

A Beautiful Design (Part 8) – Woman's Hurdles

Matt Chandler – November 2, 2014

Well, a man talking about the sinfulness of women. Just not dangerous at all, is it? If you have your Bibles, let's go to Genesis 3. That'll be our primary text. In fact, it'll be in that text that we kind of land and dig. There is one verse in particular we'll kind of pick apart. If you're a guest with us this morning and don't have a Bible with you, my encouragement would be that you look under your seat or around you. There should be a hardback black one somewhere.

If you don't own one. That's our gift to you. It's just really important you see I'm not making anything up up here. There are some things rooted in history and rooted in the Bible that really, by and large, the world would agree with whether they are Christians or not. In the book of Romans, one of the things we see is that the apostle Paul, a guy who hated Jesus and then actually turns into one of the greatest missionaries of the Christian faith... He was actually a terrorist against the Christian faith, killing Christians.

When he became one himself, he wrote that one of the interesting things about those who don't believe in Jesus is that oftentimes, they'll live or desire to live like Jesus would have them live without knowing that's actually what they were doing. One of the things we've done as we've gotten into this series... We're deep into this series now that we've called *A Beautiful Design*. What we're talking about is manhood and womanhood and what that actually is and how that actually works.

We've said some things that are important as we dive into today, lest we forget things that have already been said. I don't have time to do an expansive overview, but what we have set up until this point is that men and women were created by God in the image of God and hold a higher place in creation than anything else in the creative order so that we, as man and woman, are far more valuable than say our dog or our cat or some other species of animal out there.

That doesn't give us permission to be cruel. It doesn't give us permission to be brutal, but we are far more valuable. We know this intrinsically. We just know this intrinsically. Then we got into the fact

that being male does not make one a man, and being female does not make one a woman. Again, the law, the un-Christian law, would say this is true.

My son is 8. He cannot buy Daddy a 20-year bottle of Pappy Van Winkle for Christmas. He can't do it. Do you know why? It's because he's 8, and that stuff is impossible to find. Right? They would say that my 8-year-old son is a boy, not a man. He can't buy a gun. He cannot vote. He can't buy his daddy a nice bottle of bourbon. He can't do it because he's a boy and not a man. Are you tracking?

I have a 5-year-old daughter. No one is going to argue that she's a woman regardless of their religiosity. They can be completely secular. No one is going to look at my 5-year-old and go, "Woman." They're going to say she's a girl. She is biologically female. My son is biologically male, but he is not a man, and she is not a woman.

There is something other than that is attached to them, a type of behavior, a way of living that biblically would lead to them being man or woman. Without those pieces, little boys just grow into being little boys in bigger, more mature bodies, and little girls grow into just being little girls in bigger, more developed bodies. They still act like children act. We started to kind of define manhood biblically and womanhood biblically.

Here is what we said. We said that the man was given by God what we called headship. This is the unique leadership of the man in organizing or building out and ordering for human flourishing. We just said you can't argue with that definition because sociologists, those who study economics, everyone would say where men are present, where they are serving, loving, and kind, everything flourishes. The home flourishes. The economy flourishes. Cities flourish.

Where men are men, things go well, and where men refuse to enter in the space God created for them to walk into, things just don't work well. You get into the poorest neighborhoods imaginable, and let me tell you what you'll see. Fatherlessness and women who have been consumed and not honored or loved. That's what you're going to find, women who have been used as playthings rather than as those made in the image of God. We said that's the role of the man.

Then we talked about how man struggles, very much like we'll do today with women. More on that here in a second. Here is how we defined the role of woman last week. A woman is, according to the book of Genesis, a helper fit for the man. We called it a helpmate, and here's how we defined it. A

helpmate is a woman who serves God by helping the man in the work of establishing order for human flourishing.

We immediately needed to do some work around that definition so we could understand it most fully. God, most often in the Old Testament Scriptures, is our helper, is our helpmate. The woman being called a helper for the man is not and does not mean she is inherently inferior. Actually, God being the helper has elevated the role of helpmate to a position of honor.

What we said a helper does is a helper serves the one who holds the primary responsibility. If you are helping me, it's my responsibility, and I am too weak to get it done, so I need your help. I am unable. Either I don't have the bandwidth, or I don't have the ability. I'm missing some pieces, so I need your help because I cannot get it done.

It does not mean that you are weak for having to help me; it means I am weak and therefore need your help. This is what we see happening when God looks at the man and says, "It's not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him." We talked about that little phrase "fit for him," about the reality that men and women were built out as complementary. We need each other. We're not opposed to one another, but actually the strengths of one help the weaknesses of the other.

