

1. Introduction

Writing a ‘guide to womanhood’ seems so simple and ordinary as to be unnecessary, but also as complicated and extraordinary as to be almost impossible—which, we will see, is partly a sign of the times we live in. Our world is very confused about womanhood (and manhood) and it takes a fair amount of untangling to address something so snarled. But also, being a woman is simultaneously simple and complex by God’s design—it is glorious and mundane; it is particular and broad. It is a reality that exists apart from our willingness to consent to it, but one that also inhabits our very selves. That is what it means to exist as a created thing—that your willingness to agree with how or what you’ve been made has no bearing on who or what you actually are. The sun is unbothered by my professing it to be the moon. It keeps on burning, providing light and warmth for all.

The moon isn't affected in the least by my futile attempts to label it a star.

So too with womanhood. It does not need our mental assent to continue being what it is. Womanhood exists. Period. God made it so. No amount of railing against it or wishing it away can change that. And, what I'd like all of us to see is that womanhood is not something that we want to wish away. It's not something to be railed against, but received with gratitude. It cannot withstand idolizing, nor should it be relegated to the status of inconsequential.

Womanhood matters the way the walls of the house matter. It matters the way the food on the table matters. It matters the way flowers in the garden matter. It matters because God wanted it to matter—He made it consequential. But we don't direct our praise to walls or food or flowers. We praise the *Maker* of those things. We praise the Builder, the Provider, and the Gardener, for from *Him* and through *Him* and to *Him* are all things (Rom. 11:36). He gets all the glory for His glorious creation of womanhood.

OUR RECENT HISTORY

The past 100 years have seen great societal changes for women—both in how women think of themselves and how others think of them. The

1960s brought about a second wave of feminism, which, while seeking the empowerment of women, did so by making manhood the standard for women. They thought that being a powerful woman was achieved by becoming just like powerful men. Feminists wanted to be equal and interchangeable with men, which perhaps unintentionally ended up devaluing the things that made them distinctly women. They wanted women to be free from the 'burdens' of marriage, motherhood, and family life—free to have sex without 'consequences' (that is, children), free to kill their own offspring in the womb—in short, their desired freedom actually led to a horrid enslavement to sin.

Furthermore, they did not imagine that one day men might want to be equal and interchangeable with women—and by that, I mean the transgender movement. There are biological men who call themselves women, who are now allowed into women's restrooms, and even set records in women's sporting events. The trans movement makes a mockery of the female body, renaming breastfeeding, 'chest-feeding,' and women, 'birthing people.' And there are also biological women who call themselves men—who also take hormones

to feel more masculine and, in some cases, mutilate their body to make it look like a man's body.

These changes are remarkable when you step back and look at the scope of human history. For the entire course of mankind, everyone knew who was a woman and who was a man. It was determined by the body God gave you. But in this unique moment in time, this moment God appointed you to live in, the loudest and most powerful voices in our society say that being a man or a woman has nothing to do with your body, but only your feelings. This is a serious lie with grave consequences. Yet even so, we know that sin is not new. It is as old as the garden of Eden. Yet it manifests in seemingly new ways, like a new cancer or virus. Sin is finding more and more outrageous ways to deceive and harm.

WHO AM I?

This basic question lies at the heart of so much human striving—it reveals a quest for self-knowledge. Many find it difficult to answer, as though the self is a mystery beyond finding out. I would like to suggest to you that answering the question, 'Who am I?' is actually not difficult, because the answer is given to us by

assignment, not by self-reflection. Who am I? I am Abigail, a woman, a Christian, a daughter, a mother, a friend, a wife, a created person. All those fundamental things are not something I discovered about myself by taking an in-depth personality test. They are fundamentally gifts from a good Giver.

This is not a book to help you discover who you are, because who you are is a gift given to you by God that simply is, but rather, this is a book to help you receive with gladness who you are and to understand the meaning and purpose of who you are, namely, a woman made by God and saved through Christ.

I won't trifle with you or speak condescendingly to you in these pages. I'm assuming you want to think deeply. I'm assuming you don't want to be coddled like a child, but rather afforded the dignity of being told the straight truth and loved with the unsentimental pure love of Christ. This book is not a safe space as our culture defines it, because the truth of God's Word isn't the kind of safe that keeps us comfortable or secure in this world. Rather, it is the kind of safe that makes us secure in another world. Let's set our hope there—in heaven—where Christ is seated

WOMANHOOD

at God's right hand, and in doing so, may we become fearless women who hope in God.

Main point

There are many confused views about womanhood, but we will only find a true understanding of our created being by looking to our Creator.

Questions for Reflection

- What is a woman? Can you define 'woman' in a way that accords with God's Word?
- What are some things you've been taught about womanhood? Do these things match up with what the Bible teaches? If you don't know, how can you find out?
- Have you ever thought of womanhood as a gift to be received from God? How would thinking about it that way change your perception of being a woman?