

IKEA Kind of People

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[0 : 0 0] Great stuff folks. With God's word open in front of us, remember a number of years ago hearing someone refer to themselves as an Ikea kind of Christian.

Now if you want to get what they're talking about, have a think about the last time that you found yourself building a little bit of flat pack furniture. So one of your experiences was anything like mine, which happened about three or four weeks ago. I'm trying to build a bed for a spare room.

And if you've had an experience of anything like mine, here was the inner battle I faced every time I turned over a new page of instructions. In my mind I'm thinking to myself, reading the instructions, thinking to myself, do I really need another daul?

You know what a daul is? You've got to learn the lingo with these Ikea flat packs, haven't you? Do I really need another daul? Does it really matter that the kind of size of screw that I need to put in that joint?

There's got to be some kind of mistake here because the instructions don't quite seem right to me. Does it really matter that I've got that head poured back to front and upside down?

[1 : 1 7] Does that really matter for how this thing's going to turn out? Somebody hand me the phone because I'm calling customer services because these instructions don't quite seem right. Ever had that experience?

You see, what my friend meant, this person meant, when they called themselves an Ikea kind of Christian, was that they had seen the goodness in following the Creator's design.

And as we take in this passage in 1 Timothy today, that is Paul's plea to this church in Ephesus, particularly as he thinks about men and women.

How God has made them purposefully different, and how they are to wonderfully work together in the church. This is what this is talking about, in the church, not in the world, in the church.

Now here's two things I think we need to be aware of as we come at a passage like this. Firstly, we need to be aware of the cultural waters in which we all swim, and how they have influenced how we automatically think about so much of this stuff.

[2 : 2 4] It's a bit like, if you were to ask a goldfish in a bowl, and you say, do you like the water in which you're swimming? And a goldfish would turn around to you if it was able to speak, and it would say, what's water?

Because sometimes we get so used to, don't we, just the environment in which we live, that we don't even notice that we are growing up in a certain culture that thinks a certain way. So we need to be aware of the cultural waters in which we're swimming, and we need to be aware of the church waters in which we're swimming.

And we should expect the timeless word of the eternal God to challenge our ever-changing culture in the way it thinks.

We need to be aware of the church waters in which we swim, because some of us here today, we will have never thought about this stuff, let alone heard it read. I think that's fair to say. Some of us will never have thought about this stuff.

And on the other end of the spectrum, I'd imagine some of us have grown up in church circles here, where I don't think I'm exaggerating too much to say this is probably all we talked about growing up. And so I think what that calls for is you bring our cultural waters in which we're swimming and the church waters in which we're swimming, if you bring them together, friends, what this means is that we come to this passage today with great humility.

[3 : 47] And we choose to put ourselves under God's word, not over it. In other words, we don't tell God's word what it should say.

We listen and we respond appropriately. And we come at this with a great love for one another. If nothing else, this passage today, I hope, by God's spirit, inflames our love for one another and our desire to see one another flourish.

And so here's my aim today. I've got one aim. It's to help us see the beauty in being IKEA kind of Christians. Because this little section, remember, is tied so closely to verses 1 to 7 of chapter 2, which was all about the church sharing God's heart that the peoples of the world would come to know Jesus.

It's so closely tied to it. And I think how the peoples of the world are going to see us in action is a big factor in our witness to the world.

So the world should be able to look in and see a counter-cultural, Christ-like community of men and women together seeking to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

[5 : 06] So this stuff on men and women is part of that bigger mission that we saw in the opening verses of chapter 2. Now, to get into this today, come with me and look at chapter 4, verses 3 to 5.

Opening chapter of this letter, we thought about the false teaching that was doing the rounds in Ephesus. And we kind of get little clues throughout the letter as to what the subject of that false teaching was.

And we get another little snippet here. Some of the false teaching that's doing the rounds in this church is that marriage is a thing to be avoided. You see it? Chapter 4, verses 3 to 5.

Some people are saying marriage is a thing to be avoided. And you can imagine the spill-on effects of that kind of teaching. So I'd imagine it's going something like this. People are saying truly spiritual people are the ones who have set themselves free from the old shackles of God's dusty old design for men and women.

