

The Image of God: Is There a Gender Distinction?

Some Preliminary Questions & Statements

Does the image of God relate to men and women identically? The more I study this, it appears that the answer is “no.”

What I am not saying:

1. I am NOT saying that women are of any less value in the eyes of God. (Gal 3:28 “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*”)
2. I am NOT saying that men are any more valuable than women, or in any way more spiritual or intelligent.
3. I am NOT saying that the Bible encourages the neglect or exclusion of women (quite the opposite of the definition of “androcentric” commonly given: “Centered or focused on men, often to the neglect or exclusion of women”). [Rather, it focuses on both genders in their God-designed, God-assigned roles.]

What I am saying:

1. That it appears from Scripture that the man, the male, is created directly in the image of God, and that the woman derives the image of God indirectly from the man.
2. This relates, in part, to gender function and God-assigned responsibility, not value.
3. This doctrine establishes very distinct roles and functions for the man and woman, as designed by God.

Why I am saying it:

1. It is a major foundational truth that the entire rest of the Bible builds on, and which relates directly to God, family, church, and society. It is a fork in the road, and your choice leads you down a path that affects EVERYTHING.

One Problem: One Word Used 3 Ways

The Word: ADAM – much like our English word “man”

- All people – “man” as in “human” or “mankind” – a non-gender term for speaking of humanity in general
- man – “man” as in “male” – a gender specific term for the male (as opposed to “woman” or “female”)
- A name – “Adam” – the proper name for the first man, Adam

All 3 are used in Genesis 1-5! (All 3 are used in Genesis 5:1-2!)

Usages of the Hebrew “adam” in Genesis 1-5

1. All people – title – Mankind 1x – 5:2
2. Adam (proper name) – 17x in 15 verses: 2:19 [2x], 20 [2x]; 23; 3:8,9,17,20,21; 4:1,25; 5:1,3,4,5
3. Male – 13x in 11 verses: 2:5,7 [2x],8,15,16,18,22[2x],25; 3:12,22,24
4. Unsure (male or mankind): 1:26,27; 5:1 (all likely “male” considering context)

[Also: iysh – 2:23 “Man;” 2:24 “man;” 3:6 “husband;” 3:16 “husband;” 4:1 “man;” 4:23 “man”]

Another Problem: Our Present Cultural Bent (Ignorance, Over-sensitivity & Political Correctness = Clouded Understanding)

- We are ignorant of what the Bible teaches, either by lack of study or by disinformation (wrong teaching)
- We have wrongly rejected the OT in a wholesale manner, with terrible consequences (OT = foundation!)
- We are AFRAID to discuss gender roles and differences (with our environment of political correctness)
- We have navigated away from Biblical commands and patterns for gender (and we like it that way)

Examination of the Text: *What the Word Says & Doesn't Say*

1. **Gen 1:26-27** ²⁶ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in His [own] image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
 - In v. 26, “Let us make man in Our image” – “man” (*adam*) can be speaking of mankind or the male.
 - In v. 27, “So God created man in His [own] image” – “man” (*adam*) can be speaking of mankind or the male.
 - In v. 27, “male and female He created them” is taken by some to go with the image of God statement.
 - However, in v. 27, “in the image of God He created HIM” seems to imply just the man (male) was in view.

2. **Gen 5:1-2** ¹ This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. ² He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.
- In v. 1, this discusses the genealogy of a specific person, Adam (*adam*).
 - In v. 1, “in the day that God created man” – “man” (*adam*) can be speaking of mankind or the male.
 - However, the phrase (as in 1:27) states: “He made HIM in the likeness of God,” implying just the man again.
 - In v. 2, “He created them male and female” could somehow be defining the previous verse (but how?).
 - In v. 2, “called them Mankind” – “Mankind” (*adam*) refers to both male and female because here THEM is used (which would seem to reinforce that HIM only refers to Adam).

