

What Is a Woman?

The question, "What is a woman?" has been raised in seeming seriousness recently; and so, after trying not to laugh, we also will address the subject seriously.

God offers at least two answers. One is biological and can be summed up as "XX." In other words, inside each cell of the human body (not counting red blood cells), there is a nucleus, and inside the nucleus are chromosomes. The chromosomes contain what we might call the blueprint of the person—the information that makes a person what he is, whether tall or short, sturdy or slender, blue-eyed or brown-eyed. A normal cell nucleus contains twenty-three pairs of chromosomes. One pair determines the sex of a person. Someone whose cells contain an X and a Y chromosome turns out to be a man. If the cells contain an X and an X chromosome, the person turns out to be a woman. Tenth-grade biology books tell this genetic story in detail.

To the chagrin of people who would like to make a simple subject complicated, there you have it. If *"sixty million Frenchmen can't be wrong,"* what about billions of tissue cells all saying the same thing? Before we talk about whether or not a change of gender is appropriate, let's talk about whether it's possible. Surgery and therapy don't change God's simple fact of XX.

The second answer is more intuitive. A famous jazz player summarized it when he was asked, "What is jazz?" He replied, "If you have to be told, you'll never know." The Bible says pretty much the same thing about womanhood. Rather than defining women, it gives examples. It tells us in the early chapters of Genesis how womanhood began. And its pages tell the stories of many women, good and bad.

Then the Bible turns around and asks a question of its own. *"Who can find a virtuous woman?"* (Proverbs 31:10).

Although the Bible never tells us how to turn a man into a woman, it does tell us how a bad woman can turn into a good one.

- Rahab, a Jericho harlot, became a respected member of God's people (Joshua 2, 6:22-25).
- Ruth, raised as an idol worshiper, turned to her mother-in-law's God (Ruth 1).
- Bathsheba, having fallen into sin, was forgiven and became the mother of Solomon (2 Samuel 12:24-25).
- A woman who had had five husbands got into a deep conversation with the Lord and then told the men of her city, *"Is not this the Christ?"* (John 4:1-30).
- A woman arrested in the act of adultery received forgiveness from Jesus. He also gave her a world bright with new possibilities: *"Go, and sin no more"* (John 8:1-11).

- Mary Magdalene, once the haunt of seven devils, was transformed. She stood by Jesus' cross (John 19:25) and became the first person to see Jesus after He rose from the dead (Mark 16:9).

There were other woman who never asked themselves, "What is a woman?" They just asked, "How can I serve the Lord as a woman?" and found their niche.

- A woman came and poured perfumed ointment on Jesus' head, and when men complained, Jesus gave her a simple but high compliment: "*She hath done what she could*" (Mark 14:8).
- Dorcas, who seems to have been a single lady, made coats and garments for poor people (Acts 9:39).
- Lydia, a businesswoman, invited several traveling evangelists into her home (Acts 16:15).
- Lois and Eunice, grandmother and mother of Timothy, influenced him to become a Christian. He later served as bishop of the church at Ephesus (2 Timothy 1:5).

And a host of named and unnamed women have found ways to please the Lord, confident that even a cup of cold water would finally have its reward (Matthew 10:41–42). Hired girls, typists, artists, teachers, aunts, and, of course, moms, who "do it all for hugs," will find in the end that the Lord was watching with interest the whole time.

An elderly lady complained to a visitor that she couldn't do much of anything useful anymore. He replied, "You can pray." After that, the woman's daughter noticed times when her mother was evidently lifting her heart to the Lord. The daughter told friends, "I wondered who was being prayed for."

Once we answer the question, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" the question, "What is a woman?" will also find its answer.

~David L. Martin