

ISSUE

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BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

January 24,
2016

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Jeff Nunn

Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Steve Dixon

Ryan Ferguson

Arend Gressley

Ben Hight

Jack Langley

Blake McAlister

Brady McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Rusty Scott

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



Is God Male?

By Kyle Pope

Some years ago a question was posed in the *Faith* section of a newspaper. A denominational preacher and a Jewish rabbi were asked, “Should we refer to God as he, she or it, and why?” Although the two writers approached the question from very different angles they both reached about the same conclusion. They argued that it doesn’t really matter which pronoun one “chooses” because the Bible uses female and male metaphors to describe attributes of God. Many religious leaders might answer the question in the same way—as is seen in some recent translations that deliberately use gender-neutral terminology in referring to God. While this may be a popular view, is it really what the Bible teaches?



I. Human Gender. When God created human beings (and even animals) He made them “**male and female**” (Gen. 1:27; 5:2; 6:19). These gender distinctions were essential for earthly

reproduction. What determined whether one was male or female was a matter of physiology, chemistry, and anatomy. In most creatures, if the creature has male organs and an X and a Y chromosome it is a male. If the creature has female organs and two X chromosomes it is a female.

The Bible does not teach that God reproduces, has a mate, or gender distinctive reproductive organs and chromosomes. **“God is spirit”** (John 4:24). Never the less the Bible does use masculine names and pronouns to

refer to God. Yet, just as the descriptions of God and Jesus as “Father” and “Son” reflect something different than the human reproductive relationship, any description of gender must be understood in a different sense than earthly concepts of gender.

II. Bible Names for Bible Things. What is strange is the fact that both authors treated this issue as a matter of human choice. This shouldn’t surprise us. A world that imagines it can choose its own worship, doctrine, and behavior will naturally imagine that it can choose to characterize God as it sees fit. The real question is how does God refer to Himself?

Genesis 1:27 is the earliest passage where this question is addressed in relation to earthly gender. The text reads, **“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”** (Gen. 1:27, NKJV). Several elements of this text are important. First, the name **“God”** is translated from the Hebrew word *'elohim*. Hebrew, like most languages distinguishes nouns as either grammatically masculine or feminine. The

name *'elohim* is masculine. Next, we should note something about the verb **“created.”** Unlike English, Hebrew verbs have forms that not only communicate person (i.e. first person – “I,” second person – “you,” or third person – “he, she, or it”) but also gender (i.e. if the “you” is male or female, or if the third person is masculine “he” or feminine “she”). In this text the verb translated **“created”** is the Hebrew word *yivrah*, the masculine singular form,



meaning literally *“He created.”* Finally, we note the phrase **“His own image.”** Hebrew communicates the pronoun **“His”** by attaching a suffix to the end of the noun **“image.”** In this case the pronoun is the third person masculine **“He.”** So in three instances when God first creates human gender He uses three grammatical indicators to refer to Himself in the masculine. If we are to speak of God as He refers to Himself we must refer to Him in the masculine. Anything else is not a matter of “choice” but change.

III. Biblical Distinctions. It is clear that both men and women are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), but it is also clear that the Bible teaches that there is some sense in which there is a distinction in the nature of this likeness (or reflected glory) as it pertains to men and women. In Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians he was forced to address the problem some in Corinth were having with proper gender roles in Christ. Some of the women in Corinth seem to have been rejecting a custom widely practiced in that day as a sign of submission to male authority—the wearing of a head covering. To remedy this Paul appealed to creation itself. The apostle wrote through the Holy Spirit, **“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. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man”** (1 Cor. 11:7-9).

In this text Paul appeals to the sequence of creation (i.e. man was created first) and then the medium of creation (i.e. woman from man’s rib). In this he reveals a distinction between God’s likeness and glory as it pertains to man and woman. Paul says man is the glory of God and woman is the glory of man. Now that doesn’t mean that woman is less valuable—it is simply a matter of sequence, relationship, and authority. This wording makes it clear that we cannot ignore gender distinctions when it comes to human beings or when speaking of God. To disregard this for the sake of political correctness is to disregard Scripture.

IV. Modern Gender Wars. It is little wonder that a world seeking to make women act like men and men act like women tries to entangle God in the



same gender wars that plague our world. We must ask ourselves— Does this question really stem from a desire to characterize God accurately or is it just a way to make religious views match modern attitudes? Many in our world are uncomfortable with accepting what the Bible teaches about creation, male and female roles, and God's hand in both. Is this what lies behind such views?

So let's ask, if Scripture refers to God in the masculine does that insult women? No. God is the Creator of both sexes. If man was created first, and woman was created from man, does God love woman less? No.

Jesus died for both men and women. If God has established different roles of authority and responsibility for men and women is God abusing women? Absolutely not! It is no more an abuse of women that they are not given the role of headship in the home (Eph. 5:22-23) than it is abusing men that they are not given the ability to bear children (Gen. 3:16). God created both and loves both even though He has given different roles to each. This may be the very reason God speaks of Himself in the masculine, There is a role of leadership and authority He holds that (although much greater in scope) is similar to the role He has given men in the home and in the church.



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