

The Privilege of Being a Woman

PRO TIP
Download other grades for alternate activities!

CONNECTIONS TO THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CCC 369–373
CCC 1607–1608
CCC 2335
CCC 2363
CCC 2366–2368

SUGGESTED TIME

45–50 minutes (Given the complexity of the topic and the reading, you may consider having your students read and discuss the questions over two class periods.)

MATERIALS

- ▶ [The Privilege of Being a Woman Reflection \(Girls\)](#)
- ▶ [The Privilege of Being a Woman Reflection \(Boys\)](#)
- ▶ Excerpt from *The Privilege of Being a Woman* by Alice von Hildebrand, Part VI: Women's Supernatural Mission, found at [SophiaOnline.org/PrivilegeOfBeing](https://www.sophiaonline.org/PrivilegeOfBeing)
- ▶ [Teacher Resource: Personality Profiles](#)

Teacher Background

Sexual difference is a fundamental tenet of being human. The *Catechism* tells us that “Being man’ or ‘being woman’ is a reality which is good and willed by God” (369), a reality that is “the most beautiful and most powerful of” the differences between living beings (*Dignitatis Infinita* 58). Alice von Hildebrand, in her book *The Privilege of Being a Woman* offers a profound reflection on authentic womanhood that can help both men and women reclaim the truth about what it means to be a woman and women’s role in the family and the greater society.



HOW DOES THIS LESSON HELP INOCULATE STUDENTS AGAINST GENDER IDEOLOGY?

Gender ideology seeks to diminish or remove sexual difference, asserting that femininity and masculinity are mere constructs. It has, in recent years, begun to insist on the use of so-called “inclusive” language that obscures women’s unique role in procreation, e.g., “people who give birth,” “pregnant people,” or “people who menstruate.” This practice attempts to erase womanhood and femininity as realities. The truth is that woman is the pinnacle of creation, who uniquely shares in God’s creativity. Thus, woman possesses an intimate relationship with Him wholly her own. Women are central not only to just the existence of human life, but to the continued nurturing of life throughout all its stages. Because of this reality, authentic womanhood – and the differences between the sexes – ought to be celebrated, honored, and protected, especially from the ideologies that threaten them.

Activity

Teacher’s Note

Due to the nature of this lesson, we advise separating your students into same-sex groups in different spaces for the entire lesson, or, in the least, for the reading and discussion portion of the activity, so that they can reflect and discuss more freely and comfortably. It would be best to have a male teacher, administrator, or parent facilitate the lesson with the boys and a female teacher, administrator, or parent facilitate the lesson with the girls. .

- A. Begin by having your students work with a partner to create a list of five to ten essential characteristics of men or “being male” and five to ten essential characteristics of women or “being female.” Encourage students to think of both physical qualities and immaterial, psycho-social and spiritual qualities, while being sure to keep their responses respectful and appropriate.

- B.** When they have finished, call on pairs of students to share their lists. Record responses on the board in two columns, one labeled “Men,” and one labeled “Women.”
- C.** Next, ask your students if it was easy or difficult to create these lists, at least at first. *Students will probably observe that it was likely fairly easy for them to create these lists, at least at first, because there are many differences between men and women that are obvious and self-evident.*

D. Then explain and discuss with your students that there are very real differences between the sexes. In fact, while we often talk about the unity of man and woman in marriage and the complementarity of the sexes, these realities are *only* possible because of our differences. (If we were the same, there could be no complementarity!). The differences between men and women are not merely stereotypes, superficial, or limited to physical appearance. Rather, being male or being female encompasses a person’s entire being from the moment of his or her conception, including:

- A person’s wholly unique genome imprinted in every cell of his or her body.
- Physical/bodily differences.
- The way we respond to the world around us as men and women.
- A person’s interior life.
- Our very souls.