Where this happens, where men exercise biblical headship, where they are sacrificially loving, they are creating environments that honor and uplift the name of Jesus Christ, they're establishing a place where the Word of God is seen and honored, and we understand God as he has revealed himself, and where they provide for, where that happens, and where women come underneath that, the idea of male headship might be attacked as a philosophy, but if they came into our homes, our wives would not want to be freed from anything.

Really, men, here is a great way to gauge how you're serving, loving, and practicing your headship. If the most secularized feminist in the world showed up in your home and began to kind of coach your wife toward freedom and liberation from your tyranny, our wives should be so well cared for, so nourished, so sowed into and loved, they would say, "What you're describing is actually tyranny. I love where I am. I am honored. I am encouraged. My man sacrifices so that I might grow in my gifts. He will oftentimes lay down his own desires in order to serve me more. My husband goes to bed tired at night. He pours into our children. He encourages me. All that comes out of his mouth, sans a couple of little times here and there, is him building me up in love."

Men, here is a good opportunity. If you're like, "Well, gosh, I don't think she would say that at all," then, men, I think on the way home, you should probably repent and confess before the Lord to your wife. Quit asking me about you, though. We've already covered you. We're here to talk about the ladies. What we said about men is that because the sinfulness of the world has fractured this complementarian beauty, since it's fractured, instead of filling the space like God intended them to fill, men are prone to selfish passivity or selfish aggression.

Men are prone to do that. They tend to be selfishly passive or selfishly aggressive. They're overbearing and dominating, or they are meek and refuse to engage. Any sin you could list to me that a man operates in can fit in one of those buckets. Do you want to talk pornography? That's selfish aggression. Do you want to talk about domineering? That's selfish aggression.

Do you want to talk about abuse and violence? That's selfish aggression. Do you want to talk about won't lead, won't engage, won't love? That's selfish passivity. Right? All the sins of man can be found in one of these two buckets. What I want to do today fearlessly, mind you, is lay before you the two buckets women most often find their sins filling. Here are the two buckets. We're going to just tease them apart.

The first bucket where we will find most of the sins of women is the *bucket of comparison*. The second bucket we will find most of the sins of women would be called *perfectionism*. As men are prone to selfish passivity and selfish aggression, women are prone to the disordered desires of comparison and perfectionism, and both of those lead to a type of darkness and destruction as to erode the very feminine soul, so women will carry with them under the weight of comparison and perfectionism the stench of death just like men carrying and walking in selfish passivity and selfish aggression will reek of death.

With that said, our help here is found in Genesis 3, starting in verse 1. You can read that, but I want to just concentrate on verse 16. This is the fall. It begins to break down. Here is the curse given to the woman. Look at verse 16 with me. **"To the woman he [God] said, 'I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'"**

Two things to consider in this text, just as we break it down, that God is laying on the woman in the same text that he lays some things on the man, not in 16, but in 17-19. On this, he starts with this. **"I will surely [increase] multiply your pain in childbearing..."** Now I've been in that room three

times now. All three times, I have found in my heart a swelling up of gratitude and gladness that I am a man. I've been in there. There is nothing about that that makes me go, "I'd like to experience that."

In fact, my wife, who is so awesome and godly... She was sweating and snarling. I don't know. Something demonic maybe. I was confused and frightened. Her hair had gotten in her face and was stuck to the sweat on her face. I thought, "As a loving husband, let me just get that out of her face and tuck it behind her ear." So I went put my finger, tucked it behind her ear, and said, "Hey Boo, can I get you anything?" to which my loving wife responded, "You can get out of my face."

Here's what happened. I didn't know if I was actually supposed to do that. "If I get out of her face, is this going to get worse? Should I stay? What am I...?" I'm a confident man and was so confused at what exactly I was supposed to do in that moment. "Am I supposed to enter? Am I supposed to get out of her face? I don't know what to do." I got out of her face because I thought, "Baby, I'm just trying to do what you told me to do." I've seen the pain of childbirth.

Although when the baby shows up, it's awesome, the pain of childbirth is brutal. It is a reminder, according to the Scriptures, that the world is broken, and there is a longing for something more. All three of our children, my wife got to the place where she was like, "Get this kid out of me. I don't care. Just get the kid out." Here this unbelievable thing happens. There is sweat and tears and pain and ache.

The nurse grabs them, scrubs them down, puts them on my wife, and then all that pain just kind of vanishes, and as she holds that baby, the fact that this has come, that this is born, that pain has now given birth to life makes the pain almost apparently worth it because they do it again, many of them. You want to talk beautiful design. God has actually hormonally wired them. Did you know breastfeeding makes them forget? How awesome is that?

As they breastfeed, the body releases a hormone that makes them forget the pain of childbirth, which is why the human race is still here, right? That and the epidural. I know Denton right now is like, "Epidural Center." By and large, that's why. What is happening in this birth, as the pain of childbirth is increasing, is the same thing that happens in verse 17-19 with the man where the toil and sweat of man will now bring about pain. He's going to work.

