

Gender Equality Rightly Understood - Part Two

Barrington H. Brennen, July 17, 2014

I've stated in an earlier article that gender equality is a Creation design and a post-Calvary mandate. This means that equality of the genders is how God intended it to be from the beginning of time. However, sin brought on confusion by creating a struggle for power between the genders. This struggle distorted the true image of God. Hierarchy displaced partnership and companionship. Then Jesus came to redeem humans and to "restore" in humans, through his sacrifice, the image of God. That is to remind us that He created everyone to have equal power, voice, vote, access, and opportunity in the home, church and community. Galatians 3:28 bring this out very clearly. It says "There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."

For the secular-minded individuals, skeptics, atheists, and those of other religions, it is fair to say that gender equality does not lose its meaning or purpose outside of Christianity. Gender equality is fairness, justice, mercy, and the innate drive to treat each one, regardless of gender, as companions and not competitors. It is male and female receiving equal treatment with the avoidance of any coloring of discrimination just based on gender.

For thousands of years, too many societies have been built on the "gender-competitive" model or "gender-superiority" model of governance, where men have greater power, voice, access and opportunity. Thus women had to push, and push through the thick walls of misconception, tradition, discrimination, injustice, unfairness, rape, violence, just to be heard and to be treated fairly. In 1998 I wrote these words: "It is noted that on July 19, 1848, a political and social movement was born in the United States. Three hundred persons, including 40 men traveled by horse-drawn wagons and by foot, from up to 50 miles away, to Seneca Falls, New York, to protest the legal bondage of American women and to demand full equality. It was the first women's right convention to demand greater civil liberties for women, including the right to vote and to get an education. They came together to rewrite the United States constitution and to sign the Declaration of Sentiments which proclaimed that all men and women were created equal. During this occasion the Declaration of Sentiments presented a list of evils against women. It said: "The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world."

At the time, the leaders of the movement made it very clear that it was not the intention of the movement to take over power from men (that would be equally evil) but to be able to sit at the tables of decision-making with them. They wanted to share power with them. The women believed, and rightly so, that they should be free to make their own decisions, get an education, own property; join in governing, and given equal opportunity for leading positions in the society and the church. It is simply equal voice, vote, power access and opportunity.

FALSE CONCEPTS

Some confuse gender equality with tasks and roles. They fear that the implementation of gender equality policy because they believe it will put women above men, or give women

opportunities and voice where some say they should not have it. Kindly remember, gender equality is providing a legal framework for a level playing field between the genders. That is so anyone regardless of the gender, can decide what he or she wants to do, where to work, what to study in college, of or when to have children, etc. It is also about discouraging one gender from hurting the other simply because he or she has a diminishing view of the other gender. It is illuminating gender-specific violence of all kinds. Note carefully, the gender equality policy gives public freedom to the male or female to be a stay-at-home parent, to have equal access to job, education, and equal pay and not to be raped, killed, abused, just because on one's gender.

SOME WOMEN DO NOT BELIEVE IN GENDER EQUALITY

Gender discrimination has been painfully too high in our land. Unfortunately, some of the greatest proponents of gender discrimination are women themselves. They may not realize it, but it is true. Far too many women are still teaching their daughters to be dependent on a man and how to be subservient instead of an equal partner. Recently a teenager told me that she is looking forward to being a wife. I asked her what was her understanding of being a wife? She said one who cooks, have children, take care of the house, wash clothes, etc. Is that really the meaning of a wife? That sounds more like the meaning of a paid servant. Interestingly she also said that a wife listens to her husband, who has the last say, and serves him, because he is the head of the house. It is sad that in this modern era far too many are still being taught the inferiority of the genders.

These concepts spill over in society where it continues to perpetuate a male-dominated view of life; where men still dominate just because they are men. Also where far too many men still think of women as sex objects and not truly of equal value. Having a Gender Equality Policy is designed to remove these practices and more. It is designed to protect and serve. It is designed to create policies that create fairness and equal value under the law. It may not change minds, but the policy will protect the rights and freedoms of everyone. I look forward to the Gender Equality Policy.

*CONCLUSION: Gender equality policy will put women **beside** men as their equal partners in society. It will reduce the possibility of men lording over women and silencing their voices. It will provide the legal framework for women to be protected from gender-specific violence of all kinds."*