Observations:

- 30x in Gen 1-5 *adam* is used either of the man (as in male) or of Adam by name. Only ONCE (5:2) is it clearly used to refer to both the male and female, and the context (“them”) requires this. It seems most natural and consistent to take the unclear usages (1:26,27 and 5:1) as discussing the man (male).
 - The texts in Gen 1-5 never step out to clearly say either that “*the woman was made in image of God,*” that “*they were made in the image of God,*” or that “*male and female were created in the image of God.*” The text rather seems to go out of the way to NOT say that (much like “*Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus...*”).
 - Creation almost exclusively deals with “the man” as the male (either noun or pronoun). E.g. 3:22.
3. **1 Cor 11:2-9** ² Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered [them] to you. ³ But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman [is] man, and the head of Christ [is] God. ⁴ Every man praying or prophesying, having [his] head covered, dishonors his head. ⁵ But every woman who prays or prophesies with [her] head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. ⁶ For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. ⁷ For a man indeed ought not to cover [his] head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. ⁸ For man is not from woman, but woman from man. ⁹ Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.
- In v. 7, the man (the male) is specifically said to be the image and glory of God (excluding the woman)
 - In v. 7, it seems to imply that the where the man is reflective of God directly, the woman is reflective of the man, and thus of God indirectly.

Given the case he makes from 11:8–9, it appears that Paul’s assertion in 11:7 (that the man is the image and glory of God and the woman the glory of the man) must be speaking about relative differences in the origination of man and woman respectively. His point, I believe, is this: because man was created by God in his image *first*, man alone was created in a *direct* and *unmediated* fashion as the image of God, manifesting, then, the glory of God. But in regard to the woman, taken as she was *from* or *out of* man and made for the purpose of being a *helper* suitable to him, her created glory is a *reflection* of the man’s.²⁰ Just as the man, created directly by God is the image and glory of God, so the woman, created out of the man, has her glory through the man. Now, what Paul does not also here explicitly say but does seem to imply is this: in being created as the glory of the man, the woman likewise, in being formed through the man, is thereby created in the image and glory of God. At least this much is clear: as God chose to create her, the woman was not formed to be the human that she is *apart from* the man but *only through* the man. Does it not stand to reason, then, that her humanity, including her being the image of God, occurs as God forms her from the man as “the glory of the man”? (Bruce A. Ware, *Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God, Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 7:1, Spring 2002 p. 21)

Explanation

As Paul affirms in 1 Cor 11, the man is directly in the image of God. This does not seem to relate in any way to value, but to function, and assigned responsibility. The man (the male) more directly reflects the image of God as the one responsible to represent Him (with the woman’s help) on earth.

Examples throughout Scripture

Godhead; God consistently leads through men: Moses, Joshua, Judges, Leaders, Kings, Prophets, Apostles, Pastors

Exhortation

We need to identify and embrace and delight in God’s design for men and women within the home. Men have been assigned (and will be held accountable by God for) leadership. Women will be held responsible for helping them.

Biblical Evidence

Legend:

"adam" term translated	Proper noun (name)	Gender specific terms	pronouns	title
Mankind	Mankind		them / they / themselves / we	
Man	Man	Male / Husband	I / his / he / him / you	
	Eve	Woman / wife / female	Her / she / you / your	helper
Man (uncertain if male or man)				