The weight put on his shoulders to lead and love and self-sacrifice and protect feels like an overwhelming burden on the man so much so that he has a tendency to punt on that responsibility or to lord in aggression over others with his physical stature. It's not that women have been cursed with pain, and men have not. It is this reality. When sin entered into the cosmos, it brought pain and death to us all, and it brought pain and death right into the middle of our distinctive identities.

For the man, pain and death has entered, toil, strife, work, hard. For the woman, pain in childbirth and having to deal with a man. You should have said, "Amen," there, not giggle, but whatever. Now, in this, you have an immense amount of brokenness, but here is something I want us to pay attention to as this verse goes on. Not only has sin distorted the external aspects of womanhood, but sin has infected the very heart and hope of womanhood as well.

Look at the end of verse 16 with me. **"Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."** "Not only will I greatly increase the pain in childbearing, but I will also disorder desire." Now that sin has entered the cosmos, disordered desires now rule the feminine heart, and if we're honest, disordered desires rule all hearts. It will play itself out in specific ways with the female.

Historically, when this text is taught, what is taught out of this text I believe correctly is that women oftentimes will try to usurp the authority of husbands. They will usurp the authority of the man. They will refuse to submit to a type of headship, even when that headship is for the woman's edification, growth, encouragement, and flourishing in the Lord. It has been taught that way. That is a right way to interpret this text. I just think it's a symptom and not the full on meaning of the text.

Let me explain why I would land there. **"Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."** It actually starts to explain the twisted, disordered desires of both the male and female heart that lead to a breakdown in the kind of complementarity that our hearts are so hungered for. Jesus' own brother James taught us about this in James 1:14-15 when he said this.

By the way, for free, how do you convince your brother you're the Son of God? I have siblings. I don't know what I could do to convince them I'm the Son of God except maybe come back from the dead. No time for that this week. This is James 1:14-15. **"But each person is tempted when he [or she] is lured and enticed by his own desire."** I would say disordered desires. **"Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."** Are you tracking with the flow of things here?

Desire now has been disordered. You can desire good things, but if you elevate those desires beyond what they were supposed to be, the desire becomes disordered, and you become enslaved to the desire. James will, later on in chapter 4, explain it in a real kind of on the ground, concrete way. Here it goes. Verse 1 of chapter 4. **"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?"**

In your home, what causes fights and quarrels? In your church, what causes fights and quarrels? In your relationships, at your workplaces, what is the root behind fighting and quarrels? **"Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel."** Again, it's our disordered desires, many times desires for good things that have become ultimate things, leading us into sin.

We desire and have to have *blank*, whatever it is, so bad that whatever it is, if we don't get it, we'll do what we ought not to do. We'll fight and quarrel and murder to get this disordered desire, even if it's a good thing. Let me give you just an easy example. I think it's an easy example. It's not a bad desire to make a good living. That's not a bad desire. In fact, I've tried to encourage you to be hard workers, to climb the corporate ladder.

I would rather you be the CFOs and CEOs in the business world, but do so in such a way that doesn't trample over your family to get there and doesn't punt on righteousness to get there. If that's the only way up the ladder, then you're climbing a two-foot ladder. Ultimately, it is a good desire to make a great living. When that desire becomes ultimate and not just a good desire, then all of a sudden, you are willing to sacrifice your family because you've disordered that desire.

It's a good thing to desire a good living; it's a bad thing for your ultimate desire to have money because then your family is going to move down the ladder. Your own integrity will move down the ladder because what is ultimate to you will control you. We need to make sure our desires aren't disordered, or where they are, we have to be aware.

Now, in verse 16, what it's specifically talking about is Eve's desire for Adam. He's talking about this marriage. I'll push it farther than that. He's talking about how women will view men, how men will treat women, and how women will respond to how men treat women. Are you there? Okay. Let me just read this, and then I'll show you kind of the cycle we're all in that we need help in, and then we'll get into comparison and perfectionism.

Most women set up men as idols and look to them to provide emotionally, spiritually, and physically what only God can provide. Apart from Christ, men oppress women in return, hence the modern coping mechanisms of independent self-sufficiency and control for dealing with that male oppression. Do you see how it's a circle? Women will want a man. This is every movie, every romantic comedy you've ever seen, right here in this text.

This is, "I need a man to satisfy me. I need a man to fill me. I need a man to complete me." Right? *Jerry Maguire*. This is *The Fault in Our Stars*. This is all of it. "I need someone to help me." Men, because they are sinful, in turn, oppress women. Then women, because of that oppression, begin to build veneer strength and would then lean on independence. "I don't need no man." Lean into control, lean into a self-sufficiency, a skepticism and a hatred toward men, many times rightfully earned.

