It might seem strange at first, but to discuss our sexuality, we really need to begin with a better understanding of the image of God.

**Genesis 1:27-28 (NIV)**

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

When God created mankind to be his image, why do you think he used the concepts of male and female?

**God, within his nature, is community. What do we mean by this statement?**

Though there is only one God, he exists as three persons who we identify as Father, Son and Spirit. God exists as loving community in his tri-unity. Each person of the Godhead is co-equal, though they fulfill very different roles. Within this community is an incredible unity and love for one another that was the driving force behind the desire to create mankind.

**How did God’s triune nature affect the way in which he created mankind as his image?**

Since God is community within himself, it only makes sense that when he created his image, he made his image to be in the form of community as well. God created an image that would be diverse in its oneness. As a result, male and female are completely equal, but also have uniqueness in design and the roles that they play.

Every characteristic of male and female is designed in such a way that we would come together as one (physically, spiritually, emotionally, etc.). The result would be a loving relationship that would then also continue to produce life through children. In this way, community would expand and the image of God would spread to fill the whole earth.

**How would you, in general, describe the differences between male and female?**

Do you think that God intended men and women to fulfill the same roles, or unique roles in how they represent him in creation? Share your thoughts.

**Do you think there is a danger in too rigidly defining roles between men and women?**

The Bible gives us some insights into the unique roles of men and women, but sometimes people, and cultures, can go far beyond what the Bible teaches, creating artificial and restrictive rules or expectations.
Do you think there is a danger in ignoring or blurring God-designed differences between men and women?
If there are God-given roles and they are ignored, then men and women will never fully realize their identity and value in society. As a result, they would never understand their true contribution and effectiveness. Where one might think it would create a greater equality, it would actually diminish one’s identity and value. Instead of treasuring and valuing our differences, we would see the differences as barriers that must be removed or overcome. We essentially would be un-making God’s image and recreating something of much lesser value.

If we blur the distinctions between men and women, how might that distort our representation of God to the world?
If we blur what makes us unique as male and female, then the picture that God created to reveal himself would become distorted. Gender distinctions were ultimately created so that we would better understand and represent God in the world. The relationship between man and woman (especially as expressed in marriage) was to be reflect the oneness of God and also the type of relationship God desires to have with us. The further we move from God, the more we will inevitably blur our distinctive roles and the image of God.

Ever since the fall, no culture has necessarily gotten it right in how they view gender distinctions?
Do you feel gender distinctions are more valued today or less valued? Share your thoughts

We all know there are differences between men and women; the challenge comes when we try to define what roles each one is designed to play. Read the following verses to see if they help deepen our understanding of gender distinctions.

From the moment Adam was created he was given the responsibility to care for creation. This included subduing creation in a way that maintained order, but also to cultivate the earth to create it into a beautiful masterpiece like the Garden of Eden. The key word here is responsibility; Adam was to be responsible to care for all creation.

In what ways did God mentally and physically equip Adam for the task he was given?
God instilled in Adam an excitement that would come from seeing creation cared for and developed on God’s behalf. This work would have been thoroughly enjoyable to Adam as he saw creation developed under his loving rule.

Along with this joy for work, God also equipped Adam with a physical body appropriate for labour. Adam would have the physical strength he needed to accomplish what he desired to accomplish.
Why did God give Adam the responsibility to name the animals? What is implied in the act of naming?

By having Adam be the one to name the animals, he was indicating to Adam his responsibility over the animal realm. Whatever we have the authority to name, we are responsible to care for. This applies even today with the naming of children. Parents are the ones to name their children because they are the ones responsible to care for them.

**Genesis 3:20 (NIV)**

*Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.*

Do you think there is any significance to Adam naming Eve?

**Genesis 2:18 (NIV)**

*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

Why do you think God delayed in creating Eve?

God was revealing Adam’s deep need for Eve, instilling a much deeper appreciation and respect for his new counterpart. Had Eve been created at the same time as Adam, he might not have understood the necessary role Eve was designed to fulfill. As a result, she might not have been fully valued or treasured.

How would you summarize the specific role Eve was created to fulfill?

Eve would bring a component to the image of God that Adam was not able to fulfill in and of himself. She brought the dynamic of relational community. Without Eve there was no relationship and there was no community – both of which were central to the character of God.

In what ways did God mentally and physically equip Eve for the role she was created to fulfill?

