

Men and Women- The Same, but Different

The most difficult part of continued Bible study is approaching Scripture with an open and honest heart. We all have prejudices, and if it is not an agenda to prove or an axe to grind then it is usually the accumulation of our past interpretations that mold what we are reading today. This is not always bad. A foundation of information on a topic can be key to avoid jumping to conclusions or carrying the superficial interpretation of a verse beyond what the rest of Scripture would balance out. When we read a passage and are determined that we already know what it says we may be limiting its scope. When we avoid conclusions that condemn us or strain to allow for far-fetched possibilities, then we have crossed the line between honest study and seeking to please ourselves. That is one of our challenges when we evaluate concepts in feminism.



Coming to terms

Feminism has become a popular buzz word in our culture, but the origins of the Feminist movement are not recent. A modern college student may see the simplistic definition of “one who promotes women” and find it an appealing identification, but that is not the picture anyone over 50 will have when encountering the term. The bra-burning activists of the 1970’s National Organization for Women have left a mark on history that taints efforts to redefine Feminism. There are also many forms of Feminism to consider. Jack Cottrell lists four. A *Secular Feminist* is strongly a-religious and generally believes women to be superior to men. A *Goddess Feminist* is a new-age proponent who claims Mother Nature, or Gaia, as their god. The *Liberal Critical Feminist* sees the Bible as a document of history that was shaped by the men who wrote it down. Even if Deity prompted what they wrote, this group insists the men involved filtered that information through their cultural standards and over time the corruption of all polarizing historical documents is inevitable. A *Biblical Feminist*, on the other hand, claims the Bible to be inspired by God, but interpreted by men in positions of power to develop a traditional understanding of passages that disenfranchises women. It is not uncommon for men to identify themselves as Feminists in an effort to elevate women beyond what Scripture appears to be saying. A Biblical Feminist may cross over into Liberal Critical arguments when attempting to reinterpret what the Bible “must” have originally meant. For the purposes of this writing we will be evaluating Biblical Feminist thought.

The foundation for all reverent Bible interpretation must be a *High View of Scripture*. The Bible is the revelation of the mind of God, Who is powerful enough to deliver and preserve content we can understand. We do not sit in judgment on it to determine if it makes enough sense for us to validate. The Bible judges us. It is higher than we are because God is higher than us. That basic awareness prompts us to allow it to inform and define us and submit when we do not fully understand. As we recognize that the God of the Universe knows more than we do and has demonstrated in Christ a real love for our welfare we should have no trouble conceding that He would be in a better position to determine the absolutes that should guide our lives. God is good – all the time. God is wise – every time. We do need to look carefully to be sure we are interpreting His words correctly. A superficial reading is often not the whole truth, but we must not just be looking

for new or self-serving doctrine that will conflict with the rest of what Scripture clearly teaches. “Let God be true though every man be found a liar” (Romans 3:4).

Created Equal

So what does God say about the value of His creation? In the overview of creation given in Genesis 1 we find value and responsibility for those made in the image of God. Verse 27 describes them as “man” and “male and female.” The term “man” is not always a gender-specific designation. In this verse it includes both genders. When the Bible gives instructions to “men” we can assume it is speaking to all of us unless the context clarifies those addressed to be males. (Acts 17:30 and Rom 5:12 are examples of inclusiveness.) The Bible is not being sexist when it uses the term “man” instead of “man and woman.” It is using a word that means both. Many modern translations choose to translate these verses with the term “people” or “mankind” to emphasize the inclusion, but it might be better to remember the actual meaning. Our modern society has gotten very sensitive about being inclusive in terminology, but when we insist on separate designations we are the ones creating distinctions rather than unifying.

God values all souls. Jesus died on the cross for both male and female. Galatians 3:28 says there is no difference in the value God places on a man over a woman just as there is none for the Jew over Gentile or the slave over the free man (person). Jesus and his apostles taught women the Gospel and women were baptized as well as the men. No human is inherently inferior. Even when we corrupt the soul God has given us with rebellion and sin He still loves us and gives us the opportunity to change and be conformed to the image of His Son. That is how much He loves us. Our value is the same, but we do have variations in abilities and function. That does not make God unfair in any way. It simply highlights our individuality. We were not designed as a society of robots who all act in exactly the same way. God, Himself, is a unified collection. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three in person and function, and yet they are one. They agree and act as a unit. This is the ultimate goal of His Church, as well.

