

PERSPECTIVE

APRIL 2025

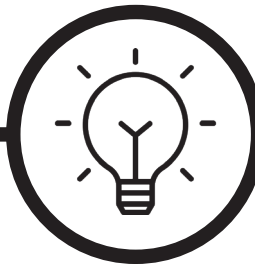
BARBIE DOLLS OR TONKA TRUCKS?



CONTENTS



ARTICLE 1
Barbie Dolls or Tonka Trucks?
James Chiang



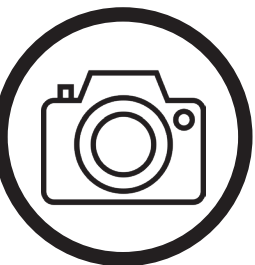
BOOK HIGHLIGHT 5
Gender: A Conversation Guide for Pastors and Parents
Written by Brian Seagraves & Hunter Leavine
Recommended by Chris Arbery



BOOK HIGHLIGHT 6
God Made Boys and Girls: Helping Children Understand the Gift of Gender
Written by Marty Machowski
Recommended by Erin Basurto



BIBLE READING PLAN 7
Take Up & Read
April



NEW MEMBERS 8
Katherine Bell, Sam Edwards, & Rachel Edwards

Barbie Dolls or Tonka Trucks?

What was your favorite toy growing up? I remember eagerly tearing through the wrapping paper on Christmas morning, hoping to find a Super Soaker water gun. My sister would squeal with delight whenever she saw a Cabbage Patch doll. Depending on your generation, your answer may vary. Perhaps you wanted a Tonka truck, or maybe a Barbie doll. As a young boy, I don't recall anyone telling me to want the water gun instead of a doll. But looking back, I'm sure I was influenced by other boys in the neighborhood, as well as TV commercial depictions of boys playing with certain toys.

Cultural expectations surrounding gender influenced more than just my toy preferences. They influenced my understanding of what it meant to be a boy as opposed to a girl. Now, as a father of two young girls, I recognize that cultural expectations are a mixed bag. Some I have to protect my children from. Others I find useful in a common grace sort of way. As a Christian parent, I want to be guided by biblical standards of masculinity and femininity rather than taking my cues from the world. As a church, we want the children in our midst to grow up to embrace the gender sovereignly assigned to them by their Creator. And yet, we are sobered by the difficulty of the task at hand. While we do not control the outcome, we are called to prayerfully and faithfully labor.

This article explores several ways to intentionally raise the next generation to be biblical men and women. First, we need to have a clear vision of what it looks like to be a biblical man or woman. Second, we need to be vigilant to the pressures children are under to be worldly men and women. Third, parents and the church should diligently work together to guide children toward biblical manhood and womanhood.

HAVE A CLEAR VISION OF WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO BE A BIBLICAL MAN OR WOMAN

Have you ever gone on a long hike through a dense forest? If so, you know it's challenging to get from point A to point B. Navigating dangers and obstacles can make it difficult to determine when you're starting to veer off track. What you need is a compass, a clear and objective indicator of the direction you should head. In much the same way, parenting in a gender-confused world is a long journey fraught with dangers. It is good and necessary to recognize those dangers and steer our children away. However, a strategy that solely focuses on avoiding danger is insufficient. We need to guide our children towards something—the truth. To do that, parents, in particular, need to have a clear picture of what it looks like to be a biblical man or woman.

I've set myself up for a tall task. Numerous books have been written on this topic, and I can't cover all the points and counterpoints here. What I can do is summarize and provide a few biblical supports for some defining characteristics of biblical masculinity and femininity. Other Perspective articles have and will delve deeper into what the Bible says about manhood and womanhood.

Biblical Masculinity

John Piper has a helpful vision for biblical masculinity: "At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for, and protect women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships." ¹ Biblical men lead. They understand their responsibilities and take appropriate initiative in their God-ordained contexts. In the home, the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23), and fathers are responsible for bringing their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). In the church, only men are to teach and exercise authority over other men (1 Tim. 2:12).

Biblical men are faithful providers. Paul warns that a man who does not provide for his relatives (especially for members of his household) has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim. 5:8). Biblical men are also protectors of women. 1 Peter 3:7 instructs husbands to show honor to their wives as the weaker vessel (referring to physical stature, not spiritual value or maturity), and 1 Corinthians 16:13 exhorts men to "act like men" (commanding watchfulness and strength). We should want our boys to grow up to be this kind of man.