E. Continue to explain the following:

- Being male and being female are undeniably and magnificently very different ways of being human. The *Catechism* affirms these truths, saying:

Man and woman have been created, which is to say, willed by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. “Being man” or “being woman” is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator. Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity “in the image of God.” In their “being-man” and “being-woman,” they reflect the Creator’s wisdom and goodness.” (369)

- The 2024 Church document *Dignitas Infinita* emphasizes that sexual difference, “is the most beautiful and most powerful [difference],” which, “achieves the most marvelous of reciprocities.” The marital union, “thus becomes the source of that miracle that never ceases to surprise us: the arrival of new human beings in the world.” (58)
- Sadly, one of the greatest threats to human dignity today, which comes from our secular culture, and, specifically, gender theory, is the denial of the foundational difference between “being male” and “being female.”

- *Dignitatis Infinita* remarks (quoting Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*) that gender theory ideology, "envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family" (59). Insidiously, this has translated into a practical elimination of womanhood and femininity. For example, some politicians and LGBTQ activists and organizations have begun to push for an "inclusive" change in language to say things like "people who give birth," "pregnant people," or "people who menstruate," instead of simply "women." We have even seen in recent years men who have taken steps to "transition" to the opposite sex (either psycho-socially, pharmaceutically, or through surgical interventions) taking part in women-only sports and dominating the competition, overwriting records rightly won by female athletes, winning female beauty contests, and even being nominated "woman of the year" by different organizations and publications. Again, transgender ideology, in seeking "inclusivity" by removing sexual difference, has effectively eliminated womanhood from various realms of society.

F. Next, distribute to your students [The Privilege of Being a Woman Reflection](#). There are two versions of the handout, one for girls and one for boys. Make available to your students Part VI: Women's Supernatural Mission from the book *The Privilege of Being a Woman* by Alice von Hildebrand, either by printing it out and distributing it to them or by sharing with them the link SophiaOnline.org/PrivilegeOfBeing. (The excerpt begins on pg. 34 of the document.)

G. Then have your students work individually to read the excerpt. When they have finished, either discuss as a whole group the reflection questions, or arrange your students into pairs or trios and have them discuss the reflection questions together.



Note: Given the complexity of the topic and the reading, you may consider having your students read and discuss the questions over two class periods.

H. Before your students read the excerpt, consider discussing the following terms used in the reading that the author assumes her reader understands.

Key Terms:

- **Fecundity (n.):** Fruitfulness or fertility; the quality, especially in females, of being capable of producing offspring, or children.
- **Metaphysics (n.):** The branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge of immaterial things, such as existence itself, the substances of things (i.e., what a thing is versus what it is not), causes, and ultimately the necessity of a First Cause, or Being itself.

I. As part of the class discussion about the reading, particularly in connection with question number 2, consider addressing with your students that some might think the author of the reading is speaking in stereotypes, particularly in the thought experiment described in the beginning of the reading. Raise the question, what if some of the women had gone to investigate the computer instead of going to the baby, or what if some of the men had gone to cradle the baby instead of going to the computer? Would that have changed the outcomes of the reflection about the differences between men and women?

J. Project the chart from [Teacher Resource: Personality Profiles](#). Then explain the following:

- This chart shows the results of an international study of male and female personality traits. The vast majority of boys and girls express so-called “stereotypical” traits and preferences. These traits and preferences can be called stereotypical precisely because of this fact. However, not every male and female expresses these so-called stereotypical traits and preferences. The curve on the chart shows that, for both boys and girls, there are some whose personality traits and preferences align more closely with the opposite sex.
- Ask: If a boy tends to have personality traits and preferences that are more “stereotypically” female traits and preferences, does that mean he is not a boy? *Allow a few moments of reasoned discussion.*