Created Different

Men and women are the same, but they are also different. The feminist movement has succeeded in convincing many that we all start the very same and are conditioned to behave differently. Conditioning and experiences do play a large role in our personalities, but they do not determine all. On a physical level we are obviously not identical. Even though we share the same “flesh” with blood types and organs that are interchangeable to some degree our most important organ, the brain, is not the same. It is made of the same materials but in differing quantities that are used in drastically different ways.

Physically

The more research that is done both in physical science and psychology the more variation between the sexes becomes evident. Medications are prescribed based on the sex of the individual, not just their size. We see the effects of some of these factors when men and women are presented with identical information yet the areas of their brains that fire to analyze and solve problems are drastically different. The brain scan of a man processing information tracks dominantly in straight connections from the front to the back of his brain within the same hemisphere, rarely crossing to the other side. He is collecting and ordering like information. The brain scan of a woman asked the same question fires from side to side, across hemispheres, and diagonally, rarely traveling front to back. She is gathering information out of an expected context or with slight similarities. (See the attached connectome map). The patterns are distinctive- so much so that many doctors say they can tell if they are looking at the brain scan of a male or a female. A man’s brain is physically structured

to produce a faster response time to stimuli. This would enhance a protector's role. A woman's brain is physically structured to connect disconnected pieces of information, which works to enhance communication skills, especial in deciphering information from non-verbal sources. Add to this the fact that the hormones present in the two brains are wildly different in quantity and often kind and the differences become solidified even further.

Behaviorally

Clinical studies confirm these findings. Studies of children from birth show that boys and girls respond in ways that differ consistent within their own sex. From birth men are different from women. To be clear: not all men are identical, just as not all women are. Individual variation will always stand out, but tendencies within a sex are statistically strong. Boys respond to distinctive objects, while girls respond to faces. Emotions and memories connected to them are longer-lasting in girls, while boys live in a shorter-term frame of processing. Certain aspects of a child's nature are universal due to their developmental progress, but there are many more areas where likes, dislikes, and aptitudes are strongly identifiable by gender. (*Brain Sex* by Anne Moir and David Jessel)

Psychological evaluations confirm that men and women are not identical. One survey taken in 2009 gave 10,000 men and women a 380 part questionnaire about what is more important to them and how they make decisions. For any given question, less than 18% of the men answered differently than the rest of men. The same percentage of variation was found for women. It is fair to say that more men are alike and in ways that make them different from most women, and vice versa. The tendencies of males is toward logic-based solutions and linear thinking, making them strongly process oriented. Men evaluate facts and prioritize more strongly than women. Women, with their broad-based evaluation methods, tend to be more emotional and place more importance on people, feelings of well-being, and security. Women are natural nurturers. Their compassion and empathy allow them to overlook facts they consider to be less important. This also makes women better at making intuitive leaps over apparently disconnected or unspecified information. That helps women acquire second languages and understand nonverbal communication (as with children who have not yet mastered language). Neither group can consider themselves more intelligent than the other, they just have different perspectives and strengths. It is perfectly natural for men and women not to automatically or fully understand each other. It is a skill that can be acquired, and respect for the fact that we do differ is absolutely needed. That I "don't understand" does not invalidate another's need.

