

# Is God A Male Chauvinist?

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In April 2002, the International Bible Society and Zondervan Publishers released a gender-neutral New Testament, the *Today's New International Version*, with the objective of replacing the masculine-dominated language with more "politically correct" expressions. Among the thousands of intrusive changes are the substitution of "children of God" for "sons of God" in Matthew 5:9 and "a person is justified by faith" for "a man is justified by faith" in Romans 3:28.

In his article "What's Wrong with Gender-Neutral Bible Translations," Dr. Wayne Grudem, Professor of Theology and President of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, takes issue with many of the wrong-headed premises that drive this burning obsession to emasculate (as well as feminize) Scripture. He cites using "inoffensive" plural pronouns such as replacing "he should call for the elders of the church" with "they should call for the elders of the church" (James 5:14-15); or using the pesky journalistic "you," substituting "in your heart you may plan your course, but the Lord determines your steps" for "a man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). In addition, the generic "man" in Genesis 1:27 gives way to "God created humankind." In some cases, the gender inoffensive "mortal" substitutes for "son of man." Other extreme measures identified by Dr. Grudem include making the army of Israel gender-neutral, substituting "warriors" for "men of war" (Numbers 31:49); eliminating "son of man" in the Old Testament and replacing this term with "human being" 106 times; neutering fathers and sons, replacing this term with "mortals" or gender-neutral "orphans."

Dr Grudem insists that all such changes amount to a timid concession to politically correct societal pressure to adopt gender-neutral Bible translations even at the expense of accuracy and clarity. Other ludicrous proposals identified by Grudem include the manufacturing of new pronouns to replace "he," "him," or "his." The willing accomplices of this obsession to mangle the language are designers of English style manuals who encourage peppering the manuscript with the ubiquitous but awkward "he/she," "he or she," or the plural "they" to eliminate the "offensive" masculine pronoun "he."

These "biblical egalitarians" and "evangelical feminists" have taken their cue from the radical feminists of the 1960s, determined to mute the patriarchal culture of the biblical writers. According to Grudem, "[I]f all generic singular statements are removed from the Bible, then the ability to think of a representative individual who stands for a whole group will have been removed—for we will have no words to formulate our thoughts [in those instances]." Stylist William Zinsser in his *On Writing Well* complains, "A style that converts every 'he' into a 'they' will quickly turn to mush." Zinsser deplores overloading manuscripts with plurals because he believes they weaken writing by making it difficult to visualize the subject.

## Swapping Roles

The late J. S. Bois occasionally would use the pronoun "she" to refer to the Deity. In a recent church service, Bishop Marshall Gilmore of the CME (Christian Methodist Episcopal) Church raised some eyebrows in the audience by referring to God Almighty as "She." In our egalitarian, politically correct society, educators and politicians have attempted to blur what they consider to be stereotypical gender roles.

In the recent decade, Hollywood has attempted to cash in on the fascination with women and men swapping traditional roles. One typical example is the movie *G.I. Jane*, which casts a woman in the role of an elite Special Forces combat soldier. The more she "got the best" of the men, the more audiences loved it.

Likewise, the formula in which a housewife takes on an executive CEO position, leaving the husband to assume a dutiful "Mister Mom" role seems to have captured the imagination of many Hollywood screenwriters. We are mindful of the row Hillary Clinton created by disparaging the supposed denigrated "female" task of baking cookies. Several years ago, a major network did some investigative reporting illustrating how female firefighters were adapting to their non-traditional roles. As petite physiques buckled under the strain of heavy, bulky equipment, questions about equality of opportunity were again raised.

I once worked for a female supervisor who had some rather bizarre misconceptions about certain leadership expectations associated with traditional male-dominated executive positions. Her absurd attempt at incorporating what she assumed to be typical "male" characteristics such as swaggering, bullying, and intimidating reminded me of equally ludicrous attempts of female impersonators and drag queens parodying the supposed "female" traits of lisping, simpering, swishing, and displaying a limp wrist. As my sister-in-law so aptly stated, "What 'real' woman do you know really acts that way?" Likewise, women supervisors who attempt to shatter the glass ceiling can become pathetic parodies assiduously trying to emulate the very thing they most despise.

Several years ago at the Feast of Tabernacles, one minister suggested that there would be no Women's Lib movement if legitimate needs of women were met in the first place. The same could be said about the labor movement and the Civil Rights movement. Swapping roles is not the answer.

## **Male and Female**

Back in May 1973, the pastor of the Minneapolis congregation asked the women whether they felt a secret kinship with Women's Lib. He also posed the question, "Is God a male chauvinist?" After all, had not God made the husband the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23)? Had not Paul asked women to stifle themselves in church (II Timothy 2:12)? Did God make only males in His image, and then as an afterthought made woman (as Archie Bunker suggested) a cheaper cut?

Helen Reddy became so incensed at this attitude that, upon acceptance of the Grammy Award for her record "I am Woman," she said, "I thank God because She made it all possible." That shocked most people in the 1970s, but in 2002, with the advent of a gender-neutral Bible, it does not seem so far-fetched to some.