For Eve it was all about relationship. Eve was designed to value relationship and cultivate deeper relational intimacy. Apart from the Fall, women are naturally equipped to be the relational glue of mankind. Both their emotions and relational focus are strengths to help make this happen.

Physically, Eve was equipped to both draw Adam to relationship through beauty and intimacy, but also to be the producers of life. Every aspect of female design contributes to the birthing of new life, and building and expanding the community. Male and female are designed to fit together as a perfect picture of oneness that would result in the creation of life. This is an incredible picture of the nature and character of God.

**NOTE:** This does not mean that men do not enjoy intimate relationship; Eve was created once it was shown that Adam needed intimate relationship. It also does not mean Eve does not enjoy task and accomplishment; Eve was to be a helpmate to Adam in caring for creation.
It is simply saying that Adam and Eve were to have greater effectiveness and fulfilment in the areas for which they were specifically designed.

**Genesis 2:25 (NIV)**
The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

**Genesis 3:6-10 (NIV)**
6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

After Adam and Eve sinned, their first “felt” consequence was sexual shame. Why do you think this was the case?
When the Spirit of God departed from their life, it left a hole that reached down to the core of their being – their sexual identity. Before they felt no shame and had absolutely nothing to hide. Now that sin entered the picture, in shame, they felt exposed, vulnerable and inadequate. Now they had something to hide, from each other and from God. The image of God was disrupted at the core of their being and would, from this point forward, create a crisis of identity.

Sin affected the very core of Adam and Eve’s being. The very areas in which they were designed to find joy and fulfillment would become the very areas in which they would now experience sorrow, loss and inadequacy. Look at the curse to discover both their areas of original joy and now their sorrow.

**Genesis 3:16 (NIV)**
To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

Summarize the areas Eve was designed to experience joy and fulfillment?
Eve was designed to find joy and fulfillment in the context of relationship. This would be most profoundly expressed in terms of family – giving birth to and raising children and being in a loving relationship with her husband, as her partner in life.

How would Eve now experience suffering in each of these areas?
Eve would now experience suffering in the physical process of child birth and in the emotional process of raising her children. She would also experience tension in her relationship with her husband. Whereas she would have been an equal partner with Adam, she would now be treated as something less than she was.
She would no longer be treasured the way she was before the fall. Man now, in his fear, would use his strength to protect and promote himself, abandoning his responsibility to care for all those in creation.

**Genesis 3:17-19 (NIV)**

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

**Summarize the areas Adam was designed to experience joy and fulfillment?**

Adam was designed to find joy and fulfilment in his caring for creation. He was created with the authority to subdue nature and lovingly rule the animals. This type of work would have been a joyful expression of creativity, replicating the Garden of Eden across the whole globe. Food would have been in abundant provision and there was no fear of lack or death.

**How would Adam now experience suffering in each of these areas?**

Adam would now experience suffering in his loss of authority over creation. No longer would animals or plants bow to his commands, but he would have to struggle to subdue chaos which would continually threaten to overwhelm him. Instead of enjoying creation, he would have to struggle against it for survival. Every day would now require hard work to live, but there would always be the threat of failure.

**Genesis 3:11-12 (NIV)**

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

**Why did Adam blame Eve for his sin?**

Adam was trying to escape the consequence for his sin, which God had previously indicated would be death. In order to protect himself, Adam blamed Eve, passing on not only the blame, but also the death sentence to his wife.

**How do you think Eve must have felt at this point in time? How might it affect how she perceived her relationship with her husband?**
What would be the greatest fear Eve would now experience?
Eve’s greatest fear would be the lack of RELATIONAL SAFETY and INTIMACY.

How might this fear affect how women would approach relationships from the Fall forward?
Women will have the temptation to try and protect themselves from being relationally rejected by either shying away from relationships or by trying to control the relationships.

Can you identify ways this fear is evident today?

What would be the greatest fear Adam would now experience?
Adam would now fear FAILURE and his INADEQUACY to be the man he was created to be.

How might this fear affect how men would approach life from the Fall forward?
Men will constantly strive to prove themselves through performance and the respect of others. In fear of being exposed as inadequate they will either avoid areas of potential failure or strive harder to win.

Can you identify ways this fear is evident today?

When relationship with God was broken, the core of our being was shaken. It distorted every aspect of our lives, especially our sexual identity and sense of worth.

If we find our identity in Christ and turn away from insecurity, how might that practically free us to live as the men and women God created us to be this week?