

IX 9Marks Journal



Complementarianism

and the local church

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Jonathan Leeman

Editor's Note

The issue of gender roles in the church and home is not one of the nine marks. Nonetheless, we thought it would be useful to spend an issue of the 9Marks Journal exploring the pastoral significance of complementarianism. Complementarianism teaches that God created men and women equal in worth and dignity and yet he assigned them different roles in the church and home. Its counterpoint, egalitarianism, argues that you can only say men and women are equal in worth if you let both assume equal leadership in church or home.

Egalitarianism possesses an obvious appeal in an individualistic age. Like the immigrant parent who abandoned the Old World with its castes or its aristocracies, egalitarianism looks affirmingly into the eyes of the little boy and the little girl and offers that quintessential American promise: "You can be anything you want to be." Boundaries are gone. Ceilings have collapsed. God has given everyone certain talents. The game now is self-discovery and self-realization. Faithfulness requires us to discover and employ all our God-given potentialities. Like Madeline who says "Pooh pooh" to the tigers at the zoo, egalitarianism's brave maxim is to one's own self be true.

Egalitarianism depends upon the worldview of individualism. That doesn't mean egalitarians are all self-centered. It means that individual desires and talents trump any class or category considerations. So the rule-makers should never keep anyone belonging to the class of "female" from being whatever she wants to be. And complementarians, admittedly, limit what members of this class can be in the home and church. Based on the egalitarian's sense of justice, this is irrational. It is $2+2=5$. Complementarianism is not just a different perspective, it defies an egalitarian's basic assumptions about what it means to be human and is therefore dangerous. How many of history's grand exploitations and terrors have rooted in the systemic prejudice of one group over another!

As such, the emotions and the rhetoric run hot, as they always do in political contests where the two sides appear irrational to one another. Why? Because our rationalities always derive from our gods. Or rather, what you take to be "most reasonable" or "most rational" is your god. A god cannot be questioned. A god is the unmoved mover. A god is the word or logic who cannot be overruled. Emotions boil hot because one's gods hold one's universe together and gives it meaning, so we go to battle for them.

Precisely here, then, is where the complementarian, in all of his or her worldly folly, leans in toward the egalitarian and warns, "Be careful you are not serving an idol, at least in this one area of your doctrine. You'll have a pretty good idea that you are if, in spite of the plain teaching of the text, you'll find some justification for re-interpreting it because your sense of justice can imagine it no other way."

Complementarians imagine a different kind of home and church than egalitarians. They are just as acquainted with authority fallen, but they can better imagine authority redeemed. They know that being *in* authority is no better than

being *under* authority, because both are assignments given by God for the sake of serving him and his praise. They know that redeemed authority creates, enlivens, and empowers, and it's a shade short of silly to argue over who gets to empower and who gets to be empowered in God's kingdom. In fact, if there is an advantage to be had, it doesn't belong to the person called to lay down his life, it belongs to the person who receives life because the first person lays his down.

The calculations of justice change just a bit in a kingdom where the king gives his life as a ransom for many; where he calls all of his citizens to surrender their lives so that they might gain them; and where he calls out a class of his citizens to specially demonstrate this self-sacrifice. Is there any "advantage" to climbing upon a cross? Not by any of this world's tape measures.

The trouble with egalitarianism is that it continues to measure "advantage" and "authority" and "over/under" with the tape measures of this fallen world. It's stuck believing that, even if there are occasional advantages to being *under* authority for training purposes, in the final analysis it is always better to be *over*. Like the mother of the sons of Zebedee, egalitarianism asks Jesus,

Can my son sit at your right hand, while my daughter sits at your left, when you enter your kingdom?

And Jesus replies,

Ah, my child, you still do not understand how authority works in my kingdom, but are thinking about it like the Gentiles do, where authority is always used to lord it over others, not to give your life as a ransom (see Matt. 20:20-28).

The true danger is that of believing it's always better to be *over*. If that were true, its logic would apply to God. Happiness will finally elude us until we are *over* God, as someone intimated a very long time ago. And so we return to the caution against idolatry, which rests behind all the debates over gender and sexuality hermeneutics. What do the horrors of history really root in? They root in that one moment when all the authority in the universe was turned upside down because a man and a woman believed they could be "like God."

