

Wednesdays at West Side West Side Church

Culture:
Its Creation, Fall and Redemption
A Case Study on Gender

Session # 3 – Jesus Shapes a New Culture

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Review Sessions 1&2: Creation and Fall

- Creation: No indication of male authority over women
- The Temptation involved both Adam & Eve
- God cursed the serpent and the ground – not the people
- Scarcity – resulting from the curse on the ground – has had significant effects on people & their relationships
 - Men: competitive, dominating, no weakness, hard hearts
 - Women: Increase in grief with & number of children,
 - Double-bind: desire for dominant husband, yet husband has more power in the relationship
 - Relationships: Hierarchy, transactional, double-standard, a zero-sum approach to position & power

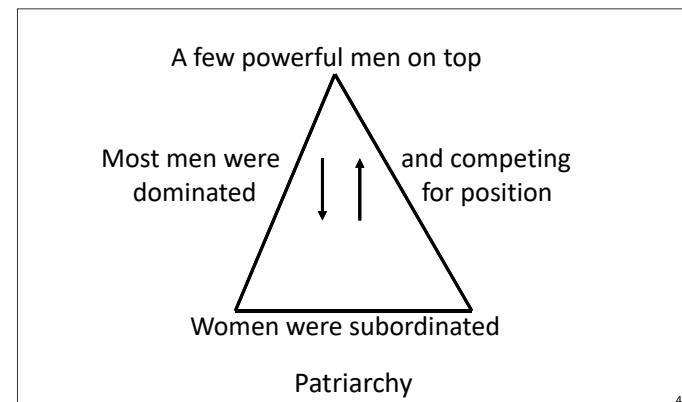
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Review Sessions 1&2: Why this Matters

- See throughout human history, including Biblical history, & make sense of the New Testament world
- Consistent with traditional, pre-industrial cultures today (e.g., Africa, India)
- Contributes to understanding of how the relative wealth of the industrial revolution has impacted (or not) these pressures
- Explains origin of today's gender norms & roles
- Helps to decrease our "Understanding Distance" to the biblical world.
- Clarifies God's creation intent vs. the result of sin
- Points us toward the redemption of relationships

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The Fallen World



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Challenging Ancient Patriarchy Today

- **Dueling Scriptures:**
 - 1 Timothy 2:12 (I do not permit a woman to)
 - 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 (but women are praying and prophesying in church)
- **Dueling Churches:**
 - Some – women have very little place to speak
 - Some – women pastors & other leaders
 - Many – somewhere in between
 - All claim support from the same Bible!

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A Proposed “Framework”

- **The Strategy:**
 - S. Scott Bartchy: N.T. historian & culture/ gender specialist
 - Identify all relevant N.T. passages on gender
 - Record on note cards
 - Sort and re-sort – and look for patterns
- **The Criteria:**
 - Approach the New Testament as an historical document
 - “Entire Counsel of God” – all relevant Scripture texts addressing gender are included
 - Each text is considered and allowed to “speak”
 - Identify the historical and cultural connections

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Preliminary Results

- **Initial Results:**
 - Women in ministry or leadership activities - often in counter-cultural ways - are simply described
 - Without qualification or defense
 - Indicates these activities were common and accepted
 - Not “WWJD” but WDWD? “What **Did** Women Do?”
 - This category formed (roughly) one-half of the cards
- **“Descriptive” Texts**
- **A Significant Discovery** – especially compared to the typical emphasis in the church
- **Therefore the primary criterion for further sorting**

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Preliminary Results

- **Second-Phase Results**
 - How did the “Descriptive” activities come about?
 - A patriarchal culture; women’s roles focus on the home
 - Identify texts that would have encouraged women
- **“Instructive” Texts**
- **These texts “instruct”**
 - Encouragement for women to act in these ways
 - Encouragement for men to support & welcome