And why would you subject yourself to limits on your life? What you can do, what you can be. Think about how you can flourish if you go it on your own. And imagine that kind of teaching is going down a storm in Ephesus.

[6 : 16] And you can be quick to join the dots and see that it's a teaching that would go down a storm in Edinburgh today. Paul counters this, verse 4, chapter 4.

He says, everything God created is good. Do you see that? Everything that God created is good. And so to this church who are maybe beginning to believe the false teaching, he says, get back to being Ikea kind of Christians and love it.

And so what he does is he firstly turns to address the men in the church. And here's what he says, verse 8. Effectively he says, stop squabbling and start praying.

It's interesting. See, when you read Acts 19, and you can go home in your own time and do that, when the gospel first hit Ephesus, the message of Jesus first hits this city, the men that you meet in the marketplace there who caused this rabble, what are they doing?

The two things that they're doing in Ephesus, they're raising their voices and they're being angry. Right? That's the two characteristics of the men that you meet in Acts 19, what they're doing.

[7 : 31] It might be part and parcel of what it means to be a man in Ephesus in this day. I don't know. But could it be that some of those attitudes of being angry and raising your voice have made their way into the church?

And that's why Paul says to the men, he says, don't be about disputing or anger. Do you see how he specifically goes for those things? Don't be known for being angry.

Don't be known for your arguments. I don't know what's going on in the background here. It's almost impossible to tell if it's not for the little clues that you put together. Could it be that the men in this church are being envious of one another?

Could it be that they are gossiping about one another behind each other's backs? Could it be that they love nothing more than an intellectual argument and winning it? Could it be that they're competing with one another in prayer?

Who can pray better? Who's got more impressive prayers? Whatever it is, Paul says, guys, you've got to stop it. What are you doing?

[8 : 34] You've got to stop it. The anger that's in your heart, the competition against your brothers if you're somebody to beat, you've got to stop it. You've got to put aside your petty scabbles and you've got to get praying.

I love that simplicity of that command to get praying. Right? Get praying for the peoples of the world. Again, did you see it so tightly linked to what's come before?

Get praying for the peoples of the world. Get praying with and get praying for your families. Get praying for your sisters in the church. Now here's what I want us to see. According to Paul, you see how a godly man is not somebody who can lift big at the gym.

Do you see how a godly man is not somebody who's got the drive and the aspiration to climb the corporate ladder. He's not somebody who's handy with a black and decker drill. He's not somebody who runs the roost at home.

He's not somebody, dare I even say, who's even married. That is not what defines a godly man. Oh friends, would we see that a godly man is one who will get on his knees and pray.

[9 : 44] Do you see that? And do you feel the challenge if you're a guy here? Are we known in this church, the men, for those who will get down on our knees and pray?

And are we known for increasingly cultivating by God's grace a humble and a teachable spirit that loves to declare its dependence on God?

And let me just say that if you think about the bigger Bible story, Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 which we'll come back to. Friends, that's what Adam was created to do. Not to live independently from God but to live in relationship with God as he carried out the mission which God had gave him.

And that's what was ruined at the fall. We thought about it a few weeks ago, our natural inclination towards independence, no political connotations given, okay? But it's our natural inclination, isn't it, to do it our own way, to be a self-made man to which we always say, what part of you did you make?

It's why if we want to know what it is to be a man, we look to Jesus. Don't look to the world. We don't look to CR7, right?

[11 : 04] We look to Jesus because Jesus is the one who perfectly modeled this and he is the one who redeems us from the curse of the fall. And what it means to be sanctified is to grow more into his likeness.

and letting those attitudes spill over into how we relate to and view others. Do you know what I thought was the most beautiful thing and this is going to stay with me for the rest of my days.

I'll use this as a sermon illustration every time I don't preach here, right? I'm not going to look at him, I don't embarrass him. Stuart was up here last week and do you know what I loved? He talked about the passage in God's word which made an impression on him.

Do you remember where he went? John chapter 4. How Jesus treated a woman who was an outcast in that society and how he treated her with dignity, how he knew her inside out, how he gave her respect, how he loved her and I love how he said that was Jesus in action that drew me to him.

For as I take it, guys, if we are being made more into his image then we should see more of him in our lives as God's spirit transforms us. You know, this is going to affect how we view particularly our sisters in the church.