I understand that I'm making strong charges. And I hardly mean to indict Christians who hold to egalitarianism with wholesale idolatry. I do mean to indict aspects of egalitarianism as rooted in the gods of this world and the gods of the West in particular. It should not be surprising, therefore, to hear conservative voices characterize egalitarianism as the hermeneutical gateway drug to affirming same-sex marriage, or, ironically, to hear homosexuality-affirming liberal voices [agree](#). Nor is it surprising that the egalitarian PCUSA should decide to affirm gay marriage, or that many of the evangelicals churches coming out now for gay marriage were egalitarian years ago. The same god who prioritizes the self-defining individual over and above 2000-years of Bible reading stands behind both positions. The same god whispers to both kinds of readers, "Surely the text couldn't mean *that*. *That* would be unjust!" But who is defining justice here? Thomas Jefferson? Betty Friedan? Lady Gaga?

Gender roles do not belong to the nine marks, as I said, but we believe they are critical to a church's submission to Scripture and therefore its health. Fuller defenses of the position can be found at CBMW.org, which is run by Owen Strachan, who helped to compile the articles in this Journal. What you'll find here are a number of pieces that examine the topic from different angles in the life of the church and church member. We pray they are beneficial.



By Owen Strachan

Complementarianism as a Worldview

What, at base, is complementarianism? Is it merely a couple of doctrinal points on contested matters, answering the narrow questions of who is the buck-stopper in the home and who ascends the sacred desk at church?

In truth, complementarianism is much more than this. It is, in a sense, a worldview. In what follows, I pose four questions that show just how helpful, and evangelistically needful, complementarian doctrine is. Complementarianism is not simply *explanatory*, in other words. It is *apologetic*. Pastors have the opportunity to lead in this ministry of truth as they ask and address the questions people both in and out of the church are asking.

First, are the sexes equal? The image of God is borne by both men and women. Both sexes are made in God's likeness and are vice-regents of the creation (Genesis 1:26-27). Both participate equally and necessarily in the most immediate outworking of the dominion mandate, the procreation of children. Both are invested with glory and worth and dignity as a result of this divinely-wrought reality.

Here is the foundation for equality our culture lacks and desperately craves. The *imago dei* shows us that there is no competition between men and women, as our secularized society suggests. Men are not idiots by nature; women are not divas by nature. This does not mean that men and women are exactly the same. Though sharing much in terms of physiology, human experience, and spiritual life, the sexes are equal but different. Eve is called to be a "helper" for Adam, and Adam clearly has the leadership role in their marriage (Genesis 2:21, 24).

These role distinctions owe to the original design of God and are not evil or problematic. They are good and God-given. They are also reinforced in the New Testament, with women called to be "workers at home" (Titus 2:5) and men pictured as providers and spiritual leaders (1 Tim. 5:14; Eph. 5:22-33). There is an elegant symmetry in the complementarian scheme. As in the Godhead, so in the home: distinction of role and personhood is no threat to love and dignity. As in the Godhead, so in the kingdom: men and women are alike a royal priesthood, performing meaningful service to Christ, advancing the Great Commission together (1 Peter 2:9; Matthew 28:16-20).

Pastors possess the calling to make clear from the pulpit that all the silly stereotypes about sexual competition (which are sometimes perpetuated by the church) have no place in the Christian congregation. No other worldview so renders the sexes equal, and so bestows dignity upon them. In the *imago dei*, and especially in the cross of Christ, the age-old wounds are healed, and the battle of the sexes ceases.

Second, what is my body for? There is currently an avalanche of confusion over the body in Western culture.

Transgenderism teaches that the body is essentially a project of the true self. Your gender identity may or may not correspond with the structure of your body. This thinking is not merely disordered. From a range of psychological experiences, many of them scarring, such perspectives reflect a sinful rejection of God's gift of manhood or womanhood.