- Explain that, rather than showing that so-called stereotypical personality traits *define* a person’s sex — that a boy who has more “stereotypical” female traits or preferences is *actually* a girl — the researchers show, as evidenced by this chart, that *most* boys and *most* girls express common so-called stereotypical traits and preferences, but the traits and preferences do not define a person’s sex. In other words, for example, if *most* girls prefer playing with dolls over trucks, but some girls prefer playing with trucks, the girls who prefer to play with trucks are not actually boys. They are simply girls who prefer playing with trucks. As the researchers note, an individual whose personality traits and preferences do not align entirely with the majority of his or her sex, “simply exists at the bend of a behavioral spectrum, and ‘sex-atypical’ behavior is part of the natural variation exhibited both within and between the sexes,” and, in fact, should be expected. Again, the researchers note:

*There are approximately forty million children in the United States between the ages of four and fourteen. **The distribution curve above would suggest that roughly four million of them have personality profiles that are “sex atypical” but which are still part of the natural distribution of personalities within each sex.***

K. Conclude by asking your students, given all they have learned and discussed in this lesson, why it is important to protect and defend authentic womanhood.

The Privilege of Being a Woman Reflection (Girls)

Directions: First, read Part VI: Women’s Supernatural Mission from the book *The Privilege of Being a Woman* by Alice Von Hildebrand found at [SophiaOnline.org/PrivilegeOfBeing](https://www.sophiaonline.org/PrivilegeOfBeing). (The excerpt begins on pg. 34 of the document.) Then discuss with your class or your group the reflection questions below.

- 1 What did St. Edith Stein observe that women are more interested in than men? What thought experiment did the author propose to illustrate this difference? Who does the author say is correct? Why?
- 2 Imagine that you are a participant in a real-life version of the above scenario. How do you think you would respond in such a situation? Why? The thought experiment described by the author might be criticized as a stereotype by some. Does that make it necessarily wrong? Why or why not?
- 3 The author suggests that women are “more responsive to the personal than to the impersonal,” and respond “intuitively, without much deliberation, because they ‘feel’ that persons rank higher than nonpersonal beings.”

Why might God have designed women with this special sensitivity?

- 4 The author states that there is a metaphysical hierarchy of being that places living things above non-living things, and that God, who is Being itself, and is the God of life, is the pinnacle of this hierarchy. She suggests that there is a unique metaphysical bond between womanhood and life — and thus a unique connection between women and God — because women give life.

What does this metaphysical connection suggest about motherhood? Given this reality, do you think our culture respects motherhood? Why or why not?

- 5 The author suggests that a woman who freely chooses to abort her child, without any form of coercion, wounds her feminine nature “to its very core.” Why do you think this is so? What does this reality suggest about the needs for and effects of God’s mercy for women who have had an abortion?

See suggested answers on page 12.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 6 The author notes that St. Edith Stein claimed that women are “more interested in wholes than in parts,” and that women’s minds, “do not dissect an object; they grasp it in totality,” suggesting that women’s minds are, “geared to what is metaphysically higher.” Put another way, as the author quotes the American master of quotations, John Bartlett, “Women are wiser than men because they . . . understand more.”

How have you experienced the wisdom of women? What examples from your own life can you give that support St. Edith Stein’s claim and John Bartlett’s quote?

- 7 What is the difference between receptivity and passivity? In what ways are all people essentially receptive? How are women uniquely receptive?
- 8 The author describes the miracle of childbearing as an example of the unique receptivity and gift of womanhood: a woman receives the “living seed” given by her husband, which, hours later, fertilizes an egg within her body to conceive an entirely new and unique human person within her. And God, who creates the immaterial, immortal soul of every person, “touches” the female body to place the soul of the newly conceived human person in the child in her womb. During the nine months that follow, the woman carries within her body two souls. This miraculous experience is one wholly unique to women.

Have you ever thought about how miraculous childbearing is? How do you regard the mothers in your life (your own mother, your grandmother, or other women you know who are mothers)?

Do you know anyone who has given birth? How do they speak of their experience of pregnancy, giving birth, and of motherhood?

- 9 Have you ever considered becoming a mother yourself? How does it make you feel to think about being a mother?
- 10 The author describes the receptivity of woman, particularly in the marital act, as a “unique donation,” a profound gift. How can accepting “to receive” be a gift?