Biblical Femininity

The Bible highlights two key attributes of femininity: a posture to help and a disposition to nurture. In Genesis 2, God had created a good world, with a beautiful garden and an image-bearing man to work it and keep it. Yet God said in verse 18: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." God created Eve because there is a unique way that women reflect the image of God. When men and women work together in complementary ways, all creation sees a fuller picture of our amazing God.

I want my daughters to earn excellent grades and to be strong in body and mind (to the glory of God!). I hope their strength and work ethic will prepare them to be productive and to lead other women and children (Titus 2:3–4). But I also hope that they will not see men as rivals. I want them to be the kind of women John Piper describes:

"A mature woman is glad when a respectful, caring, upright man offers sensitive strength and provides a pattern of appropriate initiatives in their relationship."

She does not want to reverse the roles. She is glad when he is not passive. She feels herself enhanced and honored and freed by his caring strength and servant-leadership.”²

We also want our girls to embrace a disposition to nurture. Women can exhibit a gentleness that is uniquely life-giving. Paul alludes to this in 1 Thessalonians 2:7: “But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.” There is a comfort that women provide that can help turn a heart away from fear. As the Lord said in Isaiah 66:13-14, “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice...”

In a fallen world, it can be easy for us to have a vision for our boys that looks more like the success of Steve Jobs, the strength of Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, or the fighting spirit of Doug Wilson—or a vision for our girls that looks like the boss babe or Miss America. Instead, we need to have a biblical vision of men leading/providing/protecting and women helping/nurturing squarely in view.

BE VIGILANT TO THE PRESSURES OUR CHILDREN FACE TO BECOME WORLDLY MEN AND WOMEN

There are two sources of danger that threaten to pull our children away from biblical masculinity and femininity. Using the hiking analogy again, we must be aware of these dangers so our children don’t fall into a ditch.

One source of danger is a child’s own sinful heart. We see this clearly in the aftermath of Adam and Eve’s sin in the garden. Instead of embracing the responsibility of leadership, Adam was passive and blamed Eve for his sin (Gen. 3:12). Instead of gladly providing for Eve, he would be the first (but not the last) man to get frustrated by the thorns and thistles of his work (Gen. 3:18). A man will be tempted towards laziness or overworking, to the detriment of those in his care. Because of Adam’s sin, men have conflict with their wives and abuse their authority rather than lovingly serving (Gen. 3:16). Parents, be aware that the factory setting of your boys is passivity, selfishness, and abuse of authority, not leading, providing, and protecting.

Girls are no different. Instead of helping her husband Adam through a posture of submission, Eve’s sin led to women becoming rivals with their husbands for authority (Gen. 3:16). Instead of nurturing, Eve’s sin resulted in difficulties with child-bearing (Gen. 3:16), leading to selfishness rather than joyful service in family relationships. Parents, be aware that the

factory setting of your girls is rivalry and selfishness, not helping and nurturing.

Another source of danger is the world and its master, the devil. They seek to confuse and distort God’s perfect design. The forms in which these attacks come are numerous and evolving. I’ll just name a few.

First, the rise of feminism has had harmful consequences for both our boys and girls. Feminism places a chip on the shoulders of girls to beat the boys and take control rather than working together. It holds forth to women the ideal of being the boss, and denigrates the value of being a stay-at-home mother. Feminism also exacerbates the temptation of boys to withdraw into passivity. Why would a man offer up his seat on the bus to a woman if such efforts would be met with derision? To be clear, in God’s kindness, He has used feminism to accomplish some good ends (for example, women’s right to vote and bringing real abuses of authority to light). But parents need to guard their daughters from embracing a misguided view of femininity and their sons from shrinking back from biblical masculinity.

Second, there has been a worldly backlash to feminism that is itself unhealthy. Some people disaffected by feminists’ charge of “toxic masculinity” appear to have wholeheartedly run towards the idea of the macho man. They uphold the idea that manliness looks like being muscle-bound and aggressive in tone and speech, running headlong into controversies rather than being kind, patient, and gentle (2 Tim. 2:24). On the other hand, some women have wholeheartedly embraced the concept of staying at home to be idle. Rather than faithfully working hard to bless their families, church, and neighbors, such women support traditional gender roles as an excuse to pursue a self-centered life of ease. Parents need to guard their sons and daughters from embracing worldly shadows of masculinity and femininity that are devoid of gospel truth and freedom.

