Beyond the Red Pill - A Perspective on Christian Masculinity, Pt.2

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God made men and women different for a reason. Eve was given to Adam as a "helpmate" to complement him. As Evangelist E. E. Cleveland put it, "God gave Eve to Adam so that Adam would have the sense He didn't give him." The original purpose of creation involved no hierarchy. According to Ellen White, "Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal" (The Adventist home, 25).

When God said, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:15), he was stating a basic fact that men and women need each other. Secularisation has so fractured the unity that God created that many in society now frame the relationship between men and women as a "battle of the sexes". The well-worn phrase from radical feminists is that, "Women need a man like a fish needs a bicycle."

In Western society, gender distinctions are falling like a stack of dominoes against the backdrop of gender equality, third-wave feminism and political correctness. LGBTQIA+ activism has aggressively claimed ground traditionally occupied by those who espouse a traditional Christian heritage. The church and the family are increasingly dismissed as outdated, repressive patriarchal institutions designed to oppress women and children. Those who advocate conventional family values are attacked with charges of bigotry, homophobia and misogyny.

The influence of postmodernism has placed Western values even more at odds with the Bible. Some who embrace 'progressive Christianity' have sought to appease social trends by making the Scriptures gender-neutral, even referring to God with a gender-neutral pronoun. In pushing back against societal trends, assigning arbitrary characteristics to masculinity and femininity would be a mistake. Men and women are more similar than they are different, but those differences are crucial. One of the many reasons progressives reject the Bible is its clear advocacy of a distinction between the sexes. Ellen White is consistent with this position. She said of Solomon, "From being one of the greatest kings that ever wielded a sceptre, Solomon became a profligate, the tool and slave of others. His character, once noble and manly, became enervated and effeminate" (Prophets and Kings, 58). On a cautionary note, we must not fall into the trap of confusing effeminacy with gentleness. Gentleness is very much in keeping with masculinity. Ellen White criticised men who thought it beneath their dignity to speak tenderly, gently, and lovingly (Testimonies 4, 256). She commented that, "With tender earnestness, David entreated Solomon to be manly and noble, to show mercy and loving-kindness (Patriarchs & Prophets, 26). Once again, Jesus is our model in incorporating the virtues of courage, honour and sacrifice, with the softer virtues of gentleness, tenderness and compassion.

Serve and Protect

To get to the heart of authentic masculinity, we must look at God's purpose in creating humanity. In Genesis chapter two, Adam is told that his responsibility in the garden was 'to till' and 'to keep' it. The original Hebrew words translated into English imply much greater significance than looking after real estate. The word 'till' in original Hebrew indicates labour in the service of others. The Hebrew word 'keep' means to protect and defend. This duty extended to Adam's responsibility to his wife and, consequently, his family. God gave Eve to Adam "to be loved and protected by him" (The Adventist Home, 25). So, right from the

very origin of man, we understand that the primary function of masculinity is to work in service and to protect.

These principles and responsibilities are to be discharged within the context of self-sacrificing love. Husbands are urged to love their wives "just as Christ loves the church and gave himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25). What did Christ do in his love for us? He laid down His life. Men are further commanded to "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:13-14). Biblical masculinity courageously stands up for godly values.

The Bible emphasises courage, an essential quality of manhood. God told Job to, "Gird your loins like a man" (Job 38:3). In colloquial terms, 'pull up your pants'. In other words, 'summon your inner strength to prepare for battle.' This courage is not the kind of "Here I am. Watch my smoke" bravado exemplified by Hollywood alpha male action heroes. It is the kind of courage that faces the inner fears and temptations that entice us to compromise our integrity, and which stands for the truth anyhow. We are told that. "The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall (Education, 57). These are the kind of men that the Enemy seeks to nullify in our homes, our churches, and our communities. This calibre of manhood can dispel the misconceptions about Christianity that cause non-believing men to give the church a wide berth.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

The growth of the red pill community is, to a great degree, a reaction against society's attempts to emasculate men. We have to be careful not to prescribe a "one size fits all" masculinity because no such thing exists. Even Jesus, in His perfection, provides a limited model for masculinity in that He was never a husband or a father, and we are told very little about His working life. Biblical masculinity arises out of an unswerving commitment to remain true to God's word and is modelled on the character of the man Christ Jesus. Only through faith in Him can we "come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).