Do you find it easier to give or to receive from others (e.g., receiving help)? Why? How does it feel when you give help to others? How does it feel to receive help from others?

Why might God have designed men with a special sense of responsibility and independence? If women are receptive by nature, what does that mean for you, as a woman, and how you ought to be viewed and treated by men?

See suggested answers on page 12.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 11 When we reflect on the gift of life each of us has been given, it is impossible to deny the unique, irreplaceable, and absolutely essential creative role of women in human life itself. And yet, it is precisely womanhood that gender ideology seeks to eliminate. The author reflects upon the creative miracle of childbirth that “stems from womanly receptivity,” quoting the German author Gertrude von Le Fort: “The artist who no longer gives God the honor, and instead proclaims only himself, must, by excluding the religious element from culture, practically eliminate also its womanly qualities.”

What does the author and the author she quotes suggest is at the root of the secular culture’s work to eliminate womanhood from society? Why is this not actually inclusive?

- 12 The Virgin Mary – by her “yes” to God’s invitation to be the Mother of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world – is the greatest model for us all of receptivity to the Lord, and thus, holiness. In a special way, all women contain uniquely within their womanhood this same receptivity and capacity for holiness.

How have you experienced, as a woman, God’s call to holiness in your life? How can you be more receptive to the Lord in your life?

- 13 Given all you have learned and reflected upon in this reading and reflection, how would you describe authentic womanhood? How can you embrace and support authentic womanhood in your own life?

See suggested answers on page 13.

The Privilege of Being a Woman Reflection (Boys)

Directions: First, read Part VI: Women’s Supernatural Mission from the book *The Privilege of Being a Woman* by Alice Von Hildebrand found at [SophiaOnline.org/PrivilegeOfBeing](https://www.sophiaonline.org/PrivilegeOfBeing). (The excerpt begins on pg. 34 of the document.) Then discuss with your class or your group the reflection questions below.

- 1 What did St. Edith Stein observe that women are more interested in than men? What thought experiment did the author propose to illustrate this difference? Who does the author say is correct? Why?
- 2 Imagine that you are a participant in a real-life version of the above scenario. How do you think you would respond in such a situation? Why? The thought experiment described by the author might be criticized as a stereotype by some. Does that make it necessarily wrong? Why or why not?
- 3 The author suggests that women are “more responsive to the personal than to the impersonal,” and respond “intuitively, without much deliberation, because they ‘feel’ that persons rank higher than nonpersonal beings.”

Have you ever noticed this tendency in the women in your life? How so? What examples can you give?

- 4 The author states that there is a metaphysical hierarchy of being that places living things above non-living things, and that God, who is Being itself, and is the God of life, is the pinnacle of this hierarchy. She suggests that there is a unique metaphysical bond between womanhood and life – and thus a unique connection between women and God – because women give life.

What practical evidence can you give that supports these realities?

- 5 The author suggests that a woman who freely chooses to abort her child, without any form of coercion, wounds her feminine nature “to its very core.” Why do you think this is so? What does this reality suggest about the needs for and effects of God’s mercy for women who have had an abortion?

See suggested answers on page 12.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 6 The author notes that St. Edith Stein claimed that women are, “more interested in wholes than in parts,” and that women’s minds, “do not dissect an object; they grasp it in totality,” suggesting that women’s minds are, “geared to what is metaphysically higher.” Put another way, as the author quotes the American master of quotations, John Bartlett, “Women are wiser than men because they . . . understand more.”

How have you experienced the wisdom of women? What examples from your own life can you give that support St. Edith Stein’s claim and John Bartlett’s quote?

- 7 What is the difference between receptivity and passivity? In what ways are all people essentially receptive? How are women uniquely receptive?