Third, society’s rapid embrace of homosexuality and transgenderism strikes at the very heart of God’s design. LGBTQ+ ideology places the individual on the throne, strikes at any objective definition of gender, and holds forth sexual desire as the determinant of one’s identity. This ideology is being pushed on children at increasingly younger ages, a pressure that did not exist a generation ago. I would recommend parents read Carl Trueman’s *A Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution* to be better informed about the roots of this ideology and prepared to respond to its varied manifestations.

PARENTS AND THE CHURCH SHOULD DILIGENTLY WORK TOGETHER TO GUIDE CHILDREN TOWARD BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

Parents have always been responsible for training up children in the way they should go so that even when they are old, they will not depart from it (Prov. 22:6). But life gets busy! In the daily and weekly grind, it can be tempting to “coast” and rely upon cultural institutions and norms to carry our children towards some acceptable form of manhood and womanhood. That has never been a faithful parenting approach. It is especially dangerous in today’s world, where cultural ideologies and institutions pull children in the opposite direction of where we want them to go. Parents need to diligently guide children towards biblical masculinity and femininity. Consider four ways parents can do this.

First, parents need to humbly pray. If our goal was simply to raise our boys to be sports-loving men with jobs or our girls to be fashion-conscious women with families, then perhaps we wouldn’t need to pray. The world doesn’t pray, and it churns out such men and women in spades. Recognizing the gravity and difficulty of parenting should drive parents to their prayer closets. Faithful parents recognize that only the Spirit of God, working through the Word of God, can root out the sin in their cute child. They also recognize that no protective bubble can fully insulate children from being exposed to the gender ideologies of the world. Parents, ask God to protect your children’s hearts and minds from being deceived. Humbly ask God to save your children from their sin and transform them into godly men and women who live out his perfect design.

Second, parents should intentionally provide opportunities that cultivate biblical attributes. In our busy lives, it can be tempting to hurry through the week and do things ourselves for the sake of efficiency. However, if you don’t slow down, you will miss many wonderful chances to teach your children. Fathers, instead of doing the yardwork for a widow all by yourself, bring your son along and give him the responsibility of doing an entire section of the lawn. Your son will leave with a better grasp of what it means to protect and provide. Mothers, if you are preparing to have guests over for dinner, include your youngest, least-efficient daughter in the preparations and give her the responsibility of playing with the guest’s baby. Your daughter will develop a better sense of what it means to help and nurture. Provide a steady stream of opportunities like this throughout childhood.

Third, parents should quickly correct their children when necessary. In this digital age, it can seem normal

for our sons and daughters to spend hours each day looking at screens. If your son loves video games and is starting to exhibit a withdrawn, sedentary lifestyle, pull him back into the real world by taking away or limiting his screen time. Impress upon him the importance of a man taking initiative in his life, stewarding his time to accomplish productive things that bless other people, rather than spending all of his time on diversion. If your daughter enjoys watching certain TV shows and is starting to place an unhealthy emphasis on physical appearance, consider canceling the TV service and having a direct conversation with her. Impress upon her the preciousness of a godly woman with a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Pt. 3:4), contrasted with a worldly woman who uses her physical beauty as a tool of power over men and women. My use of these examples is not to promote some form of asceticism; it is not inherently sinful to play video games or watch TV. However, parents must be vigilant to understand how their children are being influenced and act quickly to address issues, ideally before they become patterns and habits.

Fourth, parents should partner with the church. I’ve spent a lot of time in this article addressing parents, but the entire church has a role to play in teaching our children. Church member, if you see a young boy running through the halls of Mount Vernon, graciously pull him aside and gently teach him the importance of protecting our elderly saints and young kids from accidental injury. Parent, if a church member approaches you with a concerning observation about the behavior of one of your children, be quick to hear and slow to speak (Jas. 1:9). Not every observation is valid, but what a gift it is to have fellow believers join with you in seeking the spiritual good of your children! As your kids become teenagers, don’t overlook the value of having another brother or sister disciple your child. If your teenage daughter stubbornly won’t listen to you but will heed the same counsel from another sister in Christ, then swallow your pride and ask for help! Parents will always retain the responsibility, but the responsible parent will use the tools the Lord has graciously provided.

