

Cross Gender Connection, Power and Protection

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.” Gen. 1:27

In Wellspring Group events, men and women sometimes interact and engage on deep subjects. Occasionally in large group interactions, you may engage a brother or sister at a significant, in-depth heart level. These interactions highlight the power of pure and holy cross-gender connection in authentic Biblical community. We believe that is godly and biblical, most clearly demonstrated in Jesus’ experience of authentic, intimate relationships with women. In fact, as Genesis 1:27 illuminates, God’s image and glory are most fully seen in the connection of both “male and female.”

Yet, anything powerful can also be dangerous, and so appropriate boundaries need to be in place and respected in order to provide a protected environment for powerful connection to occur. In this Battle event, for example, men and women remain in separate small groups and engage in their gender-specific small groups. This attention to appropriate boundaries needs to be understood in any situation involving deep, heart level engaging; it is not exclusively a cross-gender issue. For example, when a man engages another man he does not know well, he needs to be very cautious about boundaries because that man may struggle with same-sex attraction issues.

The following are a few general guidelines for cross-gender interaction. The primary focus is on applying Reality 4: There is a Fellowship that Desires to Protect You.

- If married, protect deep conversations with someone of the opposite gender by including a third party, even conversations online or through text. Always copy a spouse or another person on anything that could be misconstrued or considered heart-engagement over email.
- When you express admiration/affection, be intentional about maintaining a heart attitude of a brother to a sister.
- Express yourself in ways that you would in front of their spouse and your spouse (if one or both are not married, then consider the future spouse).
- Ensure appropriate depth and (in)frequency of emotional engagements with someone of the opposite gender.
- Be very careful in anything related to touch

In this environment, it is not appropriate to have individual/exclusive in-depth engagement with the opposite sex (unless the person is your spouse). Evil has done a thorough job of distorting cross-gender interaction in our culture, and the way back to healthy relationships that more fully express the image and glory of God through both genders is to clarify and respect appropriate boundaries. Those boundaries create a safe context in which brothers and sisters can experience the fullness of God’s love and grace through their unique gendered expressions. The protection of the Fellowship then propels us into becoming all that we are created to be.