- 8 The author describes the miracle of childbirth as an example of the unique receptivity and gift of womanhood: a woman receives the “living seed” given by her husband, which, hours later, fertilizes an egg within her body to conceive an entirely new and unique human person within her. And God, who creates the immaterial, immortal soul of every person, “touches” the female body to place the soul of the newly conceived human person in the child in her womb. During the nine months that follow, the woman carries within her body two souls. This miraculous experience is one wholly unique to women.

Have you ever thought about how miraculous childbirth is? How do you regard the mothers in your life (your own mother, your grandmother, or other women you know who are mothers)?

Do you know anyone who has given birth? How do they speak of their experience of pregnancy, giving birth, and of motherhood?

- 9 Have you ever considered becoming a father yourself? How does it make you feel to think about your future wife being a mother and carrying your child within her body?

- 10 The author describes the receptivity of woman, particularly in the marital act, as a “unique donation,” a profound gift. How can accepting “to receive” be a gift?

Do you find it difficult to receive from others (e.g., receiving help)? Why or why not?

How does it feel when you receive help from others?

Why might God have designed men with a special sense of responsibility and independence? If women are receptive by nature, what does that mean for you, as a man, regarding how you ought to view and treat women?

See suggested answers on page 12.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 11 When we reflect on the gift of life each of us has been given, it is impossible to deny the unique, irreplaceable, and absolutely essential creative role of women in human life itself. Yet, it is precisely womanhood that gender ideology seeks to eliminate. The author reflects upon the creative miracle of childbirth that “stems from womanly receptivity,” quoting the German author Gertrude von Le Fort: “The artist who no longer gives God the honor, and instead proclaims only himself, must, by excluding the religious element from culture, practically eliminate also its womanly qualities.”

What does the author and the author she quotes suggest is at the root of the secular culture’s work to eliminate womanhood from society? Why is this not actually inclusive?

- 12 The Virgin Mary — by her “yes” to God’s invitation to be the Mother of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world — is the greatest model for us all of receptivity to the Lord, and thus, holiness. In a special way, all women contain uniquely within their womanhood this same receptivity and capacity for holiness.

St. Joseph was also called by God in his manly role as husband and father. He took Mary into his home at God’s urging, protected Mary and the infant Jesus from Herod in the flight to Egypt, and continued to support and protect Mary and Jesus throughout his life. As a man, you too are called in a special way by God to be receptive to His grace in your life and seek holiness. How have you experienced God’s call to holiness in your life? How can you be more receptive to the Lord in your life?

- 13 Given all you have learned and reflected upon in this reading and reflection, how would you describe authentic womanhood? How can you embrace and support authentic womanhood in your own life?

See suggested answers on page 13.