People today have increasingly little understanding of the goodness and purpose of the body. They have been trained to view manhood and womanhood as under suspicion. Our gender-neutral age has encouraged us to blunt the beauty of God's creative work. But God is not embarrassed by the body. He created it, and his Word celebrates manhood and womanhood. When Yahweh brings Eve to Adam, he exclaims with delight, "This *at last* is flesh of my flesh, and body of my body!" (Genesis 2:23, emphasis mine). Adam exults in this one who is like him—not an animal of the field—but not like him. She is a woman. Her womanliness is awesome to Adam, a delightful epiphany.

The Lord tells us certain precious truths about the manly form and the womanly form in Genesis 2-3. First, the woman is made from the man. His body gives life to hers; her existence depends on his (Genesis 2:21-22). The Lord is telling Adam, and us, that the man's strength is to be used for the benefit of his wife. Second, the man is to work hard to bless his family, while the woman is constituted and called to bear children. These pre-fall roles are cursed as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-7, 16-19). Even the curse indicates, however, that these roles persist following the fall. The man finds glory in the work of provision; the woman finds glory in the work of childbearing.

Pastors should make plain that the body is a profound means of God-glorification. The body is not incidental to Christianity; we own no clashing dualism as evangelicals. The body is a core part of our daily lives, of our work, of our roles within the home, and even of the age to come (1 Corinthians 15:53). From the pulpit, and in our daily lives, we should show the church and the world that manhood and womanhood are not burdens to bear with a sigh and a grimace, but bodily gifts to receive with joy.

Third, why do I have a sexual instinct? This may well be the central question of our time. People have been trained to think that their identity is inherently sexual, that the most important part of their being is their carnality and whatever particular orientation(s) it might have. They are curious, tempted, confused, depressed, exhilarated, and, in sum, lost.

The Bible, and complementarian theology, offers the meta-answer we crave. God created sex to be enjoyed between a man and a woman in covenant marriage. Sex is given as a good gift, a bodily gift, that unites us in a "one-flesh union." There is no fuller expression of intimate unity than this. But sex is not an end unto itself, nor heterosexuality our ultimate goal. One-flesh union points us to an even deeper love, the love of Jesus Christ for his covenant people. Christ is the head of his body, who submits to him in reverence and adoration (Ephesians 5:22-33). Marriage is intended by the divine mind to portray the authority-submission relationship of the church and Christ. It enfleshes the gospel.

Sex is good. God made it. He intended it to be an expression of covenantal union and unbreakable love. But even in the happiest of godly marriages, sex is only a small part of our lives. Sometimes Christian women feel great pressure to be sexual; they hear their husbands publicly grade them on their "hotness," which is a very bad and even harmful way of articulating an instinctual reality. If we view sex in selfish terms—either over-pursuing it or withholding it—we sin (1 Corinthians 7:1-9). Believers see sex as a good but limited part of life, one that blesses us but does not define us.

This relates to singleness. Single men and women have been told by a sex-obsessed culture that they are deficient for not being sexually active. The culture lies. Sex is a good gift, but the happiest person who walked the earth never partook of it. Singles have no biblical reason to feel sub-standard or incomplete. Pastors must help to heal any wounds that exist in the body over this damaging teaching.

Further, pastors have the chance to preach that the center of the Christian life is not sex or marriage. It is Christ. We will not be married to a husband or wife in the new heavens and the new earth; all the people of God will dwell in a world of love with their head, Christ. We have union with Jesus Christ now. That, and not earthly marriage, will last into eternity, and beyond all the ages of the world.

Fourth, how can I find happiness? We share so much as disciples of Jesus Christ, whatever our sex. We are united by Christ and redeemed by his blood. We are fellow church members. We worship and pray and sing together. This is just a sampling of the fellowship of Christ that we all share.

We will be happiest, though, not when we jettison or ignore our manhood or womanhood, but when we embrace God's good design. If we are men, we should have our eyes on the biblical characteristics of deacons and elders. We should strive for such theocentric character. Every pastor should be training all of his men to aspire to these biblical offices, whether or not they assume them. If given families to lead as men, we should be understanding with our wives (1 Peter 3:7), gentle with our children (Colossians 3:21), and shepherding our loved ones with pastoral care (1 Timothy 4-5). If given families to serve as women, we should be submissive to our husband (1 Peter 3:4), dedicated to the bearing and raising of any children God gives us (Titus 2:3-5), and strengthening our home in myriad ways (Proverbs 31:10-31).