Here's the reality outside of Genesis 3. When any desire, be it a desire for a man, a woman, a desire for a job, a desire for comfort or an achievement is elevated higher than it should be, then that person or that thing we're desiring will rule over us. Any desire we demand and make ultimate actually ends up controlling and ruling us. Hear me. What is your ultimate? Whatever it is, it is ruling you.

With that said, ladies, let's talk about, by and large, the hurdles that are yours and not necessarily men's. There will be men who could fall into these buckets primarily, and like I did with men, I want to use secular authors because, like Paul tells us in Romans, the world agrees with us, they just don't know they're agreeing with the Bible. That's what I love. They're like, "This is true." Well, that's in the Bible. "Dang it." Right? I like that.

Here we go. Comparison. When I'm talking about comparison, let me define it. Comparison is the disordered desire for approval and validation. This is a quote from Julia Oliphant (I'm going to quote her three times in a row here) from an article in *The Telegraph*, which is a newspaper in the UK. This is an article entitled, "Why do girls check out other girls?"

"Like it or not, we're all guilty of it. Be it an inconspicuous glance at the girl browsing the same clothes shop window as you, or the rather more blatant stares at the girl sitting opposite on the tube..." The subway. No Dallas equivalent. "...we just can't seem to help ourselves. And a recent study has confirmed it. Women spend more time checking each other out than they do the opposite sex. [...]"

According to Dr. Caroline Walters, a body image and women's sexuality specialist, it's not just other women's clothes we're checking out, either. 'It's practically every aspect of another woman's appearance, from hair style to tan, shape, size, even body hair and fat distribution.' Whatever we deem to be most important ourselves [we check out in other women]."

A woman then becomes enslaved by comparing intellects, comparing beauty, body composition, style, and fashion. In fact, here's another quote from the article. The article is going to argue that women actually dress for other women. They don't dress for men at all. Here's the quote. "Most women will agree that when we look in the mirror, we don't ask ourselves what *he* sees in us. We ask..." What? "...what *she* sees."

When girls get all dressed up for the club... Have you ever wondered, "Why would you wear four-inch heels out dancing?" Do you want to know why? It makes them an inch taller than the other girls. This is new to me. It has confused me. It has disoriented me. Lauren was dressing up the other night. I was like, "Who are you dressing up for." "You." "Uh-uh. That's not what Julia Oliphant says." Right?

It's this comparison where women will use their bodies to get the upper hand. They will flaunt what culture has called their strengths, not history, but culture has called their strengths. By and large, throughout human history, curvier women have been viewed, and curlier, pastier women have been viewed as beautiful. It is a modern idea that six-pack abs make one feminine.

Throughout human history, history behind us would say, "Eat something, girl. Eat something." We compare beauty, body, style, fashion. God help us. We are comparing parenting. I just call this the mommy wars. Let me tell you who loses in the mommy wars. Are you ready? Your children do. This has gotten absurd. I'm with you, sister. I wish they would...

This is what ends up happening. Moms will get together and will start talking about their kids. It's normal at first until one of them was like, "Well, I sent little Cynthia to marine biology camp, and she was studying and learning about crustaceans. What we read is that by going to that marine biology camp, she is going to be in line for scholarships."

It's like, "My kid is an idiot." All right? "She was at the campfire making s'mores and made a little beaded necklace. God knows now she's never getting into college." Now we're competing in this

game of comparison. We're like, "I have to get my kid ready." That's why some of you are spending \$5,000 flying some dude in from Brazil to train your 3-year-old in soccer. It's crazy. They're not getting scholarships.

I know some of you are like, "Mine is. Three goals yesterday." This is cult-like. It's absurd, and it's our children who are losing. There is no more free thought. "Go have fun." Everything is structured and organized. There is no exploration. "I'm 3." "Pick your sport. You have to pick one. You can't play all of them. If you play all of them, you're not going to be good at any of them. Pick your one. We're going to get you the best training. Here's Creatine Monohydrate in your bottle."

It's insane. P90X for 2-year-olds. "Crawl, crawl, crawl, crawl! Nice!" It's insane. This is Mommy Wars. This is comparison. "I have to be a good mom. I have to be a better mom." It's comparison. Comparing marriages. "Oh man. He pursues me. I wish my husband pursued me that way." "Females are partly programmed to do this," explains Corinne Sweet, a relationship psychotherapist and author of *Change Your Life with CBT*, cognitive behavioral therapy.

Here they are not evangelical, not believing the Bible. That's what I'm saying. They agree with us. They just don't know they agree with us. First, it is only natural to compare yourself as it gives you a point of reference which can be reassuring. However, the harsh reality is that it is a cattle market out there, and the commodity is male attention. Women are checking out the competition and identifying who the alpha female in the pack is.