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Preliminary Results

- What's Left?
 - Texts that would have discouraged women
 - Only two of them! (1 Tim. 2 & 1 Cor. 14)
- “Corrective” Texts
- Justification for “Corrective” Category
 - Context: Addressing problems in one situation
 - A sharp contrast with the other two groups of texts
 - If made primary, they cannot explain the behavior, activities & values found in the other two groups
 - The Descriptive & Instructive explain the Corrective
 - New freedom and opportunity sometimes leads to problems

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The “Whole Counsel of God”

- Three categories of texts on the role of women:
 - Descriptive Texts – *Describe* (“WDWD?”)
 - Instructive Texts – *Instruct* (*Encourage women & men*)
 - Corrective Texts – *Correct* (*problems resulting from the other two*)
- Together these make a complete picture – historically – of what was occurring in the early church
- The categories reinforce each other in a way that is defensible – both *historically & logically*

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The Impact of Jesus Christ

- Important historically to begin with Jesus
- Overlap between Descriptive and Instructive
 - Will consider them together
 - No Corrective texts in the Gospels (Re: women)
- The impact of Jesus:
 - . . . on men & how they view themselves & power
 - . . . on men & how they view women
 - . . . and on women themselves

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The Choice of the Apostles

- Their Characteristics – What's the point?
 - They must number exactly Twelve (see Acts 1:15-26)
 - They were all Jewish
 - They were all male
- What's the point?
 - The church – modeled on the renewal of the nation of Israel
- Were these characteristics ever used as criteria for leadership in the early church?
 - This was a unique, one-time position & role
 - The term also used for others in the early church
 - (Often translated “messenger”)

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Men Need to be Freed, Too!

Jesus redeemed – freed – men from a system that pressured men in damaging ways:

- To measure their worth by material worth
 - Matt. 6:19-20; 19:16-26
- To subordinate themselves to the absolute power of powerful patriarchs (even in their families)
 - Luke 9:59-62
- To participate in the endless cycle of strife and vengeance typical of honor/shame cultures
 - Matt. 5:38-41
- Struggle to dominate and be honored by others
 - Mark 10:35-45; Luke 22:24-27

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The Impact of Jesus on Men

Mark 10:35-45 (Matt. 20:20-28)

- Vss. 35-37 James and John ask for the two top spots in the coming Kingdom
- Background: Dan. 7:13-14 –
 - The “Son of Man” who would be “given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.
 - The Messiah who will be served by all peoples
- After hundreds of years of domination by others
 - Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Syrians, Romans

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The Impact of Jesus on Men

Mark 10:41-45

- Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. But it shall not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
- Jesus reverses the expectation of Daniel 7!

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The Impact of Jesus on Men

Luke 22:24-27 (Scene: The Last Supper)

- A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that.
- Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table?
- *But I am among you as one who serves.*

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The Impact of Jesus on Men

Luke 22:24-27

- The disciples argue over greatness
- The kings of the gentiles lord it over them & call themselves “Benefactors” – (Patron-Client) A strong element of *inequality* and difference in *power*
- Jesus; You are not to be like that! . . . Who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves?” . . . But I am among you as one who serves.”
- Greatness is in the act of serving, not being served
- Lower status to “free men” – associated with the roles of women and servants

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The Impact of Jesus on Men

John 13:3-9 (Scene: The Last Supper)

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”

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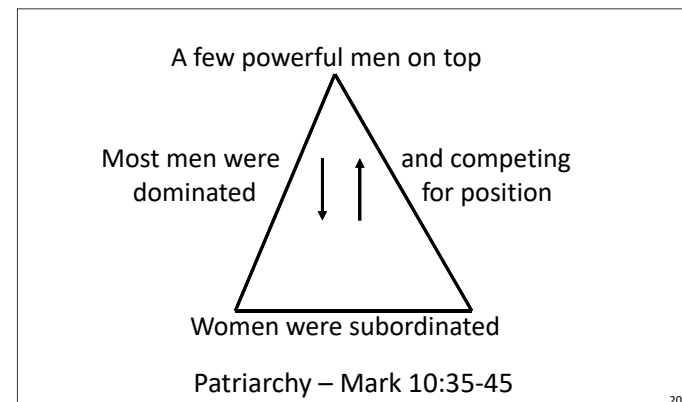
The Impact of Jesus on Men