These biblical marks offer us a roadmap that covers much of our lives. With excitement, it calls us to own life as a man or a woman. Whether married or single, we glorify God by living according to our sex. We do not look the same (1 Corinthians 11:14), we do not dress the same (Deuteronomy 22:5), and we fall prey to, in some cases, different temptations (Genesis 3:16; Titus 1-2). If we should not overplay the differences between the sexes, we should not underplay them, either. In the pulpit, and in all our ministry of Word and gospel, we should leave the mark right where Scripture does, and rest there, enjoying God and the life he has so kindly given us.

Conclusion

To a considerable degree, complementarianism helps us understand who we are and what we have been placed on this earth to do. It does not attempt to answer every question about life. But it does give us a framework for understanding what men and women have been called to be by Almighty God.

Some might wonder if this is a stretch. Isn't complementarianism minimalistic, a rehashing of the same texts and disputes? I suppose it could be. But the Scripture has a great deal to say about the sexes. In addition, our non-Christian friends are asking and debating these very matters. They are at the forefront, not the background, of our cultural conversation. There is great confusion on all sides over the body, sex, and the callings of the sexes. Divorce, absent fathers, lax parenting, abusive authorities, and other factors have ravaged the home and left people all around us damaged, disordered, and trapped in their sin.

Pastors who preach and live out complementarian teaching will offer those who wander and suffer tremendous wisdom and grace. Complementarianism, we see, has explanatory power on a range of major, life-shaping matters. But more than this, it has apologetic power, both in the living of this doctrine, and the speaking.

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By Jonathan Leeman

Why Complementarianism Is Crucial to Discipleship

Complementarianism is crucial for Christian discipleship because pastors and churches need to hold up different pictures of Christian maturity for the man and for the woman.

It's easy to err in one direction or the other either by homogenizing our conceptions of discipleship or by over-emphasizing the differences. However, to be faithful to Scripture in its entirety, a right conception of Christian maturity will put forward models of male and female maturity that are both the same and different.

For example, every Christian—male and female—needs to live a life of repentance and faith. Every Christian needs to grow in the knowledge of God and in conformity to Christ. Every Christian needs to be united to the fellowship of believers. But if that's all your children's Sunday School classrooms, home Bible studies, and weekly sermons teach about Christian maturity, then it will have implicitly smothered the God-intended differences between men and women, thus misrepresenting "maturity."

Three things are necessary to help move discipleship in a complementarian—and, I believe, biblical—direction: (i) a theological vision of how the mature Christian man looks different than the mature Christian woman; (ii) examples of godly manhood and womanhood in our churches; and (iii) pastoral strategies for moving the church in this direction. I'm not going to take the time here to carefully color in these lines. I hope others will be inspired to do the more substantive work. But here are a few thoughts to get the ball rolling.

THEOLOGICAL VISION AND DISTINCTIVES OF DIFFERENT DOMAINS

It all begins with a complementarian theological vision for discipleship.

In the domain of marriage, here's what the elders of my church tell couples in pre-marital counseling: According to Genesis 1, both the man and woman should focus on bringing God's Lordship and dominion to the earth. But according to Genesis 2, they have different ways of doing that. The man is oriented to the Garden, while the woman is oriented to the man and being a suitable helper to him. She's to employ her entire resume of gifts and talents to promote the work of his administration. He, in turn, is to steward her gifts to maximal effect and not bury them in the ground, like the unfaithful steward.

Now, it's comparatively easy to see what this means in a marriage, where there is one man and one woman in an authoritatively structured relationship. But what does it mean for a single woman in a church, who is not called to submit to every man as a wife does with her husband? What does it mean for a married woman at work? What does it mean for a married man with other women at home, church, work, or in the public square?

Well, these are the kinds of questions a mature Christian man helps a younger man answer, and a mature Christian woman helps a younger woman answer. These are the types of questions that might be addressed in Sunday school, small groups, or inductive church Bible studies.

To fill out a “theological vision” of masculinity and femininity, we need to consider how Genesis 2 might relate to other Scriptures and the peculiar distinctives of the home domain and the work domain and the church domain and the public square domain. Then, we need to help our fellow believers live *masculine* and *feminine* Christian lives in those different domains—not just generically Christian lives.