Women subconsciously put themselves in a hierarchy. I know dudes do that. I just didn't know women did it too. They will find the best mom and will just get around her. They will find the most beautiful woman, and they will just get around her so they can reap the spoils of the alpha female. I didn't even know there was an alpha female. The most beautiful, the most talented women are surrounded by beautiful, talented women who want some of the beauty and talent of that woman to fall on them.

I always knew this was a male issue, I just didn't know the girls were in it, so welcome, guys. At the end of the day, comparison is competition. What you're comparing and competing for is identity. You want to have an identity. It's a desire for approval and acceptance and validation. It is, ladies, an identity gone bad. It is a veneer, faux identity that is placated around a false strength and a false, "I have it all together," that has us constantly comparing, constantly trying to better ourselves, not based on any universal biblical standard but actually by the standards of our current age.

We have to be that. We have to accomplish this. It's all, most of it, way out of step with how humans have functioned for thousands and thousands of years. It leads to dark, dark, dark places. See, when you put forth a veneer and image of yourself that is untrue just to keep up, when you're trying to be in, to get the guy, to get the job... Listen. If social media has destroyed anything, it has destroyed our ladies. Bless y'all's hearts. There is this faux image of what you're supposed to look like.

What is the worst possible thing you could do with people who struggle with comparison? Give every one of them a phone with a camera in it. No woman takes a picture of herself at 6:00 in the morning with Clearasil dried on that zit on her face. *Click.* "Living large. Woman crush Wednesday." Nobody does that. No. All dolled up, features like they want them, whatever could be a strength or even made to look like a strength. *Click.* "Just sitting around." What is that? It's a veneer.

Here's the problem with veneer. An untrue image of oneself will always lead to discontentment and insecurity, always. A veneer, which is why I plead with you all the time here at The Village. Be honest about where you are. You don't have to fake it. If you're struggling with doubt, then just say it. If you have addiction, then just say it. We're not afraid of your brokenness. We aren't. If anything, feel at home in your mental health. Feel at home in your addiction. Let's journey together toward health and healing. We have no shot at it if you're not willing to be honest.

This veneer madness has to stop because where it exists, there is discontentment and insecurity. That works itself out in fantasizing. Fantasizing about a different color of hair or skin or a different sized waist or chest, a different husband or boyfriend, which will always lead them (see, we're spiraling out of control now) to coveting and jealousy. Here's what is interesting about jealousy and coveting, specifically as females.

Males will most often use their size and strength to intimidate. When men are insecure... Have you ever heard of little man's syndrome? When men are insecure, they're going to handle that physically. All right? "Say something to me. I wish you would." Right? That's what happens to men. Women don't tend to operate like that. They actually operate with words. Women can either, with their words, interject a type of fertilizer into human flourishing that makes everything grow, or they can, like some cruel ninja assassin, burn it all to the ground.

Women, with their words and attitudes, can brutalize the human race. I'll say it. Go ahead and email me. Women are cruel, and it starts early. If you have daughters and you've watched your daughters

try to engage with other daughters, something is wrong there, man. It's scary stuff. I remember when Audrey was 3 years old, we were out at the community pool. There is a little kiddie pool there. You know, the one that is about two feet deep, about 30 degrees warmer than everything else for some reason.

Audrey was heading there. There were three other girls playing with each other. I can just see that train wreck coming. There have never in the history of the world been three little girls who know each other playing where a fourth outsider comes in where they're like, "Hey, would you like one of our toys?" It never ends that way. They huddle up. They all ignore her. Audrey is confident. She's trying to get in there. It doesn't matter.

Then she comes back to me. "They don't really want to play with me, Dad." My flesh is incited. I just want to say, "Don't worry. She's not even cute at 3. There is no trajectory there. In 15 more years, you're going to be the alpha female. She'll be like, 'Can I hang out with you?' and then you'll close the door on her face." That was in my flesh. I didn't say that. I'm a better dad than that, but that was there. Oh, you guys are so holy.

Instead, I just said, "Hey, Daddy remembers what it was like to be cut out, to not be accepted. I'm sorry, Boo. This will be a part of life. It's not about you; it's about them." Then we went home. Really, you see women with their words brutalizing each other, emasculating men, gossiping, slandering. "Are you saying men don't?" No, I'm not. I'm saying women are far more varsity at it than men are. I'm going to quote the seculars to prove my point. Okay?

Even the Bible will say this is a real issue, specifically for how women brutalize men with their words. Men can intimidate and use size. Women will most often use their words. Listen to what God has to say about this. Proverbs 19:13. This is in the Bible, mind you. **"A foolish son is ruin to his father, and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain."** Waterboarding. You live with a quarrelsome wife. You might as well put a sheet over your face and then just pour water on you forever.