John 13:3-10, 12-17

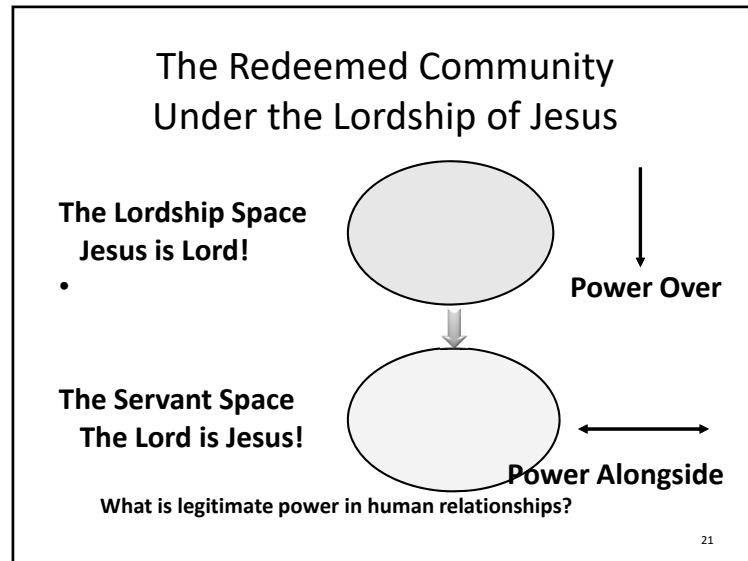
- “What does it mean to be Lord?”
 - What would you do if you were the most powerful person in the room?
 - (Power: *The ability to cause or prevent change.*)
- Jesus washes the disciples' feet
- Peter resists – even objects
 - He will be expected to wash the feet of others
 - He is not yet ready to become this kind of man
 - Are we?

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The Fallen World



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- ### What does it Mean to be Lord?
- (1) **Jesus** is Lord
 - Anybody else is out as Lord
 - The emperor (or president or prime minister) can't be lord. One's husband or father can't be lord
 - Jesus allows no one else in the "Lordship Space"
 - (2) The **Lord** is Jesus (and not the emperor!)
 - Who comes down and operates out of the "Servant Space"
 - It is from there that He invites the rest of us to join him
 - IF THE LORD IS JESUS: legitimate power seeks not to control or dominate . . .
 - But to empower others, to lift up, to reconcile, to encourage maturity & responsibility, to build community . . .
 - In contrast to dominating power, this kind of power exists in unlimited supply.
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- ### Summary: Lessons for Men - & All
- The model for leadership is servanthood, not dominance
 - The male ego must be disengaged
 - Authority is necessary but also a temptation, due to the pervasiveness of the world's approach
 - Rather than "power over" others, we are to seek "power alongside" them – for their benefit & growth
 - Power under Jesus' model becomes a "positive sum" matter rather than a "zero sum" one
 - We cannot understand the issue of women in ministry without first understanding the culture of the N.T world and the way in which Jesus challenged men and their role in it.
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- ### The Impact of Jesus on Women
- Jesus addresses the expectations & limitations on women's activities in traditional cultures
 - Women as sex objects for men
 - The sexual double standard that favors men
 - Role expectations – Men in public, female at home and serving her husband
 - What does bride price/dowry price for a wife get you?
 - Answers we usually hear: Children, food/labor, & sex
 - Jesus does not treat women on any of these bases!
 - Why would this encourage women?
 - Do the men "get" this?
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Jesus: Women are Not Sex Objects

- Matthew 5:27-29
 - “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand . . . (ESV)
- Compare NIV – “who looks . . . lustfully”
- The issue:
 - Not involuntary attraction
 - But deliberate intent

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Jesus: Women are Not Sex Objects

- Matt. 5:27-29 – Adultery in the heart
- Questions we ask in Africa:
 - To both men & women: Who does Jesus blame for a man’s lust, the woman or the man?
 - To women: How would women’s lives be different if all men obeyed this command of Jesus?
 - To men: How does a “real man” behave toward women?
 - Another passage helps us answer this question