[12 : 20] Now, this is what I saw on Sky News the other day. I don't know if any of you saw this. I think it was on Twitter. I can't remember but the question was and I think it was in the context of violence against women in our society.

The question was something like is porn part of the problem to view how men view women? Is porn part of the problem? I remember hearing it and thinking I cannot believe that's even been asked as a question.

men, may it be something that the world would see something different when they come in here and they see how we treat our sisters in Christ.

How we just treat women like Jesus treated them. May the world look in and see how we are for them, how we listen to them, how we value them, how we protect them, how we give ourselves in the church for their flourishing particularly in the context of their walk with Jesus.

Agreed? Agreed. The challenge here is men, are we praying? You feel the challenge? Are we praying?

[13 : 29] Are we absorbed in silly competition against one another? Is there anger that's lingering in our hearts? Are we being led and fed by our pride?

Stop squabbling and start praying says Paul. Oh man, how counter-cultural. I want a witness to the world this community will be if the men start behaving like this considering what the men in Ephesus were like.

And to the woman in the church he says, in the context he says, stop distracting and start serving. You read the round on this? Women in the first century were famous for their elaborate hairstyles and their expensive clothes.

It almost become a kind of status symbol as you walk around town everybody looks at you and they know who you are and they know what you're worth. Again, is Paul putting his finger on a cultural norm, a cultural attitude that has tiptoed its way into the church in the way that the women here are behaving?

In terms of how they're conducting themselves. Now whatever they're doing in the background here, do you see it's disrupting things.

[14 : 42] Maybe for the men I imagine as well as the women it's distracting from the main thing how they're behaving and I think as well it's causing divisions in the church how they're conducting themselves.

I know what he's talking about and be clear what he's not talking about. He's not talking about promoting ankle length skirts or anything like that. That's not what he's saying. He's saying to the woman think about others.

What is it that you're prioritising in your life? Dear sisters here today what are the things that you might be doing in here out of here that are a cause for distraction and division?

I tried to do a little bit of research on this asking different women in the church I don't know if this is going to hit I'm not a woman you'll see okay what is it you love to talk about?

What is it you talk about when you hang out? What is it you talk about when you go for coffees? Is it houses? Is it wallpaper? The different things that you're planning on doing to your house?

[15 : 50] Is it who's got the better buggy? Is it jobs? Is it schools? Is it friendship groups that you're in or not in? For whatever it is think about it.

That's what Paul was saying think about it. Wouldn't it be a great thing to do to have in your mind the next time you meet one of your friends whatever it is in the church that encouraging one another towards godliness was central to your conversation because the timeless principle I think here is that godliness is beautiful in God's eyes.

Godliness is beautiful in God's eyes and the fruit of the spirit man that's what we all need as you too are transformed more into the likeness of Jesus.

That's why I think he calls the woman in this culture again think about how counter-cultural this community is going to be. He calls them to be known for their good deeds. Listen I love this quote by Elizabeth Elliott I've used it before but I love it she said this she said the fact that I'm a woman does not make me a different kind of Christian underscore that but the fact that I'm a Christian does make me a different kind of woman.

So Paul here he talks to the men and he talks to the woman and offers two counter-cultural yet wonderfully attractive ways that they can uniquely and together adorn the beauty of the gospel in their city of Ephesus.

[17 : 26] Do you see it? We need to take that into the next section. Now it's worth saying as we come to this section that many dear brothers and sisters around the city and let me just say personally some of my best friends see this very differently what comes up here and some of us here this morning will see this differently.

We need to acknowledge that and in a world that handles its differences with people by saying tolerate we need to see that Jesus calls us to handle differences in the body of Christ by saying love.

Demonstrating that love that would even die for its enemies that Christ showed us on the cross. We need to carry that with us and yet having said that we've got to wrestle with this stuff. I just take a line a byro and just score it out of our Bible.

We've got to think about what he's saying and to get what he's saying. We need to see the context in which he draws on in the passage here. Do you see it? He says he talks about Adam and Eve.

Again, do you see it in the passage? He's talking about Adam and Eve which is code for Timothy to get his Bible and turn to Genesis. Remember these two know each other really well.