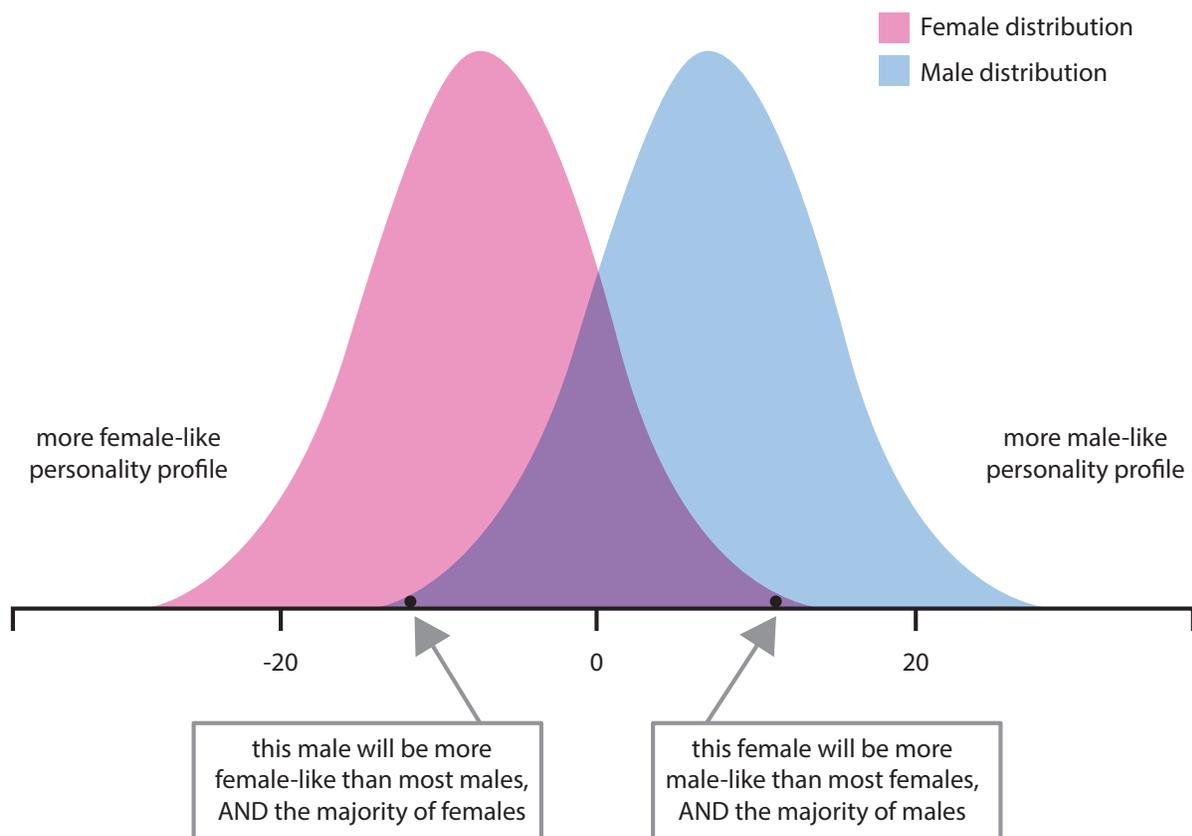
THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING A WOMAN (GIRLS/BOYS) ANSWER KEY

1. She observed that women are more interested in persons than in things (implying that men are more interested in things). The author proposed a thought experiment of a group of men and women gathered behind a closed door and, when the door is opened, they find a large room with only a baby in a cradle and a brand-new computer. She suggested that the women will flock to the baby to cuddle and cradle it and marvel as it coos, while the men will glance at the baby and gravitate towards the computer and play with it with passion. The author suggests that the women are correct because a baby is a “marvel of God’s creation that no technological accomplishment can match.” She notes that women, “place the concrete over the abstract,” and, “individuals over universals.”
2. Accept reasoned answers. Even though some may criticize the thought experiment described by the author as a stereotype, it does not make the conclusions wrong. As evidenced by the chart and discussion about personality traits and preferences (see letters I and J from the teacher instructions), sex stereotypes do not define a person’s sex — for example, that a boy who has more “stereotypical” female traits or preferences is actually a girl. Rather, an individual whose personality traits and preferences do not align entirely with the majority of his or her sex, “simply exists at the bend of a behavioral spectrum, and ‘sex-atypical’ behavior is part of the natural variation exhibited both within and between the sexes,” and, in fact, should be expected.
3. Girls: Accept reasoned answers.
Boys: Accept reasoned answers.
4. Through motherhood, women uniquely encounter God and share in His creativity, a reality that bestows on motherhood a unique and profound dignity. In general, our culture does not respect motherhood as it ought. It often views motherhood as an inconvenience to a woman’s lifestyle and particularly to her work. Often, our culture both overtly and subtly discourages a woman from becoming a mother and, if she does choose to be a mother, does not give her the support to fully embrace her motherhood. Accept additional reasoned answers.
5. A woman who freely chooses to abort her child freely chooses to deny, turn her back on, and reject that part of herself that is authentically feminine, mortally wounding her fundamental identity as a woman made in the image and likeness of God. This reality reveals the great need for God’s limitless mercy and love for women who have had an abortion in order to heal and be reconciled to God, and to have her authentic womanhood restored. Accept additional reasoned answers.
6. Accept reasoned answers.
7. Passivity, or being passive, is the opposite of active, or being inactive; it is to be acted upon without response or resistance. Receptivity, on the other hand, is an alert, awakened, joyful readiness to receive the act or actions of another. All people are essentially receptive because, as the author notes, “there is nothing that we have not received.” In other words, everything we have in this world, including our very lives, is something we have received from outside of ourselves. Women are uniquely receptive, with this receptivity inscribed in their biological nature. As the author notes, “a wife giving herself to her husband accepts joyfully to be fecundated, to receive. Her receptivity is a self-giving.”
8. Accept reasoned answers.
9. Girls: Accept reasoned answers.
Boys: Accept reasoned answers.
10. Girls: Accept reasoned answers. Because women are receptive by nature, it suggests that men ought to have an active role in protecting and defending the dignity of women, both in their own thoughts and conduct towards women, as well as in society as a whole. Women should also expect this behavior from the men in their lives as the standard rather than the exception to the norm.
Boys: Accept reasoned answers. Because women are receptive by nature, it suggests that men ought to have an active role in protecting and defending the dignity of women, both in their own thoughts and conduct towards women, as well as in society as a whole. Men should strive to cherish the women in their lives and treat them with great respect and honor.

THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING A WOMAN (GIRLS/BOYS) ANSWER KEY

11. The desire to proclaim, or celebrate, only oneself. The extreme individualism of the secular culture is really the opposite of inclusivity because, rather than seeking to build community that acknowledge differences and builds up the common good and the Kingdom of God in light of our differences, it focuses solely on one's own particular wants to the exclusion of others. Accept additional reasoned answers.
12. Girls and Boys: Accept reasoned answers. In order to be more receptive to the Lord, we must all listen for His voice in our lives by spending time in silence, in prayer, and by regularly hearing His Word in Scripture. Accept additional reasoned responses.
13. Reasoned answers should include reference to the receptivity of women, which, at the same time receives from others and is a profound self-gift. Authentic womanhood is also one that seeks and upholds the dignity of human beings, especially over things, and that intuitively is concerned with the goodness and well-being of others. Accept additional reasoned answers. Authentic womanhood should be welcomed and embraced in each of our lives and celebrated in society as a whole, not by eliminating the truly feminine from our culture, but by allowing women to be truly feminine. This includes supporting and celebrating motherhood as the beautiful miracle that it is. Accept additional reasoned responses.

Personality Profiles



William J. Malone, Colin M. Wright, and Julia D. Robertson, "No One Is Born in the Wrong Body," *Quillette* (24 Sept 2019)

The Privilege of Being a Woman

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- 2 Imagine that you are a participant in a real-life version of the above scenario. How do you think you would respond in such a situation? Why? The thought experiment described by the author might be criticized as a stereotype by some. Does that make it necessarily wrong? Why or why not?
- 3 The author suggests that women are “more responsive to the personal than to the impersonal,” and respond “intuitively, without much deliberation, because they ‘feel’ that persons rank higher than nonpersonal beings.”

Why might God have designed women with this special sensitivity?

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What does this metaphysical connection suggest about motherhood? Given this reality, do you think our culture respects motherhood? Why or why not?

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How have you experienced, as a woman, God’s call to holiness in your life? How can you be more receptive to the Lord in your life?

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- 1 What did St. Edith Stein observe that women are more interested in than men? What thought experiment did the author propose to illustrate this difference? Who does the author say is correct? Why?
- 2 Imagine that you are a participant in a real-life version of the above scenario. How do you think you would respond in such a situation? Why? The thought experiment described by the author might be criticized as a stereotype by some. Does that make it necessarily wrong? Why or why not?
- 3 The author suggests that women are “more responsive to the personal than to the impersonal,” and respond “intuitively, without much deliberation, because they ‘feel’ that persons rank higher than nonpersonal beings.”

