

Dear friends,

I was talking with my son's beautiful bride about a month ago when somehow the topic turned to a book that her friend, Carla, had sent her to read. "Captivating – Unveiling The Mystery of a Woman's Soul" is the title. It is written by John and Stasi Eldredge. It is refreshing to read the insights into the persona of a woman by this Christian couple. I thought it might help me for sermon material or Bible Class so I asked to borrow it. I'd like to share some of the things it contains in a series of letters to you as I read through it in the next few weeks. Please feel free to pass this on to some other person with a burning desire to know more about God's grand design of Woman. If you are not interested simply delete this or reply that I shouldn't continue to share it with you and I will certainly oblige. Here goes...

I have always had a deep respect and regard for the beauty and heart of a woman. I suppose that most of this is because I have grown up in a Christian home raised by a Lutheran Pastor and his beauty wife, my Mom, Carol. (ElRoy is Dad's name – he's in heaven now!) Holy Scripture has plenty to say about the marvelous way that God blessed the world with the gift of women. So enthralled with this gift was Adam, the first man, that when he awoke from his God-induced sleep and discovered his new companion and love of his life that he exclaimed, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh..." (Genesis 2:23) What an exquisite, living, breathing, piece of art was this amazing woman! That's how a truly Christian man perceives of his wife as well. I feel this way about the woman God blessed me with as a partner through this earthly life too, my bride, Donna.

In the first chapter the author speaks about "The Heart of a Woman." She begins by telling of a wonderful experience she had with her husband and family while on a camping trip in the Tetons. She relates the tale of how she was forced by necessity to help her husband paddle down the river in the pitch black of night when they encountered a wild bull moose waiting exactly where they had planned to come ashore. He was blocking the only exit they had from the river and she remembered that many people had been killed by moose in our national parks. Somehow as she and her husband were forced to paddle upriver against the current in the complete darkness she had to summon up the strength and perseverance to keep her family safe. Her husband must steer with skill while she must paddle with strength. If they made just one mistake the strong current would force the canoe broadside, fill it, and sweep their boys off downriver into the night.

They did it, together. They rose to the challenge when everything was on the line for their family's welfare. She pretended she was Sacagawea, Indian Princess of the West, a valiant and strong woman. And with God's help, she prevailed.

Hidden inside the heart of every woman is a longing for certain things. This is a divine spark and initiative to be relevant, important, to live a life with meaningful participation of her skills and unique abilities as a woman. Wise men acknowledge this and appreciate it in a woman. God's kind of offspring sense this in one another as God lives and grows in them through Word and Sacrament.

With all the pressures to achieve and the high expectations on women to be the "super woman" of Proverbs 31, or of some fairytale, society and the church even sometimes leave well-intentioned women befuddled and guilt ridden, as well as tired and exasperated in the pursuit of what they too desire to reach or fulfill. Scripture does well to remind us, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Prov. 4:23). But many times we forget that our heart is the core to who we truly are. As Staci says, "It is the source of all our creativity, our courage, and our convictions. It is the fountainhead of our faith, our hope, and of course, our love. This "wellspring of life" within us is the very essence of our existence, the center of our being. Your heart as a woman is the most important thing about you."

If a woman doesn't understand this or has it beaten out of her by abuse, lack of understanding parents or spouses, or by neglect, she can never hope to fulfill her promise or potential to be all her Creator designed her and every woman to be.

Staci suggests that the journey as a woman begins with "desire." This is the journey to discover what God meant when He created woman "in His image." Just look at the things that little girls play with. Look at the movies women love. What is it that a woman really wants? What does she dream of? Think about the believing women of the Bible. Tamar, Ruth, Rahab – not exactly the paradigm of virtue or the churchy kind we're often accustomed to. But God places these women in the Bible to be honored and esteemed.

Staci and John offer for our consideration that "every woman in her heart longs for three things: to be romanced, to play an irreplaceable role in a great adventure, and to unveil beauty. That's what makes a woman come alive." Its in this effort I am attempting to help you women reading these words to do just that, as you live and grow and have "your being" in Christ, as a sanctified individual, with much to offer society, our communities, our homes and our churches.

As an example of this Desire To Be Romanced the authors get us to thinking by offering examples of games female kids played when they were growing up. One of her favorite games was "kidnapped and rescued." She wanted to be the beauty that was taken captive by the bad guys, fought for and then rescued by a hero. (Guys often played the opposite roles in their childhood play, as rescuer and hero, right fellas?! I did anyhow.) In girlhood dreams she envisioned herself as Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, or Maid Marian.

In the literature that women read this same longing is behind much of what causes them to spend more than a few dollars on books that help them “to relax,” as my own wife puts it. A little girl (and yes, the big, grown up ones too guys!) longs for romance, to be fought over and desired and seen as a beauty. That’s why they cheer when the Beast wins the heart of the Beauty in Beauty and the Beast. They dream of being the woman at the bow of the ship in that gorgeous scene from The Titanic. They long to ride off on horseback in the Scottish Highlands with a guy like Mel Gibson. (It isn’t really that they want someone else in place of you men who are their husbands, its just that they want to be loved and pursued and romanced like that themselves! That should help the light bulb to go on in some of our dimmer minds, like my own.)

She wants to also have An Irreplaceable Role In A Great Adventure. The author urges us to think about the role of Sarah from the TV movie, Sarah, Plain and Tall. “A man and his young children need her; their world is not right until she becomes a part of it.” Her courage and creativity helped tame the West! That’s how Staci herself, the author, feels as she remembers the story of canoeing in the dark beauty of the Tetons with her family. She was needed! Not only that, but she was irreplaceable!

And so are you my dear! God designed you with wild potential and unbridled purpose. It’s up to you to unleash that “you” with God’s entire blessing. You don’t need to long for the role of a man to be tremendously relevant. You are a wonderful and priceless gem. You are a daughter of the most high God. You are exactly who God wanted you to be and where He planned for you to be. With His watering and the sunshine of His love, you will continue to find ways to fully blossom into the enchanting and captivating woman that you were always meant to be. And the good news is that it’s never too late. Some of God’s most beautiful and treasured gifts are the women who have matured into their 50s, 60s, and 70s and beyond!

Well, I’ve got to get back to work and the role God designed for my life now so I’ll end this letter for the time being. I hope it has helped you to see how incredibly God has blessed our world with the gift of women, women who understand more and more why they are “programmed” and “wired” the way God in His wisdom has done so very, very well. Maybe you want to pass this on to some man in your life who appreciates you now, but needs a little reminder or insight into the intricacies of the design of the One who shaped us all. Until next time, God bless!

Pastor Randy