God is saying that. You live in the house with a contemptuous, emasculating woman who is an expert on your weaknesses and delights in cutting you with her words. That's like a dripping faucet. Then it gets worse. Proverbs 21:9. **"It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife."** It's like the Lord is like, "Hey, man. I see what's

happening. Get up on the roof, man." It's raining. "You'll be all right. Get up on the roof." What about lightning? "If you're lucky, I'll hit you. Get up there."

You have God saying, "It is better to live on your roof than in the house with a woman who is constantly going to jab at you, poke at you, emasculate you, question you, is an expert with her words and how to wound you." I said last week that wives can wound their husbands in ways that no one else can because they are most known by their wives, even if they are only partially known.

The last one (this is the one I quoted last week) is Proverbs 21:19. **"It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman."** I don't know what you think of when you think of a desert. Don't think of a beach; this is a desert. There is no water. There is no vegetation. The animals there are weird and barely survive. They're small.

God just said, "Man, get your stuff. Head out to the desert. It's going to be nasty. You're probably going to die out there. It's better than where you are." Right? This idea of being a quarrelsome, fretful woman, this idea of tearing down with your words. Let me just say two things here. One, God hates gossip and slander. He hates it. He will not have it in his church, not even disguised as prayer requests. He hates it.

By the way, ladies, let's chat for a second. Who the heck do you think you are that you're standing in a position in which you could gossip or slander anyone? How highly do you view yourself, or how insecure are you that you would judge others and where they are? Aren't we all where we are by the grace of God? What have you done that would put you in a position in which you could judge another woman? Are you so perfect in how you're living your life? Is your life so pretty that you literally have the right to sit and judge other women, other men? Who do you think you are?

What sort of prima donna, self-absorbed, insecure woman are you that you would stand in that spot and cast judgment on others? It's wicked. It's deplorable. Who in the world do you think you are? Like your sin doesn't reek of death. There are no perfect people. That's what creates humility in us. It's only the insecure and those who lack self-awareness who dare venture into the worlds of gossip and slander.

Now, wives with husbands, I would never encourage you to be marshmallows who just get run over, but hear me. There is a way to engage your husband that is encouraging and life-giving, and there is a way to engage him that will incite his flesh and will not go well. Here's an example from

our home. October was easily the busiest month of my year. I traveled a lot, had a lot due for A29, had a lot to do here, not to mention the sermon series, which requires, because I'm trying to pull from a lot of secular sources, some extra study time.

Lauren came to me just a couple of weeks ago and just said, "Hey, can I chat with you for a second?" It was the right time. The kids were down. Everything got quiet. She said, "I know this has been a crazy month for you. I know San Diego, and you have the national conference coming up. You have all these things in the air, and I've just felt, in the midst of your business, that we're a bit disjointed as a family.

I can feel with the kids and in my own heart just this desire to sit down and open up the Bible and pray. I know you've been busy, but is there something I can do to help us get to that place? If I started dinner earlier, if we got the kids down earlier, if we got the kids done with showers and baths earlier, do you think we could sit down and make that happen?"

Do you see what is happening there? She is leaning on me. She is correcting me, and she is awesome at it. She didn't go, "Hey, Matt, why do you hate our family and not want to make us disciples? Why are you not practicing the very thing you're preaching to the men at The Village, Mr. Self-Sacrificing Love?" Right? She didn't do that. Do you know why? It would have incited my flesh.

Now, I'm mature enough not to scream at her, but I can tell you what I can start noticing. All her weaknesses. I would have to really press into the Lord because I would be freaking aggravated. "As hard as I'm working, as much as I'm pouring into you, that you would bring that up to me..." Right? But the way she went about it made me do this. "Oh, man. Yeah, Boo. Why don't we try to start dinner a little bit earlier? I'll help you get the kids showered.

I know the one who is going to be the fight, so here is the threat I think we should bring. I think we should open up the countdown on the iPhone and go, 'You have 15 minutes to get in the shower and get out. Come into this in your pajamas. All you own is gone. Start.' 'Dad, I thought you...' 'Hey, you can say to me anything you want to say to me, but that's a minute. Let me go get your little pricer gun for all your stuff.'" Then we got to sit down and do it.

She engaged me and corrected me and encouraged me in a way that did not emasculate me. I already know where I'm weak. I already know where I'm dropping the ball. I feel it. To approach me

with grace and compassion leads to greater fruitfulness. To pour on in a hard season incites my flesh. You'll find that almost all men are built this way.

It's not just comparison, this disordered desire for approval and validation. It's also perfectionism. This is the disordered desire for righteousness and perfection apart from Christ. Here we go. This is from an article in *The Atlantic* called "Closing the Confidence Gap." I love the first sentence.