CONCLUSION

I love watching the boys play out on the front lawn after church. It’s common to see a boy marching around with a stick or climbing a tree. But it’s also common to see a boy playing quietly with a couple of girls. I’m thankful that God created both the adventurous boy and the quiet one, even if the world deems one more manly. I pray that both boys grow up to be godly men who love the Lord Jesus, faithfully living out a biblical masculinity that encompasses both warrior and poet.

Since I'm a girl dad, I know far more about raising daughters than sons. Both of my girls like crafts, dresses, and tea parties. But interestingly, they both like to compete in sports, and neither can stand shopping. Perhaps one day they will have a corporate job leading a team of men and women, or maybe they will choose to raise children at home. There is nothing inherently wrong with the goals that the world typically wants for girls—such as marriage, kids, beauty, and career—but those aren't my goals for them. I'm focusing my prayers and efforts on training them to embrace biblical femininity in preparation for whatever future the Lord has in mind for them.

Parents, don't take your cues from the world. Look to Scripture, which is sufficient to guide you in raising your boys and girls to become the men and women God intended them to be. Your responsibility is to have a clear vision of biblical masculinity and femininity, to be vigilant to the pressures your children face, and to work together with the church to shepherd your children toward that vision. May God use our prayers and faithful labors to bless the children in our midst!

– James Chiang

¹ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021), p.41.

² Piper and Grudem, p.58.

Gender: A Conversation Guide for Parents and Pastors

Written by Brian Seagraves and Hunter Leavine

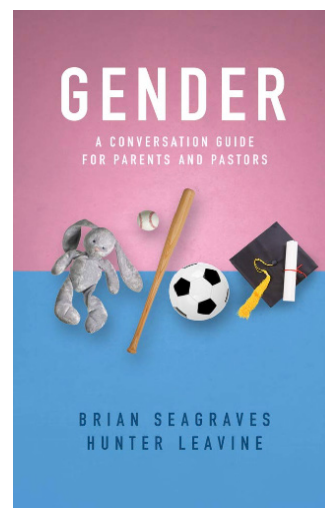
One of the most polarizing topics in recent years is gender. While to some Christians it might seem uncomfortable or perhaps unnecessary to discuss this topic with our children or teens, co-authors Brian Seagraves and Hunter Leavine encourage us to engage in constructive, loving, and biblical conversations about it—early and often.

The purpose of this concise and easy-to-read book is to “help [Christians] bring clarity to young minds in a world that is spinning in confusion” (p. 5). It begins by identifying two key dangers for children and teens: (1) basing their identities on how they think and feel about themselves rather than God’s design and (2) allowing the world to shape their view of God’s word instead of the other way around (pp. 9-12). These themes run throughout the book, which is organized into three “foundations” based on age ranges: preschool (0-7), elementary school (7-11), and middle/high school (12+). Each includes age-appropriate key concepts, tips, questions and discussion starters, and helpful conversation points. The section for teens also includes Bible passages to read and discuss. The final section addresses several important gender-related issues that may arise in conversations with children, teens, or even other adults, equipping readers to better understand these issues and answer objections.

I found the book particularly helpful not only because it provides Biblical clarity, but also because it highlights the evangelistic opportunities that such conversations can create. It encourages Christians not to isolate our children or ourselves from society, but to look for ways to build bridges with the gospel and God’s word. The authors emphasize that Christians should welcome these conversations, even with those who have different worldviews. We can disagree without being disrespectful or ungentle, and we can point them to Christ.

Although the title suggests the book is only “for pastors and parents” and the authors state it is created “for anyone who works with children or teens” (p. 13), I would recommend this book for any reader seeking to better understand how Christians should approach conversations on this or any other important topic with children, teens, or other adults—with clarity, compassion, and conviction (p. 6).

— Recommended by Chris Arbery



Excerpts from the Book

1

Often times the hardest issues to talk about can be turned into the strongest bridges to Christ. If we leave some of life’s most challenging questions unanswered and are unwilling to talk about some of the weighty things within the world, our children will grow up and look for answers elsewhere.

– “Foundation Two: Elementary Age (7-11Years),” p. 34

2

True tolerance respects people in the midst of disagreement. Christians are called to speak God’s truth into the dark voids of society and people’s lives, and yet to do so with gentleness and respect.

