

Session 1: INTRODUCTION

I. The Issue in the Confusion

THE ISSUE IS NOT EQUALITY

THE ISSUE IS IDENTITY

II. The History of the Confusion

The Economic Roots:

The Social Roots:

The Spiritual Roots:

III. Three Helpful Suggestions

Please relax.

Please engage in truth seeking.

Please graciously lean into the conversation.

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you define womanhood?
2. What roles and expectations have historically been placed on women? In what ways have women you know accepted or rejected those roles and expectations?
3. Why do you think women have such concern about equality with men?
4. What issues or topics regarding being a woman would you like to explore in this study?

Small Group Member Agreement

Confidentiality – What’s said here, stays here. I will not repeat what others say unless given permission.

Openness – I will strive to reveal who I am – my hopes, hurts, joys, and struggles – as well as I am able. I will help others by risking to be known and telling what is real to me rather than be repeating something I heard elsewhere.

Sensitivity – I will share only my part in issues that involve others. For example, if I am in conflict with a spouse or friend, I will focus on what I did, thought, or said that contributed to the conflict. I will refrain from gossiping or “slamming” others.

Courtesy – I want everyone to share. I will keep others in mind, allowing time for each person to speak. I will limit my sharing and will not interrupt when another group member is speaking.

Acceptance – I realize that we are all works in process. We are all at different places in our spiritual journey, come from different backgrounds, and the Holy Spirit works in us in different ways. I will not be judgmental or offer unsolicited advice.

Prayer – I will pray for the other members of this group and rejoice in the confidence that they are praying of me.

BIBLICAL WOMANHOOD

Commitment – I will make a diligent and sincere effort to participate in the discussion each week and will make group attendance a priority.

Accountability – In all of these commitments I invite my fellow group members to hold me accountable, as I will do for them.

Reflection Assignment...

As women, we have been influenced by many factors on what it means to be a woman. Retrace your “walk toward womanhood.” Was the path lined with heartache and struggle, or did you have role models and mentors to guide you through, or was it something in between? Draw a timeline. On one end, write the day you were born, and on the other, the present. Fill in significant milestones on your timeline that have shaped the woman that you are today. Place the names of people in your life during those milestones on your timeline. What did you learn from them about womanhood?

BIBLICAL WOMANHOOD

Passage to Ponder this week... Psalm 139:13-18

Week One Summary...

Welcome to Biblical Womanhood! We are excited you have joined us for what we hope will be a life-changing study. For the next several months, we will be taking a hard look at a crucial issue in our world, our society, and for many of us personally: “What does it mean to be a Woman?” So much confusion, controversy, and even conflict surround this issue. As women, we have the sense that being a woman is crucially important. If we don’t do a good job of “being a woman,” we may have missed out on something vitally important when all is said and done. However, we seem to be stumbling blindly through a maze with many voices shouting contradictory advice at us. Most of us have a vague mental image of “traditional” gender roles which is tied to “traditional” religious views and conservative politics. But Science and Philosophy tell us that traditional thinking is for mental lightweights, and God is either irrelevant or non-existent. Feminist teaching and post-modern thinking tell us that “gender roles” are an archaic idea: there are no differences between men and women except the ones we create in our own minds, and actually, men are either irrelevant or The Problem. But for the most part, we are so busy—our lives and families so scattered by the pace of things and all the responsibilities we juggle—that we don’t have time to sort it all out.

Our goal in Biblical Womanhood is to take the time to untangle some of the confusion. This study will challenge beliefs and opinions many of us embrace without really thinking about it, from traditional views to progressive perspectives. In the next few months, you may find yourself questioning or defending convictions you’ve had for years with regard to women and men. For example, most of us are in the habit of thinking that the issue between women and men is Equality. However, the Bible is clear on that issue. Men and women are absolutely equal in the sight of God. We have equal value to Him, and as Christians, we are equal heirs to His grace. However, we are also **different by design**, according to the Bible, and we bring different strengths as we partner together to create and develop a flourishing world. So, the issue is not Equality, but Identity.

This rearranging of our mental categories can be a challenging experience, so we want you to be prepared. Before we go any further, please understand that the principles set forth in this study are founded on Biblical Teaching, not on one individual’s opinion or society’s conventional wisdom. That’s where we’re coming from. We think it will also be helpful to you to spend some time examining where **you’re** coming from and hope that you will feel free to share where you are in your journey openly and honestly. Our hope is, as we share our unique perspectives with one another and wrestle with God’s perspective, that we will grow in becoming individually and together all that God designed us to be – that we will flourish.

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