EXAMPLE OF ONE DOMAIN: THE LOCAL CHURCH

In the local church, for instance, masculinity seems to be tied to teaching the Word. Every Christian man should therefore be taught to take a special interest in learning the Word and promoting its ministry. Not every man has the gift of teaching in the church, but every man should equip himself to teach it somewhere (like in the home). And every man has some gift, such as a gift of administration or a gift of relationship building, that he can use to promote the ministry of the Word in the church.

Instead of a church filled with passive men, who quickly rush their families to the car when the service ends, imagine a church full of men charging ahead to promote the ministry of the Word. Imagine the men doing this in the pulpit, in the music ministry, in the children's ministry, in after-church events, in evangelistic work, in caring for outsiders. I dare say, *that* would be a church in which it would be easier for a godly woman to be a godly woman.

In other words, women are often stuck having to take initiative and leadership in churches because men fail to do so. But to the extent men work hard in the garden of the church, sowing the seed and tilling the dirt, Christian women have good work to do by helping those men. They do this by following the leadership of worthy men, by extending the Word's work into areas in which it can be more difficult for men to travel, as in the lives of children or younger women.

Notice, I've provided an example of how biblical masculinity and femininity look different in one domain—the local church. Discipling young believers to engage with the local church, therefore, should not be unisex. Yes, there are points of commonality: everyone should be interested in promoting the work of the Word. But there are points of difference: men should be taught to take initiative and leadership, while women should be taught to facilitate, encourage, and help.

In every domain—I think it's safe to generalize—women will better be able to pursue godly femininity when they are surrounded by men who pursue godly masculinity. When women don't, men often only have themselves to blame.

PASTORAL STRATEGY

Moving from a theological vision to a pastoral strategy for discipleship, church leaders should teach these different pictures of maturity in the children's and youth programs, men's and women's ministries, and the regular pulpit ministry of the church. Teaching occurs in a number of places in the church's life, and it's worth reviewing them one by one. Is the instruction in each area uniformly unisex, or are biblical differences promoted?

In addition to teaching, church leaders should promote good examples of biblical masculinity and femininity in the flock. What kinds of men are recognized as elders? What women are publicly recognized in pastoral prayers? What men and women are placed in front of the youth group?

Too often, the discussion about complementarianism gets stuck at the borders. For instance, people get marooned on matters like whether it's appropriate for adult women to teach high school men. Where's the line, they ask. But focusing on the borders of what's licit is a bit like the dating couple who asks, "How much can we do with each other physically? Hold hands? Kiss?"

There is a place for such questions, but what's needed first is a positive statement about how to promote biblical masculinity and femininity among young men and women. The dating couple, instead of asking, "How far can we go?" should instead ask, "How can we serve one another and best prepare the other for marriage?" Likewise, in the church we should ask, "How can we best help these high school women become mature women, and these high school men become mature men?"

So let's try again: Is it okay to have adult women teaching high school men? Well, frankly, I'm not entirely sure if it's licit or not, but I do know I want those high school men to learn what it means for men to take initiative in the church. And I do want the high school women to learn what it means to love, affirm, and support male leadership in the church. Therefore, I'm going to be very careful about what models I place before them. In most circumstances, I'm going to have Bible-loving, initiative-taking adult men teach the group as a whole, while having mature women support and assist that ministry.

COMPLEMENTARIANISM AND THE GOAL OF DISCIPLESHIP

In general, complementarianism is crucial to Christian discipleship because it gives discipleship a goal. As a man, I want to help the other men I spend time with know what it means to be a leader and initiator, to have courage, to be protectors, to make sacrifices for those weaker than myself, and so on. My wife, on the other hand, wants to help the women she spends time with know what it means to be a supporter, a helper, a facilitator, a counselor, a fan, occasionally a rebuker, and so on.

I want to help men know how to do this at church, at home, and elsewhere as is appropriate. She wants to help women know how to do this at church, at home, and elsewhere as is appropriate.

The harder questions come later: What do biblical masculinity and femininity look like in the many other domains of life? And what are we doing to promote these models through discipleship?