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The Sexual Double-Standard

- Luke 7:36-50 – The “sinful woman”
- A “sinful woman” anoints Jesus’ feet while he dines in the home of Simon the Pharisee
- Vs. 39 - When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.”
- Jesus tells a parable: Two people forgiven – one of a small debt, the other of a large one. “Which of them will love more?”
- Vs. 43a – Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”

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The Sexual Double-Standard

- Luke 7:36-50 – Continued
- Vs. 43b – Jesus said, “You have judged correctly.”
- Then Jesus turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

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The Sexual Double-Standard

- The sexual double standard in a shame-honor culture:
 - A woman’s honor is like virginity: “While male honor is flexible and can sometimes be regained, female honor is absolute and once lost is gone forever.”
 - Jesus challenges this by ascribing honor to the woman.
- In vs. 44, Jesus asks Simon, “Do you see this woman?”
 - Since Simon has already looked at her, what is the implication of this?
- Men are to see women . . .
 - Not through the “lens” of judgment or as sex objects
 - But through the “lens” of the *value* Jesus has for them
- Rather than look at women as objects (whether with lust or judgment), men need to *see* them as persons

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The Sexual Double-Standard

- John 8:1-12
 - A woman caught in adultery is brought to Jesus
 - “They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses said to stone such women. Now what do you say?’”
 - In response, Jesus writes on the ground. Twice.
 - Who is missing? Why don’t the others see this?
 - “Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone.”

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A Woman’s Role

- Luke 11:27-28 (The value of a woman)
 - “Blessed is the one who bore and nursed you”
 - Jesus: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”
 - The two-fold context of the Gospels
 - Jesus’ context in this event
 - Luke’s context and purpose in telling this account
 - Implications for Jesus’ own mother

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A Woman’s Role

- Luke 8:1-3 - A number of women were traveling with Jesus & the 12 and helping to support them out of their own means.
 - Surprising given the strict social customs of the traditional Palestinian culture
 - The women are paying for the fledgling Jesus movement out of their own means
 - Luke – a man – admits this in writing (not particularly honorable – handouts from women)

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A Woman's Role

- John 4:1-42 – Jesus has an extended theological discussion with “the woman at the well” in Samaria
 - Breaks the social taboo against talking with a woman (in uninhabited place with no witnesses)
 - Jesus so totally humbles himself that he needs her services.
 - He serves from a position of weakness
 - Serving from a position of strength tends to produce pride in the giver and humiliation in the receiver
 - Jesus elevates the woman's self-worth & affirms her dignity (treats her as a serious theologian and reveals His identity to her)
 - Many Samaritans “believe because of her word” (John 4:39; like the apostles in John 17:20, where Jesus prays for “those who believe in me through their word”)

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A Woman's Role

- Luke 10:38-42 – Mary leaves her traditional female kitchen duties and joins the men at the feet of Rabbi Jesus
 - Martha is upset – the real issue, culturally: This is disgraceful!
 - “Tell my sister to get back in the kitchen where she belongs!”
 - Jesus: “Mary has chosen what is better, and it shall not be taken away from her.”
 - The traditional role of homemaker and hostess can give way to the role of disciple and future agent of Jesus in His kingdom

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A Woman's Role

- All Four Gospels: Women the first witnesses to the resurrected Lord!
 - Then sent to bear witness to the apostles!
- John 20 – Not accidental or incidental!
 - Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb; it's empty
 - She returns to tell Peter & John
 - Peter & John go to the tomb, look inside, & return
 - Mary returns to the tomb
 - Jesus appears to her and sends her back to the apostles with a message

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Sent with Authority

- One traditional view: Only if impersonal and/or indirect – or will upset a man's sense of his masculinity
- Yet Mary delivers the Lord's message to the male apostles in a way that is both personal and direct
- Can the Lord speak to men directly – even the apostles – through a woman?
- To be continued . . . Next week in Acts and the letters of the Apostle Paul
 - The “Descriptive” and “Instructive” categories

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