

GENDER DISTINCTION

Abridged

Adopted by the General Board in 2014

Swiftly changing cultural expectations have created pressures to compromise many biblical principles, but it is vital for the church to continue to firmly and faithfully embrace and teach scriptural truths. Regardless of cultural changes or pressures, Bible principles should always be the final authority in governing how we reflect the gender distinction with which God has blessed us as individuals.

Gender distinction is of utmost importance to God because it relates to His most precious creation and the object of His love: the people He created. We should celebrate the distinction and differences God made within the genders, which complement and complete us as His unique created beings, made in His image and after His likeness.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them “ (Genesis 1:27).

“And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man “ (Genesis 2:22).

God first made a man and from that man He made a woman. This foundational truth is important at least three primary reasons:

1. *A basic aspect of His beloved creation is their unique gender roles, rights, and responsibilities.* The Scriptures outline the important roles that men and women have and how they relate in a harmonious family unit.

2. *The procreative power of the human race depends on the union of those of the opposite sex: male and female.* Gender identification then becomes central to the definition of the family, which in turn is the core of any healthy society. Jesus reaffirms this truth in Matthew 19:4-6 and furthermore regards it as the motivation to begin a marriage and family. To blend, confuse, or distort proper gender roles is to bring confusion to the heart of human society.

3. *A social group or society that begins to blur clear gender representations also tends toward unhealthy sexual practices and follows a downward digression away from God and His fundamental plan for humankind.* This degradation leads to the disintegration of the most basic roles of men and women (Romans 1:24-28).

In the beginning the enemy of humanity, in the form of a serpent, advanced his agenda of the destruction of God’s people and their paradise. Eve’s deception and Adam’s disobedience led to the complete loss of their innocence and paradise. In response to their shame and nakedness, the first man and woman clothed themselves, albeit improperly. The Lord graciously intervened. He mercifully covered and clothed them, forever answering the question of God’s involvement and interest in the apparel that men and women wear. In their fallen condition, they needed clothes to cover them, and they needed God’s guidance for proper clothing choices. In short, clothing mattered to God then, and it still matters to Him today. The Lord provides parameters

and principles concerning our clothing: modesty, costliness, and distinctiveness (I Timothy 2:9; Deuteronomy 22:5).

Gender Distinctions: The Mandate

Men and women are to maintain a visibility in their gender distinction. God created men and women to fulfill unique roles and to illustrate those roles in specific ways. The Lord utilizes two primary symbols that provide a clear visible distinction between male and female: hair and clothing.

1. *Hair*. Paul wrote of definite distinctions between men and women in I Corinthians 11 as is reflected by their hair: long, uncut hair for women and short hair for men. Paul affirmed the order of creation in Genesis (vs. 3, 8-9) and wrote that “even nature” innately teaches us this truth: “Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering” (I Corinthians 11:13-15).

2. *Clothing*. “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God” (Deuteronomy 22:5).

Attire should be distinctive to one’s own sex. Scripture is clear that God requires a definite distinction between the sexes. In virtually every ethnic group there is clothing that is perceived to be feminine and clothing that is perceived to be masculine. While the modern age has exerted tremendous pressures of influence upon basic gender distinctions in dress, God has clearly stated that to fail to maintain distinction between the genders is an abomination to Him. An abomination is an extreme term that relates to a variety of evil practices and is something that is detestable and abhorrent to God.

God emphasized the distinction between men and women in the New Testament when Paul wrote that effeminate men would not inherit the kingdom of God. The obvious deduction is that God expects women to be feminine and men to be masculine, not effeminate.

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (I Corinthians 6:9-10).