

45-Minute Small Group Bible Study

MAN AND WOMAN

The Christian Faith, pages 13-15

Purpose: To understand men and women as equally valuable image-bearers created by God with embodied, complementary differences, and to explore the biblical purposes of companionship, marriage, family, fruitfulness, dominion, mutual dependence, and the way marriage points beyond itself to Christ and his church.

Main Truth: God created humanity male and female in his image with equal worth and complementary gifts. He made us for relationship, faithful stewardship, marriage and family, and mutual dependence. The one-flesh union of husband and wife is God's institution and also serves as an earthly sign pointing to the greater mystery of Christ the Bridegroom and the church his Bride.

1. Opening Prayer - 2 minutes

Creator God, you made us in your image, male and female, and called your creation very good. Give us humility to receive your Word, charity toward one another, and wisdom to honor the dignity and vocation you give to every person. Center our identity not in ourselves but in your gracious purpose for us in Christ. Amen.

2. Opening Discussion - 3 minutes

Begin with one or two questions:

1. What messages does contemporary culture give about what makes a person valuable or what defines male and female identity?
2. Why is it important to hold together both equal worth and real embodied difference?
3. What is gained when marriage is seen not only as a private relationship but as part of God's creational design?

3. Read the Doctrinal Statement - 2 minutes

Have one person read the doctrinal statement for "Man and Woman" on page 13. Listen for what it says about equal worth, embodied difference, companionship, family, dominion, and the connection between marriage and Christ's relationship to the church.

4. Male and Female Share the Image and Dignity of God - 5 minutes

Read: Genesis 1:26-27

God creates humanity in his image and gives human beings dominion; the text immediately identifies humanity as male and female.

Discuss:

1. What is shared equally by man and woman in this passage?
2. How does being made in God's image ground human worth before any achievement, role, or social recognition?
3. What does dominion suggest about a shared human vocation toward the created world?

Read: James 3:9

James warns against cursing people because human beings are made in God's likeness.

Discuss:

1. How does the image of God place moral limits on the way we speak about people with whom we disagree?
2. What does this imply for the treatment of the weak, unborn, elderly, disabled, or socially unwanted?

Key Insight: Equal worth does not require sameness. Scripture grounds dignity in God's creative act and image, not in interchangeable bodies, identical gifts, or identical callings.

5. Human Identity Is Embodied and Sexed - 4 minutes

Read: Genesis 2:7

God forms the man from the dust and breathes life into him.

Discuss:

1. What does this passage say about the goodness and significance of the body?
2. Why is biblical human identity more than an inner self temporarily inhabiting a body?

Read: Genesis 2:22

God builds the woman from the man and brings her to him.

Discuss:

1. What does the woman's creation communicate about both shared humanity and distinct embodiment?
2. How does the narrative prepare for the later language of "one flesh"?

6. “It Is Not Good for the Man to Be Alone” - 4 minutes

Read: Genesis 2:18

For the first time in the creation account something is “not good”: the man is alone. God promises a helper who is a suitable partner for him.

Discuss:

1. What does “suitable partner” imply about both correspondence and difference?
2. Why should the word “helper” not automatically be heard as inferior, especially when Scripture elsewhere uses help-language for God?
3. What broader truth about human life is revealed by the statement that isolation is “not good”?

7. Creaturely Freedom Is Life Under God’s Word - 4 minutes

Read: Genesis 2:16-17

God gives the man abundant freedom - “you may freely eat” - together with one clear command not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Discuss:

1. How does the command show that human freedom is not autonomy from God?
2. Why is trusting God’s definition of good and evil essential to creaturely life?
3. How does this command prepare for the next chapter’s account of sin?

8. God Institutes the One-Flesh Union of Marriage - 4 minutes

Read: Genesis 2:24

A man leaves father and mother, remains united to his wife, and the two become one flesh.

Discuss:

1. What movements in this verse describe the covenantal shape of marriage - leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh?
2. Why is “one flesh” more than emotional closeness?

Read: Mark 10:6-9

Jesus reaches back to creation: God made them male and female, joins husband and wife, and declares that humans should not separate what God has joined.

Discuss:

1. How does Jesus ground marriage in creation rather than merely in changing social convention?
2. What does Jesus’ language say about God’s own action in marriage?

9. Fruitfulness, Family, and Stewardship Belong to the Creational Vocation - 4 minutes

Read: Genesis 1:28

God blesses the man and woman and sends them to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and exercise dominion.

Discuss:

1. How are fruitfulness and stewardship joined in the first human vocation?
2. What does it mean to exercise dominion as image-bearers of a generous Creator rather than as exploiters?

Read: Psalm 127:3-5

Children are described as a heritage and reward from the LORD.

Discuss:

1. How does the psalm challenge cultures that treat children primarily as burdens, projects, or lifestyle choices?
2. How can the church honor this teaching while also caring tenderly for those who are single, infertile, widowed, or childless?

10. Man and Woman Are Mutually Dependent - and Marriage Points to Christ - 4 minutes

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:7-12

Paul remembers the creation order of man and woman, yet immediately insists that in the Lord neither woman nor man is independent of the other: woman came from man, man now comes through woman, and all things are from God.

Discuss:

1. How does Paul hold together distinction and mutual dependence?
2. What happens when either sex treats the other as unnecessary, inferior, or self-sufficient?

Read: Ephesians 5:31-32

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 and calls the one-flesh union a “great mystery,” speaking ultimately about Christ and the church.

Discuss:

1. How does Christ’s faithful, self-giving love give marriage a meaning beyond personal fulfillment?
2. How can marriage serve as an earthly sign without making married life the only meaningful Christian vocation?

Key Insight: The chapter’s final horizon is larger than marriage itself. Human sexuality and marriage are located within God’s saving purpose: Christ the Bridegroom gives himself for his Bride, the church. Earthly marriage is honored precisely because it points beyond itself.

11. Bringing It Together - 2 minutes

God creates men and women with equal dignity as his image-bearers, yet with real bodily difference and mutual need. He gives human beings a shared vocation in creation, establishes marriage as a one-flesh union of man and woman, blesses fruitfulness and family, and reveals that even this creational gift points to the deeper mystery of Christ and his church.

12. Application Questions - 5 minutes

Choose two or three:

1. Which truth in this study most helps hold together equal dignity and embodied difference?
2. How does the image of God challenge the way our culture assigns value to human life?
3. What would it look like to receive your body and sex as gifts rather than raw material for self-definition?
4. How does Jesus' use of Genesis shape a Christian understanding of marriage?
5. How might Christ and the church help married Christians understand their vocation - and help the whole church understand the meaning of faithful, self-giving love?

13. Closing Prayer - 2 minutes

God our Creator, you made humanity in your image, male and female, and declared your work good. Forgive us for despising your gifts, exalting ourselves over others, or using one another for selfish ends. Teach us to honor every person, receive our embodied lives with gratitude, and live faithfully in the vocations you give. Bless marriages and families, strengthen the lonely and burdened, and keep before us the greater mystery of Christ and his church. Amen.