– “Foundation Three: Middle or High-School Age (12+),” p. 43

3

As Christians who believe what God’s word says about gender, let’s not be the ones who talk about it the least or last. Make it a point to have ongoing and appropriate conversations in your home.

– “Glossary,” p. 74

Available for checkout from the Church Library or purchase in the Bookstall.

God Made Boys and Girls by Marty

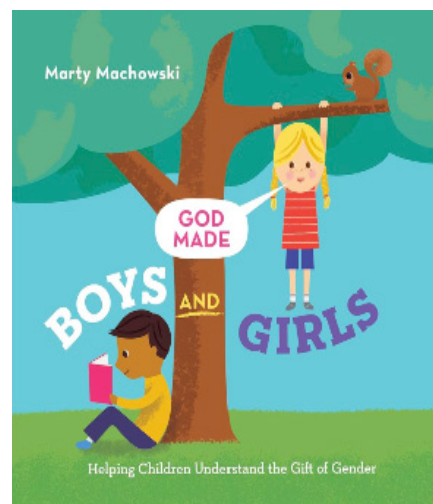
Written by Marty Machowski

God Made Boys and Girls is a children's picture book that uses storytelling to explore "the wonderful truth that God created each of us male or female according to his plan." While at recess, Lucas tells Maya she'll turn into a boy if she keeps playing with boys. After recess, their teacher, Mr. Ramirez, explains to the class that God picked some of us to be boys and others to be girls. He goes into a lengthy but manageable discourse that covers a scientific explanation of gender, God's perfect creation of male and female, and the unique gifts God gives to each of us. Mr. Ramirez proceeds to describe sin's corruption of God's good design for men and women and ends with a kid-friendly Gospel presentation and encouragement to love those who might be confused about their gender.

Machowski uses Mr. Ramirez's character to explain complex topics—X and Y chromosomes, genetics, and God's plans to shine forth his image—with simplicity, all while completely avoiding the mention of body parts. He makes it clear that girls and boys have all kinds of talents and gifts, including gifts that may not fit into gender stereotypes, like a girl who enjoys fixing cars. Machowski also weaves a Gospel presentation into the story and clearly states what it takes to be saved. At the end of the book, Mr. Ramirez asks the students how they can show others God's love, and their answers encourage us to love those who disagree with us or may be confused about their gender.

This book is intended to be read by a parent with a child but would be helpful to any adult who is looking for simple language to talk about what it means to be male and female. The content is appropriate to read with young children, but, taking into consideration length and discussion, it may be best for elementary-aged children or older. The book begins and ends with notes to adults that offer encouragement, talking points, and truths to share with children.

— Recommended by Erin Basurto



Excerpts from the Book

1

God gives each of us a special code that is found in every tiny little cell in your body. There is a code for the color of your skin, hair and eyes. And there is a code that says you are a boy and a code that says you are a girl.

– p. 9

2

Remember, it is not what we do or like or think that makes us a boy or a girl. God gave us our gender as a special gift, and God never makes mistakes. His ways are perfect.

– p. 19

3

Jesus said that we should love our neighbors and even those who disagree with us. So we should show love should love to people who might be confused about their gender and about how God made them.

– p. 27

APRIL

These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message. Take Up & Read!

April 1	Ephesians 3:14–21	April 17	John 19:1–16
April 2	Romans 11:33–36	April 18	John 20:1–18
April 3	Jude 24–25	April 19	John 19:17–42
April 4	Proverbs 2:1–15	April 20	John 20:1–18
April 5	Proverbs 2:16–22	April 21	Haggai 1:1–15
April 6	Romans 16:21–27	April 22	Ezra 1
April 7	John 12:12–19	April 23	Ezra 2
April 8	Mark 8:31–38	April 24	Matthew 6:1–24
April 9	Mark 9:30–32	April 25	Matthew 6:25–34
April 10	Mark 10:32–45	April 26	Ezra 3
April 11	Zechariah 9:9–17	April 27	Haggai 1:1–15
April 12	John 12:20–50	April 28	2 Samuel 23:3–4
April 13	John 12:12–19	April 29	1 Peter 5:1–11
April 14	John 20:1–18	April 30	Ephesians 5:22–6:9
April 15	John 18:1–14		
April 16	John 18:15–40		

TAKE UP & READ

NEW MEMBERS



**Katherine
Bell**



**Sam & Rachel
Edwards**



MOUNT VERNON

BAPTIST CHURCH