

Reflections on the roles & responsibilities of Christian men

1. God has created us in His image as male & female -- Genesis 1:26-27. As each is a special creation made in God's own image, we acknowledge our equality with women before God. This implies:
 - a) We must never allow ourselves to view either male or female as being either superior or inferior in their relationship to the other.
 - b) As Christian men, we desire to honour, respect and rejoice in who we are according to God's creation, neither denying our maleness, nor deeming ourselves to be God's superior creation, nor allowing ourselves to be influenced by any modern secular thinking that places women in a superior or higher place above men.
 - c) We also desire to express our thanksgiving to God who has planned for both male and female to complement the other.

2. Being "male" is God's calling for us. We desire to promote godly qualities of manhood through our life-styles and habits. On the one hand, we recognise certain male strengths, for example, a calmer and more rational response to life's situations or problems. However, on the other hand, we also recognise our weaknesses, for example, the frequent surrender of our God-given responsibilities to women -- in the home, church and society, our sometimes overly sensitive "male ego", and our frequent insensitivity to the real needs of women. It is our prayer that such a confession will lead to genuine repentance and positive active steps.

3. We desire to esteem our sisters in the body of Christ as "co-heirs" of God's gracious gift of life as taught in God's Word (I Peter 3:7). We receive the Word of God that says that women may be weaker physically in comparison to men's physical strength. However, we understand that in God's plan, our strength has been given as a provision to help protect women rather than something to boast about. Thus, we do not regard this Scripture in any way as a statement of their inferiority or our superiority. We readily acknowledge that many women have inner strengths that are seldom seen in many men.

4. We believe it is imperative that we Christian men think towards, relate to and talk with women in a way that truly honours God, their Maker and ours. This also includes the context of team-life in O.M. Thus we recognise our need in our relationships with all women, and our Christian sisters in particular, to be loving, respectful, kind, helpful, courageous, strong, sensitive, holy, pure, faithful, and gentle.

5. As far as our calling as men within God's plan is concerned, we recognise that we are called to lead -- in the home, in the church and in society. However, we desire to underline several important points, namely:
 - a) We not see this as being ours to be exercised as a "right" but rather as a "responsibility" for which we will be held accountable to God.
 - b) Nor do we desire to exercise this God-given authority to lead to the exclusion of our sisters. We recognise that they bring special insights and balance that enhance and enrich our leading with godly wisdom and grace.
 - c) It is also our earnest desire to lead in a caring, sensitive yet decisive way. We take as our example and model our Lord Jesus Christ's servant leadership (see John 13:12-15).

- d) We renounce all forms of "lording it over" women -- both in the home, the church or in any human institution such as Christian organisations.
 - e) We also desire to respect highly and encourage to the fullest potential the gifts of ministry that God has given to women. And in particular within our missionary endeavours, we see them as being our "co-labourers" in the ministry of the Gospel God has called us to exercise together, worthy of highest esteem and respect. (Cf. Paul's testimony in Romans 16:1-16 concerning different women who laboured faithfully for the Gospel.)
6. We desire to dialog openly with our sisters in Christ to gain a deeper understanding of what the Scriptures teach concerning these matters. We do so based on the conviction that all the brethren (men and women) in God's family must submit themselves together to the truth and authority of God's holy Word. We suggest the following issues for discussion and dialog:
- a) Our concern with the biased use or misuse of Ephesians 5:21 by some who wish to downplay the importance of following Scriptures in Ephesians 5 (verses 22-33).
 - b) We are also concerned to understand more of God's mind regarding the leadership role sometimes given to women within the church and missions today. It is our belief that the Scriptures do not exclude women from each and every leadership responsibility. Thus we are willing to receive and submit to women in certain positions of leadership within the church and mission work. However, it is also our conviction that as far as the "office" of ruling elder or pastor in the church is concerned, this is a responsibility which God has given to only to men. Nevertheless we do not desire to exercise such a responsibility apart from a free flow of dialog with our sisters.
 - c) We desire to share openly some struggles we have in relating with our sisters in Christ, especially:
 - i) How to adequately help meet the emotional needs of single women in an acceptable, culturally sensitive yet non-romantic way.
 - ii) How to respond to the tendency of some women to use various manipulative measures in order to dominate and gain control over men.
 - iii) How to gain a proper understanding of our "male ego" which we see as very closely related to our need to be respected and loved as men.
 - iv) How to respond to and work together with women who in their desiring our help give out commands or orders rather than requests.
 - v) How to respond positively when a sister relates to us through a caring touch through words of care and sympathy.

Graham Roberts
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