[18 : 42] Timothy knows what Paul is getting at. Get to Genesis. Get to Genesis. And you turn to Genesis 1 and 2 and you will see two truths there. I think that Timothy has to draw upon here.

Two truths about men and women. Firstly, equality. They are both made beautifully and equally in God's image.

And if you're here today and you're feeling worthless, you're thinking, is life worth going on? Am I really valued? Would you know that you are made in God's image? Whoever you are here today, it's why as God's people, we care about all peoples of the world.

We care about life and all its forms because every human being is stamped with an inherent dignity. It's not one that you've earned. You just have it because you've been made in God's image.

You'll see equality between men and women. Every human being made in God's image. And you will see complementarity. Now, I couldn't think of a better English word.

[19 : 43] Not only we've got one, complementarity. God brings Eve on the scene as a helper to Adam. Now, before you jump on the conclusion that that's derogatory, remember throughout scripture God refers to himself as the helper to Israel.

So it's dignifying. And God has given Adam the role of stewarding and cultivating creation, filling it under God's rule and for his glory.

And as Adam leads, as God has commissioned him to do, Eve comes alongside and the two of them can do better the thing that Adam could not do on his own.

Eve brings something to the table. She brings something to the game because of the way that God has uniquely wired her which perfectly suits the way that Adam has been designed.

It's complementarity. Now, if you're struggling to picture that, let me just give you something to carry with you. This is where I love being Scottish. Okay? Because I was brought up in Cayley's.

[20 : 58] The guy does his role and the woman does her role and together it's a beautiful dance. It's growing up in the stuff.

Or you want to change the analogy. Do you notice when we sang this morning as we brought the male and female voices together? Do you notice how beautifully they're harmonised? In my role, I've spoken at women's coffee mornings, I've spoken at men's breakfast, both of which involve singing.

I remember hearing both of them and thinking, you two should really meet because your voices do something together which is beautiful. I think this is what Paul is talking about when he's talking about equal yet different.

And of course that's exactly, to stretch you a little bit, what we find in the Godhead, isn't it? Father, Son and Spirit, we sang about it this morning. Our God is three in one, all three equally God but different roles.

And if that is who our God is, then it would make logical sense if we're made in his image that we see something of that complementary design built into the very DNA of what it means to be a human being.

[22 : 05] And yet that's what went wrong at the fall in Genesis 3. So you see, Paul writes here, we need to get into this, Adam was not the one deceived, Eve was.

So Eve ate the apple that God had forbidden them to eat. But listen to this, I don't think this is as much a dig at Eve as it's a dig at Adam. Because the picture that you get if you turn to Genesis 3 is that Adam is hiding in the background as all this is unfolding.

Adam is there, he should have been the one to jump in and said, Eve, listen, we don't do that. Listen, our God is so good, he's told us how we're to live, he's told us what we're not to do to show our love for him, we don't do that.

And yet Adam, Eve takes it and she hands some to him, the image you get is that Adam's hiding in the background when he should have been standing up and speaking and leading.

And he's the one that God holds to account. He says, Adam, where are you? And I take it as Paul's replay in this scene and I take it Paul is saying that this church need to rediscover something of the beauty of that original complementarity.

[23 : 19] Now, don't miss the fact that Paul in verse 11 is encouraging the woman in the church to learn. Don't miss that. Please don't miss that. So hugely counter-cultural in this day, in the Greco-Roman world to encourage women to learn.

It's so counter-cultural. Paul is so pro-woman here. And I take it that when Paul uses that word quiet in verse 12, he can't be envisaging absolute silence because he's just used, you see, the same Greek root word nine verses earlier at verse 2 of chapter 2 when he was talking there about living a life of godliness.

So I just don't think absolute silence is what we should read there. So it would seem strange, wouldn't it, if Paul was meaning something different.

And when he says submissive, the choice of putting yourself under someone, friends, that does not mean that a woman has to submit to every man, get that underscored.

I think in this instance, it's a reference to the elders and the public teaching of the church, and that calls exactly the same on the men. Paul knows that women have a vital role to play in this church if it's going to grow to maturity.

[24 : 37] And add to that the fact that elsewhere we see him encouraging women to teach the younger women, he's encouraged them to pray and prophesy. Some of Paul's closest and most dearest co-workers are women.