Have you ever noticed this tendency in the women in your life? How so? What examples can you give?

- 4 The author states that there is a metaphysical hierarchy of being that places living things above non-living things, and that God, who is Being itself, and is the God of life, is the pinnacle of this hierarchy. She suggests that there is a unique metaphysical bond between womanhood and life – and thus a unique connection between women and God – because women give life.

What practical evidence can you give that supports these realities?

- 5 The author suggests that a woman who freely chooses to abort her child, without any form of coercion, wounds her feminine nature “to its very core.” Why do you think this is so? What does this reality suggest about the needs for and effects of God’s mercy for women who have had an abortion?

- 6 The author notes that St. Edith Stein claimed that women are, “more interested in wholes than in parts,” and that women’s minds, “do not dissect an object; they grasp it in totality,” suggesting that women’s minds are, “geared to what is metaphysically higher.” Put another way, as the author quotes the American master of quotations, John Bartlett, “Women are wiser than men because they . . . understand more.”

How have you experienced the wisdom of women? What examples from your own life can you give that support St. Edith Stein’s claim and John Bartlett’s quote?

- 7 What is the difference between receptivity and passivity? In what ways are all people essentially receptive? How are women uniquely receptive?

- 8 The author describes the miracle of childbirth as an example of the unique receptivity and gift of womanhood: a woman receives the “living seed” given by her husband, which, hours later, fertilizes an egg within her body to conceive an entirely new and unique human person within her. And God, who creates the immaterial, immortal soul of every person, “touches” the female body to place the soul of the newly conceived human person in the child in her womb. During the nine months that follow, the woman carries within her body two souls. This miraculous experience is one wholly unique to women.

Have you ever thought about how miraculous childbirth is? How do you regard the mothers in your life (your own mother, your grandmother, or other women you know who are mothers)?

Do you know anyone who has given birth? How do they speak of their experience of pregnancy, giving birth, and of motherhood?

- 9 Have you ever considered becoming a father yourself? How does it make you feel to think about your future wife being a mother and carrying your child within her body?

- 10 The author describes the receptivity of woman, particularly in the marital act, as a “unique donation,” a profound gift. How can accepting “to receive” be a gift?

Do you find it difficult to receive from others (e.g., receiving help)? Why or why not?

How does it feel when you receive help from others?

Why might God have designed men with a special sense of responsibility and independence? If women are receptive by nature, what does that mean for you, as a man, regarding how you ought to view and treat women?

- 11 When we reflect on the gift of life each of us has been given, it is impossible to deny the unique, irreplaceable, and absolutely essential creative role of women in human life itself. Yet, it is precisely womanhood that gender ideology seeks to eliminate. The author reflects upon the creative miracle of childbirth that “stems from womanly receptivity,” quoting the German author Gertrude von Le Fort: “The artist who no longer gives God the honor, and instead proclaims only himself, must, by excluding the religious element from culture, practically eliminate also its womanly qualities.”

What does the author and the author she quotes suggest is at the root of the secular culture’s work to eliminate womanhood from society? Why is this not actually inclusive?

- 12 The Virgin Mary – by her “yes” to God’s invitation to be the Mother of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world – is the greatest model for us all of receptivity to the Lord, and thus, holiness. In a special way, all women contain uniquely within their womanhood this same receptivity and capacity for holiness.

St. Joseph was also called by God in his manly role as husband and father. He took Mary into his home at God’s urging, protected Mary and the infant Jesus from Herod in the flight to Egypt, and continued to support and protect Mary and Jesus throughout his life. As a man, you too are called in a special way by God to be receptive to His grace in your life and seek holiness. How have you experienced God’s call to holiness in your life? How can you be more receptive to the Lord in your life?

- 13 Given all you have learned and reflected upon in this reading and reflection, how would you describe authentic womanhood? How can you embrace and support authentic womanhood in your own life?