<p>Gen 1:26-28</p> <p>26 Then God said, "Let Us make man ^{masc sing} in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."</p> <p>27 So God created man ^{masc sing} in His [own] image; in the image of God He created him; male ^{zakar} and female ^{neqebah} He created them.</p> <p>28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."</p>	<p>(26) Man created in the image of God (26) "Man" is singular (26) Them to have dominion (27) Man created in own image (27) "Man" is singular (27) Male & female created them (28) Them blessed</p>
<p>Gen 2:7-8</p> <p>7 And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.</p> <p>8 The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.</p>	<p>(7) Male formed from dust (7) God breathed into the male (7) Male became a living being (8) Male put into garden of Eden</p>
<p>Gen 2:15-17</p> <p>15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.</p> <p>16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;</p> <p>17 "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."</p>	<p>(15) Male to tend & keep garden (16) Male allowed to eat every tree (17) Male prohibited from tree of knowldg (17) Male warned</p>
<p>Gen 2:18-25</p> <p>18 And the LORD God said, "[It is] not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper ^{ezer} comparable to him."</p> <p>19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought [them] to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that [was] its name.</p> <p>20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper ^{ezer} comparable to him.</p> <p>21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.</p> <p>22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman ^{ishshah}, and He brought her to the man.</p> <p>23 And Adam said: "This [is] now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman ^{ishshah}, Because she was taken out of Man ^{lysh}."</p> <p>24 Therefore a man ^{lysh} shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife ^{ishshah}, and they shall become one flesh.</p> <p>25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife ^{ishshah}, and were not ashamed.</p>	<p>(18) Male not good alone (18) God intends to make helper for male (18) Helper is to be comparable to male (19) Adam exercises dominion [alone] (20) No helper found for the male (Adam) (21) God takes rib from Adam (male) (22) God makes woman from male's rib (22) God brings woman to the male. (23) Adam names female gender woman. (24) Marriage = male leaves parents (24) Marriage = male is joined to female (24) Marriage = male + female = one fl (24) Male + female naked but unashamed</p>
<p>Gen 3:1-7</p> <p>1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman ^{ishshah}, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"</p> <p>2 And the woman ^{ishshah} said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;</p> <p>3 "but of the fruit of the tree which [is] in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"</p> <p>4 Then the serpent said to the woman ^{ishshah}, "You will not surely die.</p> <p>5 "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."</p> <p>6 So when the woman ^{ishshah} saw that the tree [was] good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make [one] wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband ^{lysh} with her, and he ate.</p> <p>7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they [were] naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.</p>	<p>(1) Serpent speaks to female (1) Serpent questions what told to male (2-3) Female answers serpent (2-3) Female quotes what told to male+ (4) Serpent lies to female re results (5) Serpent lies to female re God's intent (6) Female reasons apart from male (6) Female chooses apart from male (6) Female gives to male (husband) (6) Male eats (7) When male eats, eyes of both opened (7) When male eats, both see nakedness (7) Both sew fig leaves together</p>
<p>Gen 3:8-24</p> <p>8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife ^{ishshah} hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.</p> <p>9 Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where [are] you ^{masc sing}?"</p> <p>10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."</p> <p>11 And He said, "Who told you that you [were] naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" [all ^{masc sing}]</p> <p>12 Then the man said, "The woman ^{ishshah} whom You gave [to be] with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."</p> <p>13 And the LORD God said to the woman ^{ishshah}, "What [is] this you have done?" The woman ^{ishshah} said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."</p> <p>14 So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You [are] cursed more than all cattle, And more</p>	<p>(8) Both hear God walking (8) Both hide (Adam leads? cf. v. 10) (9) God calls out to male (Adam) (10) Male speaks 1st person (reprnttv?) (10) Male evidences change of relationsp (11) God asks male about nakedness (11) Nakedness points to sin committed (11) God asks male what, not why (11) God: fruit command told to male (11) God only asks Adam re eating fruit</p>

