

Gender Pathologies

Men and women are different—surprise! But one difference sets up serious pathologies that intensify the conflict between the genders.

“A gracious woman retains honor, but ruthless men retain riches” (Prov. 11:16).

“As a ring of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion” (Prov. 11:22).



These two observations, separated by only five verses, highlight a quirk of human nature that explains much of the friction that damages relationships between men and women. Let’s dig in.

Verse 16 says that men get rich by being “ruthless” (NKJV). Other translations read “aggressive” or “violent.” That is, they usually get what they want by brute force. Contrast that with the woman in verse 22, who is described as “lovely” (NKJV). Most other versions render this word as “beautiful.” Which is an oblique way of saying that women tend to achieve their goals by enhancing their physical appearance.

Simply stated, these two verses point to the different means by which men and women seek success in their lives. Men seek it by *projecting strength*. Whether in the military, in business, or in personal relationships, men tend to be more assertive, forceful, and aggressive, and others—especially women—are attracted to that strength. Women, on the other hand, seek success by *projecting*

beauty. They spend inordinate amounts of time and money on their hair, clothing, makeup, and jewelry, all for the purpose of attracting the attention of men—who respond predictably.

These two facts explain so much that we see in the relations between men and women.

Men rely on strength, partly because of biology, but also because it works. Women are attracted to athletes, Hollywood hunks, and even “bad boys,” most of whom end up as lousy mates. Feminists can object all they want, but there’s something about strong men that women find irresistible.

Similarly, the weakness of men for beautiful women is legendary. Like moths drawn to the flame, men succumb to the alluring curves and moves of women who know how to dangle the bait. Even the best of men can be lured into disastrous liaisons based entirely on physical beauty.

So men and women each have qualities that appeal to the base instincts of the other. And neither is very good at recognizing the down side of what attracts them. This interlocking pathology is a dance of death that drags both into heartache and destruction.

There is a hidden lesson in these two proverbs that men and women would do well to learn. First, a wise woman will not be drawn to the macho posturing of a man who tries to impress her with his physique, money, status, or any other display of power. She will “retain her honor” and save herself for a man who has nothing to prove but will provide for her sacrificially.

Likewise, a man who seeks to mate with a woman strictly based on her looks is like someone who grasps at a valuable gold ring, unaware that it is attached to a pig. He may get his ring, but he’ll get a lot of ugly trouble with it. The wise man will look past the glossy exterior to the character inside. If he can’t find beauty in her character, he’ll look elsewhere for companionship.

These verses do not disparage masculine strength nor feminine beauty. A good man will use his strength as a tool to serve others and protect the weak. Female beauty is a wonderful gift, but a good woman will concentrate on developing inner beauty, because that is where her true value lies.

Male or female, how we find affirmation in life is based on *character*, both in ourselves and in our mates. Choose wisely.

— David King