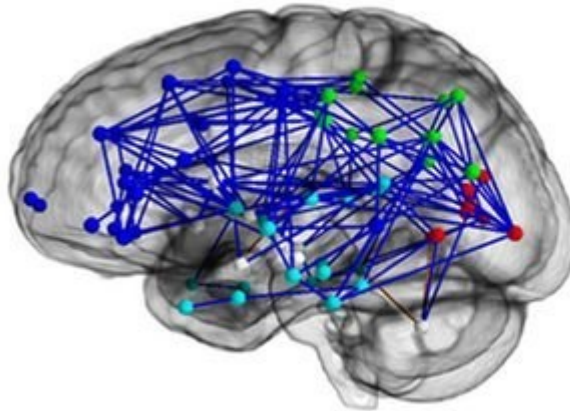
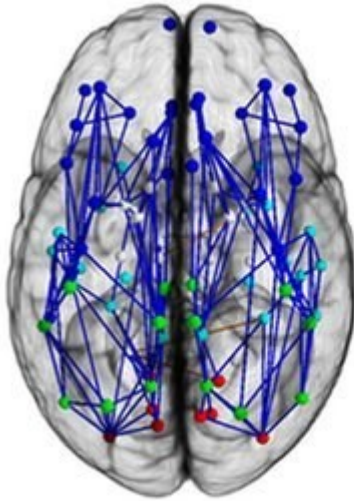
For an individual to have some typically cross-gender character traits does not make them "gay." The brain is what it physically is. It just means you are not typical. We cannot cross genders. We can modify our behavior to conform more with one group or the other, but we will always be the gender we were born with in ways we cannot change, even with plastic surgery and hormone therapy.

So what does all this mean for the function of men and women in the family and within the Church? At the least it says we are not identical and would not be expected to do the same jobs or compete with each other. We are apples and oranges, but we still make a wonderful fruit salad. When someone has a strength in one area, it usually means they have a weakness somewhere else. When we balance our strengths with the strengths of others we form a whole that compensates and is stronger than any one of us would be on our own. 1 Corinthians 12:14-27 uses the analogy of parts of the body and says that all our differences were made by God on purpose so we would learn to depend on each other (v24, 23). Unfortunately the world uses differences to polarize and compete. It is no coincidence that chapter thirteen goes on to say that love is the greatest gift we can have and that is a potential we all possess equally.

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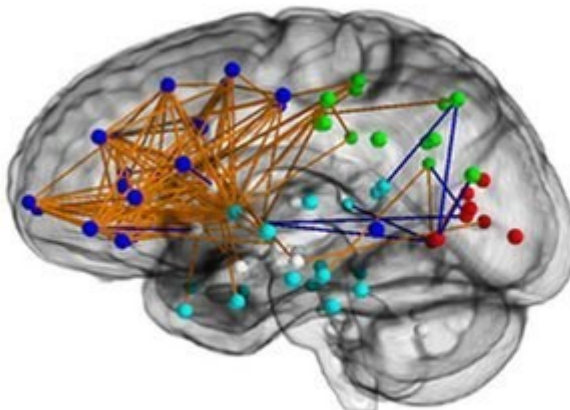
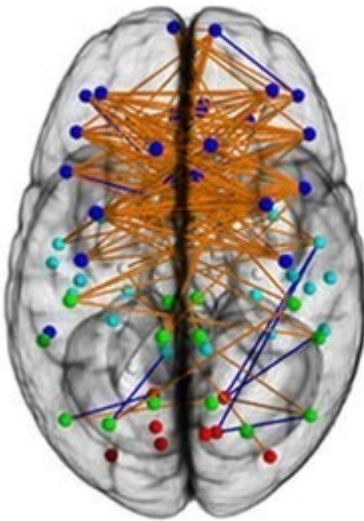
Brain Activity

The following “connectome map” graphics show electrical path progress during cognitive function as evidenced by brain scans of male and female subjects. The colored dots are fixed locations in all four pictures.



**Male
Brain Scans**

Overhead and
side views



**Female
Brain Scans**

Overhead and
side views

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The upper two pictures are above and side views of a male brain processing information. The electrical paths clearly follow a front to back motion that is generally contained within one hemisphere or the other.

The lower two images are again upper and side views of a female subject and demonstrate electrical activity that crosses hemispheres more often than staying within one or the other.

Although the raw data above seems to be evidence of clear differentiation, researchers quoted in the article are still reluctant to draw conclusions of cause or predictability between the sexes, citing multiple levels of causality.

From BBC News, Health page- dated Dec 3, 2013. Link below was still active as of 4/22/2022.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-25198063?print=true>