"Underqualified and underprepared men don't think twice about leaning in, about getting into opportunities." A man is underqualified. He is underprepared, but he wants a shot at it. "All the empirical data is I'm going to break this and sink the company, but I deserve a shot." That's men.

"Yet, overqualified and over-prepared, women still hold back. Women feel confident only when they are perfect or practically perfect. Study after study has shown that it [perfectionism] is largely a female issue, one that extends through women's entire lives. We don't answer questions until we are totally sure of the answer.

We don't submit a report until we've edited it ad nauseam. We don't sign up for that triathlon unless we know we are faster and fitter than is required. We fixate on performance at home, at school, at work, at yoga class, even on vacation. We obsess as mothers, as wives, as sisters, as friends, as cooks, as athletes."

Really there is this interesting thing here. According to this article... These are not Christian women writing this article. Perfectionism is a female sport. Men don't do it. Men can be completely incompetent, and they still want a shot at it. They are not paralyzed by their incompetence. They're just not. "Give me a go." "You can't read." "Hand me the book." They're just... That's not how they work.

Women put a weight on their shoulders that is impossible to bear. "I have to be a perfect student. I have to be perfect at work. I have to be a perfect wife. I have to be a perfect friend. I have to be a perfect..." Where perfection is not attained, they are paralyzed. It works itself out in their relationships. When perfection is your goal, any type of conflict is very difficult, so you will rarely, if ever, stand on what you believe to be true.

You will be shaped by those around you because in your quest for perfection, you will have no conscience. You will absorb the conscience and conviction of others. Not to mention (here we can do this again) mommy guilt. In this environment where raising children has become a competitive

sport, not only is comparison a major issue that harms the children, but then the feeling of moms to be perfect?

I can tell you this. There were no organic Cheerios when I was a kid. We hadn't discovered the tree those things grew on yet. We just ate chips and drank Coke and stayed up later than we should. Everybody spanked us, and it was a different world. Now, under this weight of perfection, I'll tell you what has happened. There is a cultural idea that is bought into by and large that is called psychological determinism.

What that means is parents believe the children they have are a blank slate, and they can turn them, by their parenting techniques, into whatever they want to turn them into. "I can practice these parental techniques, and I can make my kids stay away from drugs, and I can make my kids stay away from alcohol. I can make my kids stay a virgin until the appropriate age." That's the secular world. All right? It's called psychological determinism.

In fact, there was a guy in the 50's who said, "If you gave me 100 children, I could turn them into whatever I wanted to. From day one, if you gave them to me as newborn infants, I could make them doctors. I could make them professional athletes. I could make them psychologists. I could make them whatever I wanted to make them." That's psychological determinism.

Now, what we've done as Christians is we've taken the same, broken, weak idea. We've added a Bible verse to it, and we've inherited it. We have taken, "**Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it,**" and we have said, "I can make my kid godly." Look at me. That's absurd. Let me try to free you from this.

The sentence that is crazy is this. "Christian parenting techniques produce godly children." This is categorically false, *categorically* false. Now, there is a responsibility as Christian parents to gather kindling around the souls of our children. We want to read the Bible in my home. We want to let our children watch us do ministry. My children have come to the hospital with me to pray for others. They have gone to funerals to sit and help me just be a presence with the family.

They have seen us invite people into our home who reek of smoke and alcohol. They have watched us long-sufferingly walk with men and women in the hopes that they might trust and believe in the name of Jesus. We have had men and women in our homes who are confessing homosexuals. We

have had men and women in our home who have actively battled with addiction. We're letting our children watch us love and serve and encourage these men and women, invite them into our lives.

I climb in bed with them every night. We pray together as a family. Sometimes, I get out of rhythm with that, and Mom is quick to encourage me in the Lord. I talk with them often about Jesus, about what they're thinking about the Lord. My 11-year-old is showing a ton of fruit as a believer, maybe. She's 11. All she knows is us. Let's just wait and see how the Lord takes root in her life.

I've learned it's never really over. I've found parents who are still worried about their 30-year-olds in their faith. I'm learning it's not ever over, which is kind of a bummer. She's showing fruit now, but I don't know. I can't make her believe. I can't make my son believe. I can't make my daughter believe. This makes me incredibly desperate, and it creates and should create, ladies, in you a type of humility when it comes to parenting. You're not going to be perfect.

Look at me. You're going to snap at your kids. All right? Breathe. You're going to snap at them. That's not going to make them serial killers. You're going to lose patience. That doesn't mean you've skewed them forever. What we do is we confess our sins. We seek forgiveness. We acknowledge where we've failed, and we trust that perfection has been given to us, and we don't possess it ourselves. Now, this perfectionism, just to be frank, has brutalized women. Let me give you one more quote from Lynn Hirschberg. She's the managing editor of *W* magazine, and she's also pretty big in Hollywood as a casting agent.