<p>than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life.</p> <p>15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman^{ishshah}, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."</p> <p>16 To the woman^{ishshah} He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire [shall] be for your husband^{lysh}, And he shall rule over you."</p> <p>17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife^{ishshah}, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying: You shall not eat of it: "Cursed [is] the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat [of] it All the days of your life.</p> <p>18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field.</p> <p>19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you [are], And to dust you shall return."</p> <p>20 And Adam called his wife's^{ishshah} name Eve^{Chavvah}, because she was the mother^{tem} of all living.</p> <p>21 Also for Adam and his wife^{ishshah} the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.</p> <p>22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever "--</p> <p>23 therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.</p> <p>24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.</p>	<p>(12) Male answers with "why"</p> <p>(12) Male blames female</p> <p>(12) Male blames God</p> <p>(13) God asks female (re giving to man?)</p> <p>(13) Female rightly tells of deception</p> <p>(13) Female answers re eating</p> <p>(14) God curses serpent</p> <p>(15) God puts enmity: serpent vs female</p> <p>(15) God puts enmity: serpent vs seed</p> <p>(16) God gives no reason(s) to female</p> <p>(16) God → female: multiply sorrow</p> <p>(16) God → female: multiply concept</p> <p>(16) God → female: pain in birth (moth?)</p> <p>(16) God → female: desire male (over?)</p> <p>(16) God → female: male will rule over</p> <p>(17) God gives reasons to male:</p> <p>(17) Reason #1: Heeded voice of female</p> <p>(17) Reason #2: Eaten from tree YOU</p> <p>(17) God curses ground b/c male</p> <p>(17) Ground curse: produces lifelong toil</p> <p>(18) Ground curse: thorns/thistles</p> <p>(19) Ground curse: toil explained</p> <p>(19) Male → return to dust</p> <p>(20) Male names female person</p> <p>(20) Male names female "life" (≠ death?)</p> <p>(20) Name opp of Adam: father of death</p> <p>(21) God makes tunics for both m/f</p> <p>(22) The male has become like us</p> <p>(22) Lest HE put out HIS hand</p> <p>(23) God sent HIM out of the garden</p> <p>(23) HIM = one taken from ground</p> <p>(24) God drove out the male (woman finds place & purpose in male)</p>
<p>Gen 4:1-2</p> <p>1 Now Adam knew Eve^{Chavvah} his wife^{ishshah}, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man^{lysh} from the LORD."</p> <p>2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.</p>	<p>(1) Adam knows Eve (first time?)</p> <p>(1) Eve conceives (conception normal)</p> <p>(1) Eve bears Cain</p> <p>(1) Child "from the LORD"</p> <p>(1) WHO is talking? Adam or Eve?</p> <p>(2) Eve bears Abel</p> <p>(2) Children = different bents?</p>
<p>Gen 4:25-26</p> <p>25 And Adam knew his wife^{ishshah} again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed."</p> <p>26 And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then <i>men</i> began to call on the name of the LORD.</p>	<p>(25) Adam knows Eve</p> <p>(25) Eve bears Seth (conception normal)</p> <p>(25) Child appointed by God</p> <p>(25) WHO is talking? Adam or Eve?</p>
<p>Gen 5:1-5</p> <p>1 This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.</p> <p>2 He created them male^{zakar} and female^{neqebah}, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.</p> <p>3 And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot [a son] in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.</p> <p>4 After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters.</p> <p>5 So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.</p>	<p>(1) Genealogy of Adam (not "& Eve")</p> <p>(1) God created male (male or human?)</p> <p>(1) Male made in likeness of God</p> <p>(2) God created them male & female</p> <p>(2) God blessed them</p> <p>(2) God called THEM mankind</p> <p>(3) Adam (male) lived...</p> <p>(3) Adam begot son in his likeness/image (no sim statement for daughters of Eve)</p> <p>(3) Adam named son Seth (dau names?)</p> <p>(4) Adam's life = years + sons/daughters</p> <p>(5) Adam dies (sin); no record of Eve</p>

Regarding the Image of God:

Gen 1:26 – “let us make man in our image” – could be speaking about mankind in general, referring to both the male and the female, if the term is understood in its general sense. Since the verse goes on to say, “let them have dominion,” it could imply this. It could also be understood to be speaking just about the male, however, since “man” is singular in form. This verse in and of itself is inconclusive.

Gen 1:27a – “so God created man in His [own] image” – This is possibly inconclusive, either indicating “man” in general. However, “man” is singular in form, which would imply just the male is in view here.

Gen 1:27b – “in the image of God He created **him**” – HIM seems to clearly indicate just the MALE is in view here.

Gen 5:1a – “This is the book of the genealogy of Adam” – proper noun of a specific individual (would not work for a general term usage).

Gen 5:1b – “In the day that God created man” – Inconclusive as a phrase, but “Adam” before and singular “man” afterward seems to limit it to just the male.

Gen 5:1c – “He made him in the likeness of God” – “Him” is singular, so it continues to indicate one person, especially in light of the context of specifically discussing “Adam” the male.

In Genesis 2, the additional detail indicates that the male was created first, so the image of God was seemingly describing the creation of the male. Since the woman was made from the man, she was not created directly into the image of God. She derived her “image of God” quality indirectly, via the man. The wording seems to carefully indicate this too. The Bible never actually says that the woman is created in the image of God, nor that God created THEM in the image of God. It always states that “He made HIM” (1:26-27; 5:1) It indicates “HIM”, and then “male and female He created THEM” as an indication of the female being created at a separate time.

1 Cor 11:2-16

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered [them] to you.

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman [is] man, and the head of Christ [is] God.

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having [his] head covered, dishonors his head.

5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with [her] head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.

6 For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.

7 For a man indeed ought not to cover [his] head, **since he is the image and glory of God**; but woman is the glory of man.

8 For man is not from woman, but woman from man.

9 Nor was man created for the woman, but **woman for the man**.

10 For this reason the woman ought to have [a symbol of] authority on [her] head, because of the angels.

11 Nevertheless, neither [is] man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.

12 For as woman [came] from man, even so man also [comes] through woman; but all things are from God.

13 Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?

15 But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for [her] hair is given to her for a covering.

16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor [do] the churches of God.