And yet I take it what he does envisage is that both the authority and the teaching role in the church is one that he sees right for men to take based on Genesis 1 and Genesis 2.

And the fact that he roots that instruction in Genesis, not Ephesus, I think means that it's a timeless principle because it's a creational principle.

Now what does that mean for us today at Brunsfield? Well it means that we'll continue to encourage our dear sisters to participate when we gather together publicly like this.

Leading things like small group Bible studies, leading various ministries that we'll see next week and kind of come under the umbrella of deacon, participating up front on Sunday and leading worship, reading, praying and speaking.

[25 : 47] And we've been so blessed as we've journeyed over the years seeing women use their gifts in those capacities on Sundays and I hope that by Kate's appointment you see the strategic investment we're making in women's ministry and seeing the women of our church flourish.

And yet friends when it comes to the office of elder, which we'll see next week, and the teaching of the Bible when we gather together as a church, I think this timeless principle kicks in and leads us to conclude that these roles should be taken up by men.

And not just any men, got to get that right, we'll see it next week where we'll see God-loving men. In our world where there's a leadership crisis, the leadership in the church is vital.

Men who ooze Christ-like character, men who have been tested and approved, men who have committed themselves to sacrificing themselves for the good of the church family and seeing them grow.

Do you see Ikea kind of Christians? Let me just say, just swimmer there, when Paul talks about childbearing at verse 15, I take it that's a direct shot at the false teachers who are seeking to downplay marriage and who are by implication who are downplaying motherhood.

[27 : 14] Now let me just, just because we're in the context of motherhood because, listen, dads were called to do exactly the same. Let me just say to you, if you're here today and you're a mum, if you're staying at home to look after the kids, if you've stopped work to look after them, if you're sacrificing yourself for them, if your days are changing nappies and running errands, falling into bed at night shattered, all because you long for your children to grow up to come to know Jesus, I want you to know that that is a wonderful call.

In our culture, one of the things that we have is a very core of identity, is it not? When you ask people, you say, what do you do? And friends, how often do those who are in this category, do we kind of reluctantly say that we're at home looking after the kids, right?

I think this calls us to see that that is a wonderful thing. And I take it that's exactly what Paul is saying to those women in Ephesus. Do not let them downplay the false teachers.

what a glorious thing it is to be a sacrificial mum. Reject that false teaching, reject it, and keep going with the grain of God's good design.

Now listen, we've covered a lot here today, Kate, I hope you recognise it, I could only do so much justice to it in half an hour, and that's why we need to be in our small groups thinking this stuff out together. But let me just close by bringing us back to the big thing.

[28 : 40] The big thing. Now some of you might remember if you're old enough, in 1992 there was a book that was released, I can't remember the guy's name, it was American Relationship Guru called, is it John Gray?

I can't remember. You'll know the title, you know the title, Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus? You heard that before, that book? Well let me just take the joke, it's kind of been a joke in our culture isn't it?

Let me take the joke and turn it around for us as we finish and put it to us as a truth. Now I take it that as we live our lives together as men and women, as we exhibit what it means to live under the lordship of Jesus together, friends I take it we should show the world that we're not from here.

We show the world as we live our equal yet different lives that together we are from heaven. Just think how much of a counter cultural community this will be in Ephesus.

And think how much of a counter cultural community this will be in Edinburgh. What is Paul saying? He's encouraging them to go with the grain of God's good design.

[29 : 56] And he's pleading with them to be a key kind of Christians. So let me pray and then we will close our service.

Okay, let me pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much Lord for your goodness to us. And I just pray Father that your spirit would be moving amongst us today.

Lord, we long to be those kind of disciples who are fully submitted to Jesus. Lord, I recognize that much of what we've spoken about today, it will come at us in unique and in different ways.

And so Father, I pray as one who's just pleading that you would do your work by your spirit, that you would be bringing comfort and challenge and forgiveness and healing and restoration and a longing for a life that glorifies you in every way.

So Father, I just thank you for your precious word. While we recognize that it is eternal, we recognize that we are finite. And so Father, I pray today as we respond to this, that you would help us continue to be disciples who glorify Jesus to the watching world.

[31 : 15] Father, help us to love one another, we pray in Jesus' precious name we ask. Amen. Amen.