Here's what she says. "I have an iron will, and all of my will has always been to conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy. I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being, and then I get to another stage and think I'm mediocre and uninteresting. Again and again. My drive in life is from this horrible fear of being mediocre. And that's what's always pushing me, pushing me. Because even though I've become somebody, I still have to prove I'm somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will."

This is perfectionism. "I can't be mediocre. I have to be somebody. Even when I become somebody, I have to continue to prove I am somebody." This is enslaving. Listen to me, ladies. This is why women are twice as likely to commit suicide as men are. This is why women by far wrestle with anxiety and depression more than men do. This is why, by and large, it is women who are overwhelmed with body image issues.

Eighty-five to ninety-five percent of people who suffer from eating disorders are females. On a recent college campus, it was revealed that 83 percent of those interviewed were dieting, and 50 percent of those were of normal weight. What is that? That's perfectionism that enslaves. It leads to women being overwhelmed. How could you ever be happy if everything has to be perfect?

How could you ever rest? How could you ever feel at peace? How could you ever see yourself as lovely if perfection is the standard? Every holiday, every outing, every vacation, every interaction with your children, every day of your life, the oppressive, brutal weight of perfection on your back. Ladies, stop. You're not perfect. Breathe. No one is.

Here's what's crazy. You don't have to be a perfect wife to be a great wife. You don't have to be a perfect mom to be a great mom. "Where's that line?" That line is confession, repentance, and getting back up and staying moving. We take on the perfection made available to us in Jesus Christ, his righteousness, not my righteousness, not a false veneer righteousness of my own. Not my strength, his strength. Not my perfection, his perfection. We rest in that. Then we walk as best we can every day.

Where we fall short and snap at our husbands, that is happening. Where we lose patience with our kids, that is happening, right? We find ourselves gossiping. We find ourselves hurting ourselves because we lack perfection, punishing ourselves. It is women who self-mutilate, not men. In the end, the buckets that dominate and drive female sinfulness are the disordered desires that take place when we compare and the disordered desires that take place when we believe we have to be perfect. Those two enslave and brutalize the feminine soul and take what is lovely and make it reek of death.

Just in closing here, all of humanity, male and female, struggles with this. Whatever desire controls our heart will control our life. Whatever controls us is our Lord. The person who seeks power is controlled by power. The person who seeks acceptance is controlled by the people he or she wants to please. We do not control ourselves. We are controlled by the lord of our lives. What is your lord? What is controlling you?

The most devastating reality is that what we lust after ends up dominating us, enslaving us, having dominion over us. Thomas Chalmers wrote an article called "The Expulsive Power of New Affection." In that article, here's what he argues. I tweeted it out earlier today, so you can go look it

up if you're on the Twitter. I like to call it *the* Twitter. If you're on that, you can find this article he wrote.

"The Expulsive Power of New Affection" says, "Where desires are distorted and broken, the only thing that can drive out desire is new desires that have more power than old desires. If only we could have a new desire placed in our heart that has more power than comparison and has more power than perfection." That's next week's sermon. Spoiler alert. It's Jesus. Let's pray.

Father, I pray now for my sisters. Father, where they are overwhelmed and owned by comparison, will you enter that space and bring peace? Father, for those who are obsessing about their bodies, obsessing about their looks, obsessing about their clothes, obsessing about how they are seen and viewed and judged, will you enter that chaos, that high-winded, crazy-waved storm and whisper peace?

Bring a soothing to that soul for my sisters stuck in perfectionism, this disordered desire for righteousness of their own, where anxiety and depression and fear rule their lives for being found out that they are not all they are showing themselves to be. I pray for rest today. I thank you that you are our perfection. You are our righteousness, so we might, in your righteousness, begin a day at a time to walk faithfully in our failures, confessing, repenting, and moving forward the best we can by your grace in the community of the saints.

Father, for men in this room who prey on insecure women with wounded hearts, Father, I just pray over these men a type of weight on their souls that would be crushing. Father, I thank you that you do not take lightly wolves hunting down your daughters and that there would be a day that these men, hollow-chested boys in grown up bodies will cry out as you come for mountains to fall and that the mountains will flee before your coming.

I thank you that you are a just judge who will not handle lightly boys who can shave who take advantage of your daughters. I pray that there might be repentance for these men for the salvation of their own soul. Enter these spaces. They're complex and hard. I pray for my sisters. Help us. We're imprisoned in so many ways.

I thank you that you are the author of what is beautiful. You are the one who stands outside of culture and outside of time and says, "This is right. This is good. This is lovely. This is beautiful." I

pray we would not be enslaved to cultural norms that are so out of step with reality that, if we could think objectively, would look absurd. Help. We need you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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