long process which goes well beyond the mere selection of an occupation. Levinson views this developmental task as spanning the entire novice phase (ages 17–33).

Similarly, formation of intimate family relationships does not begin and end with the marker events of marriage and the birth of the first child. Both before and after these occasions, the young man is learning about himself and the ways in which he relates to women. He must ascertain what he likes about women and what they like about him. He must define his inner strengths and vulnerabilities in sexual intimacy. In his early 30s, he develops the capacity for a serious democratic partnership. A primary relationship with a “special women” (Levinson’s term) also fills a need similar to that of the mentor/pupil bond. The special women may facilitate realization of the dream by sanctifying it and by believing her partner really to be a hero. She aids his entry into the adult world by encouraging adult hopes and tolerating his dependent behavior and other shortcomings.

Follow-up studies found support in the seasons of a woman’s life as well. The same four developmental tasks were found to apply to women with some exceptions. Remember, those four are the defining of a dream of the adult accomplishment, the finding of a mentor, developing a career, and establishing intimacy.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the sexes is in the differing dreams they have. For both men and women, the dream is of central importance, but men tend to have a unified vision of their future focused on jobs while women tend to have split dreams. Most women in these studies had dreams incorporating both careers and marriage; and the majority of these women gave greater weight to marriage. Less than 18 percent focused exclusively on career achievement in their dreams, a subject we will discuss further when we address ministering to working women. Also, a bit more than 15 percent restricted their visions of the future to the traditional role of wife, mother, and helpmate. However, even those women who had dreams of both career and marriage moderated their dreams in the context of their husbands’ goals and thus fulfilled traditional expectations within a more contemporary lifestyle. Approximately 41 percent of these women expressed dissatisfaction with one or another aspect of their split dream. It seemed to several of these women that careers and marriages were incompatible. Although colleagues and family members felt these women were successful, the women themselves felt that they had sacrificed either career to family or family to career. This response is very different from Levinson’s finding about men who experience little dichotomy between career and family life.

Another area in which men and women have very different experiences is the mentoring relationship. Although relations with mentors are considered important to the career and life development of young adults, women enter into this relationship less frequently than do men. Part of the problem is that there are few women in positions to guide, council, or sponsor young women in the workplace. This is one area that I want to address in a future lesson when we talk about older women mentoring younger women. How do you link them up in your church together? How do you find common ground? How do you find common interests so that they would have a workable situation that would be beneficial to both? But we will look further to what Scripture says about women mentoring women.

Women have greater difficulty than men in finding that special person who will not only help them into early adulthood, but will continue to support their development into middle adulthood. Consequently, women do not cease being beginners in the world of work. We will further discuss this topic when we look at ministering to professional women.

Men may make changes in their careers or lifestyles, but they do not change their focus on their jobs and careers. Women, in contrast, do. Priorities that were set during early adulthood are generally reversed by women during age-30 transition. Those women who are oriented towards marriage and child rearing tend to shift more toward occupational goals, while women who are career-centered generally move toward marriage and the family.

Levinson's studies indicate that men and women have very different views of themselves and very different concerns as they cope with similar developmental tasks during age 30-transition period. The more complex dream of women makes it much more difficult for them than for men to achieve their goals and to find satisfaction in that achievement. In all of these differences, we need to focus on the compatibility between men and women that God intended.

In Psalm 139:13–16, the psalmist said, “For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are thy works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from thee when I was made in secret and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.”

If we are each precious and unique in His sight, then it is important for us to understand each other and how we can fit into God's plan for the furtherance of His kingdom.

How can we understand women well enough to minister to them in a way that will point them to fulfilling relationships? First, with their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and next, to those who surround them in their context, whether it be their homes, their churches, or their communities. If we are to minister well, we are to be open to the teaching of God's Word and be more concerned with pleasing Him than in pleasing mankind.

I want to go through a brief summary at this point of our lesson for us to kind of get a grasp of what all we have covered, because in looking at how unique a woman is—from the creation by God in the beginning to the development of her as an individual to the roles that God has called her to in her lifetime to the integration that she will find in her life incorporating that into working with men—in looking at the uniqueness of one's womanhood, I want us to remember that as God created Eve in the garden of Eden, that He created her with a purpose. But He also created her with a unique position in that she, like the man, is the image of God. If she is the image of God, since He does not have an image, we need to see that she will use the tremendous abilities that God has instilled in her to work for His glory.

I know that in our constant struggles between men and women today, we seem to lose sight of this. We seem to go back to the old mentality of the boys on one side and the girls on the other side. And yet, in so doing, we really lose sight of the perspective that God has for us. God has uniquely designed us equal. We know—and we will see this when we get to the New Testament—that Paul says that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. If this is true, that in the sight of God we stand before Him as a person who is created in His image but also who worships Him, we need to know that on this earth there are different roles. We're living in a culture in which there are so many confusing ideas that pull to us as women especially, into a position that God has not called us to. I would really challenge us throughout this course, as we begin to look lesson after lesson at the uniqueness with which God has created us, so that we can find the capacities that we have as individuals and to realize that we are not inferior, as many women have been raised to believe. There are so many different areas in other countries in which women are so degraded; they are considered second-class citizens. A lot of times, our own culture through tradition, through some of the writings of the church fathers which we will look at, have added to this idea that women are inferior.

That's why I believe that so many women in our churches today do not want to look at role differences, because they feel that there is an inferiority status here. And yet we will also look into the Godhead to see that there were role distinctions there. Within the Godhead—of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—there was absolutely no inferiority. There was equality but different roles.

I want us to conclude this particular lesson with the focus that we are created equal in God's sight and that we are created for a specific purpose.