To set the record straight on what God Almighty had in mind about man and woman, we need to go back to Genesis 1:26, where God says, "Let Us make man [humankind or human beings—not as Archie Bunker thought, only men or males] in Our image, according to Our likeness." Both male and female together are created in the image of God.

In Genesis 2:24, when the marriage covenant is ordained, man and woman are designated as "one flesh"—one unit. God is indeed creating a Family modeled after His own characteristics, but not all Godlike characteristics are found in one sex or gender, any more than they are found in one race. It bears repeating that God did not create a superior and inferior sex, any more than He created a superior and inferior race.

God has characteristics (revealed throughout Scripture) that are considered to be masculine and feminine. Our own bodies mirror this. Human reproductive glands, for example, manufacture both male and female hormones. Women's ovaries produce small, but significant amounts of androgen (a male hormone). Likewise, men's testicular canals produce not only testosterone, but also a small but significant amount of estrogen (female hormones). God has also designed the human anatomy so that both sexes have vestigial equipment of the opposite sex. No one is 100% male or 100% female—not even the most muscular man or the curviest woman can claim this distinction.

Together, men and women make up a composite image of the living God. Individually, we are incomplete, partial, and lacking something in our personality. One of the reasons God gave us marriage state (a God-plane relationship) is to learn how the other half of the God-image behaves. We learn from our mate's traits and characteristics of the opposite sex in order to become complete God-beings. The Bruce Willis/Russell Crowe macho-warriors and the Nicole Kidman/Meg Ryan goddess stereotypes are insufficient models for a God-being. God the Father is not in the process of making macho-warriors or goddesses, but balanced members of His Family.

Part of this process—incredible as it sounds—involves the male incorporating Godlike feminine (not effeminate) characteristics such as tenderness, mercy, and patience. Similarly, the female needs to learn or adopt masculine (not tomboy or butch) characteristics such as strength, assertiveness, and decisiveness. The above-mentioned pastor isolated 22 godly characteristics—eleven masculine and eleven feminine—suggesting that this rudimentary list barely scratched the surface. However, if we make a thorough search of the Scripture, we would find the masculine and feminine traits of God equally distributed. Ironically, if gender-neutral advocates had their way, these delightful differences would be blotted out.

### **Incorporating Traits**

Space permits elaboration on only a few from each list. We see ample and abundant masculine traits in the Bible: strength, power, decisiveness, aggressiveness, provider, ruler, and leader. Feminine traits are also abundant: beauty, grace, mercy, tenderness, caring, and affectionate. In order to qualify as members of God's Family, both men and women need to incorporate all these characteristics into their personalities.

Men often have a hard time being as loving and affectionate as their wives are. Little boys know that Mommies make the best pillows, and Daddies make the best armrests. If some of the women in the congregation would enlist the aid of the men in the congregation to hold their babies, the men might break out in a cold sweat. Nevertheless, motherly feelings and instincts come from God. It did not bother Jesus Christ to express a motherly instinct: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem. . . ! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. . . !" (Matthew 23:37).

Back in 1980, when my brothers and I got together on the home farm for a family reunion, I noticed one of my brothers holding his little boy on his lap, caressing him lovingly. As I walked into the room, he doubled up his fist and gave him a vigorous love-tap. He evidently did not want his big brother to question his masculinity. In our family, largely influenced by North European culture, hugging, kissing, and caressing were designated as mushy and undesirable. Even Mom did not hug us much past the age of seven. My brothers and I were conditioned that it was a shame for a man to show his emotions or to cry.

By contrast, one of the most godly men I have ever known in my life was a stocky Ukrainian immigrant in the Minneapolis church, the late Igor Kubik. He showed a Godlike balance between strength and sensitivity.

My family adopted Igor and Nina Kubik as surrogate parents. From time to time, Igor would grab his daughters, Tonia and Lydia, and his sons Victor, Oleh, and Eugene, giving them a big Ukrainian bear hug and a rather fulsome kiss. I was at the same time uncomfortable and envious at this display of emotion.

Igor once told me, "My children may not have had a lot of material things, but at least they have had enough love." The Kubik children, now grown up with families of their own, are some of the most balanced human beings I have ever met.

An essential Godlike masculine trait is His strength and power. Scriptural references that emphasize this trait are I Chronicles 29:12 and Job 40:9. Notice, however, Psalm 62:7 (*The Amplified Bible*): "He is my Rock of unyielding strength and impenetrable hardness." Daughters should occasionally be assertive and decisive, having deep inner strength rather than be kicked and pushed around. It makes it easier for her to grow into the rest of her feminine role. Adult women must also learn to be assertive and decisive. The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:16 was out wheeling and dealing in property, and verse 17 says, "She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms."

Many women in the church of God are real take-charge ladies, assertive and decisive women. My own wife and my mother-in-law fall into that category, but their assertiveness does not detract from their femininity one iota, just as Igor Kubik's love for his children did not detract from his masculinity. Not only do these not detract from essential manhood or womanhood, they add a dimension of Godhood.

Jesus says that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, we will not enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 5:20). By this same reasoning, unless we exceed our natural selves, we will not enter the God Family. As Christian men and women, we should seek to go beyond self-actualization to God-actualization—to the point that, when we look into our spouse's eyes, we should be able to see the very image of God Almighty.