

Chapter 5.

Creative Equality

Chapter One of the handbook for humanity written by the Spirit of God defines our identity. God could have populated the earth at once with a sea of humanity, with the infinite variety of snow-flakes, all sizes, colors, and shapes. He gave us instead a common ancestry: one man, one woman, of whom we have no physical description. The words "in our image, after our likeness," indicate the spiritual nature of humanity and our implicit relationship with the Creator God. Godlikeness was his design for us, the purpose of which would be the revelation of himself.

Embodied in humanity was the life of the Creator, by means of which we were to reign in male-female complement, under God, over all of his creation. We were not to pre-empt God's authority, but to express it, and to do so in terms of his character. This is the first chapter in God's love story. He shares his life and his heart with his people. He creates them, blesses them, fellowships with them, and in this context he gives them a creative function suitable to their humanity. They are given the dignity of reigning over the earth as God's servants! At no time is there any disparity between persons, as God assigns the male-female identity. Properly related to him, all of God's creation is in harmony and balance.

A woman who sees herself from God's perspective has a secure sense of identity, and the recognition of her equality with every other person. It could be summarized in this way: I am God's woman. He made me. I accept my unique design without resentment, knowing that God's intention toward me is loving and redemptive.

A multitude of complicated hereditary and cultural factors have combined to make me what I am, but in the end nothing and no one can thwart God's redemptive plan for me. He chose me before the foundations of the earth, destined me to be conformed to his image, and has provided me with every spiritual resource I need to be a fulfilled person and to relate to others with security and joy.

He accepts me conditionally, not on my own merit, but because he himself settled my sin issue, and I may rest in his forgiveness. I am loved; I am forgiven; I am accepted. I belong. I am not my own, because he has made me and he has redeemed me.

Nothing I can do--or not do--will change God's value system; only the righteousness of his son is acceptable before him, and he sees me in Christ. That frees me to be what I am: God's woman. That is my identity. I am his and he is mine. I am available to him, and he is available to me. This is the source of my security, and this is what frees me from the need to use others to validate me as a person.

What is true of me in my humanity is true of every other person. All are equal in accountability, spiritual responsibility, and the God-given freedom to choose. What is true of me as a child of God is true of every other child of God. The only distinguishing factor between the child of God and one who is not is redemption. Redemption is God's work, not mine.

The Christian view of equality is not a political issue, nor the battle between the sexes. It is, rather, viewing ourselves and others from God's point of view. Competition and comparisons cannot co-exist with the spiritual principle of equality! The Apostle Paul states it clearly:

"Not that we venture to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding." II Cor. 10:12

We share God's creative expectations with all humanity. We need to see ourselves and others in terms of our mutual potential for becoming what God intended us to be: redeemed to himself. The principle of equality reminds us that we all are sinners, all under pressure, feeling life's demands, and reacting accordingly. We need to develop an appropriate sensitivity to others' hurts to weep with the weeping and rejoice with the rejoicing.

Christians mutually share the Holy Spirit and his gifts; therefore, we may and we must learn from everyone and anyone who is a believer. As 1 Corinthians 12 clearly teaches, we are a body made up of equally necessary members. "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." Remembering it is Christ's body, we must make certain "that the members may have the same care for one another." And as James reminds us, we are to "show no partiality" as we "hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory" (James 2:1).

No one has arrived we're all on a journey. We have a mutual destiny: to be conformed to the image of Christ, His image, not ours! This leaves no room for pedestals or for pariahs. We are to "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7.) We are not our own. We belong to the one who redeemed us. Herein lies the ground for acceptance of one another.

Each individual is--individual. Equality in value does not imply sameness. Each of us has the privilege and responsibility of our own personhood. We must allow others that prerogative even when it differs from ours! We are equal in value, but different in expression sexually, culturally, racially, in the exercise of spiritual gifts and in personality variations.

"You shall have no other gods before me." "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything. You shall not bow down to them or serve them" (Exodus 20:3,4). This is phase one of God's program for human freedom. God is concerned with the true dignity and freedom of humanity. Since we are created as spiritual beings, one of the distinguishing features of our humanity is the need to worship. Though seemingly paradoxical, worship is really the key to our freedom. God seems to be saying, "Supplant me, sublimate me, and you will lose your ability to function as a whole human being. You will stymie and trivialize your humanity."

Deuteronomy 30:6 says, "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." The God who made us for himself is our First Cause and our First Love. We are to worship none but him. Surely this is not the least implication of our equality with all other persons The very essence of sin is putting something finite before God. No one can serve two masters. Whatever honor and devotion we offer God is meaningless if at the same time there is a rival to him in our loyalty and affection. Actually, the rival to God is not others, but the self using others to sustain a sense of worth. God's image in us gives equality of destiny and value. Any thought, act, or relationship which usurps his priority or authority in our lives is a false image.

God is jealous of our commitment to him. He disallows false images because they engender false worship and nurture warped concepts of life, God, ourselves, and others. The effects of such twisted ideas, then, are perpetuated in offspring, home, church, and society.

He is not jealous of us, but for us on behalf of our blessedness, fulfillment, and wholeness. The true image of God is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul tells us in Colossians 1:15, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." In the same chapter, Paul speaks of "Christ in you, the hope of glory," and declares that our goal is "that we may present every man (generic) mature in Christ" (verses 27,28).

Our identity rests on this indwelling equality of Christ-in-you and Christ-in-me. We are not to imitate one another, but to reflect his life, in the context of our own individuality. You are a new creation; I am a new

creation.

"From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new is come. All this is from God..." (2 Corinthians 5:16-18).

Both our expectations and our estimation of others, as well as of ourselves, will now be reckoned from Christ's vantage point. The old human value-system, based on performance and prestige, is no longer apropos. We will now see what God can do with a body which has become the residence of the Holy Spirit, a transformed mind and a "united" heart (Psalm 86: 11).

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