COMPLEMENTARIANISM AND THE GOSPEL

Is emphasizing these differences really *that* important? Yes. God hard-wired these distinctions into creation in Genesis chapter 2. Why? So that all creation would have a picture of the gospel, which Paul later says that husbands and wives picture in their love for one another (Eph. 5). When a church holds up models of biblical masculinity and femininity, therefore, it makes the gospel easier to comprehend.

Without such models, the gospel is simply harder to explain, almost like the Bible translator who wants to describe Jesus as the "lamb" of God in a jungle culture that's never heard of a lamb or a sacrifice. Is it any surprise that the devil, who hates the gospel, would want to homogenize men and women as well, thereby blurring one set of images for picturing the gospel?

You can maintain belief in the gospel apart from a complementarian conception of discipleship, but your vision of discipleship will work against such belief, not for it.

Editor's note: A version of this article originally appeared in the July-August 2010 Journal: [Pastoring Women](#).

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By Andy Davis

Discipling Guys

The idea of pouring into younger disciples was engrained in me from the very beginning of my Christian life. But in the last two decades, I have seen more specifically the need to focus on training men.

Every follower of Christ, should be taught to obey everything Christ has commanded. Yet God places a special burden of leadership on men, and there is no better way for men to be prepared to shoulder that burden than in the context of a committed mentoring relationship with a godly man in a local church.

OUR CONTEXT: WIDESPREAD GENDER CONFUSION

There is a systematic, Satanic attack on the very concept of gender, and with it, gender-based roles at home and in all society. Leaders in the church need to be very aware of the nature and seriousness of this attack and rise up to meet the challenge with good, biblical ministry to both men and women.

Because of this, boys don't enter the world knowing how to be godly men; they have to be trained into it. Of course, the primary training role for that formation should be the boy's father. He is to disciple his son every day in the Word of the Lord and in the pattern of godly living.

But while godly fathers are by far the best disciplers of young men into Christ-like manhood, spiritual fathers can play a vital role as well. This is where a mentor, a pastor, or a discipler can step in and take the young man beyond where his father has left off. In a day of rampant absenteeism among biological fathers, the next generation of spiritual leaders is yearning for godly men to step up and serve as an adoptive spiritual father.

A FEW BASIC PRINCIPLES IN DISCIPLING YOUNG MEN

1) Conform them to the "two patterns."

The New Testament reveals two "patterns" of discipleship to which every disciple must conform: the pattern of sound teaching (2 Tim 1:13) and the pattern of godly living (Phil 3:16). There must be a doctrinal/biblical/bookish side as well as a "life on life," role-modeling side.

According to the first pattern, we must saturate men's hearts in Scripture and in sound theology. Use the classics from church history: Calvin's *Institutes*, the writings of the Puritans, the sermons of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and so forth.

The second "pattern" (example of godly living) is worth an extra comment when it comes to manhood. Young men may very well never have seen a godly husband love his wife as Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25), or a godly father bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). It would be excellent to have a disciple regularly observing the home life of his mentor, because some things cannot be learned but by example. This is why Paul says, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

When it comes to church leadership, opportunities for this abound:

- allow them to watch you meet with a grieving family as you prepare a funeral;
- take them with you to conferences at which you may be speaking;
- have them with you when writing your sermon;
- spend time with them on your knees in praying through the church directory;
- take them with you to the hospital;
- lead them in outreach activities in the community.

In order to shape the hearts and lives of future leaders, these two patterns must be employed.

2) Impart a vision of godly leadership.

Make this vision of leadership plain: God is raising up men to lead at home and in the church. In both the Old and New Testaments, God establishes men to lead his people in every generation, and that should be a clear goal of your discipleship relationship.

In the context of discipling relationship, your goal is to help a younger brother understand that the church needs wise leaders who will teach sound doctrine and shepherd Christ's flock in humility and strength (Acts 20:17-38; 1 Peter 5:1-4). God may be raising him up, preparing him to be a part of a godly group of elders who will lead the church. And this leadership must be along biblical lines if we are to achieve the Great Commission Christ entrusted to us.

Finally, a young man should understand that you expect him to be doing this same type of discipling of young men when he is "fully trained" (Luke 6:40).

3) Warn about the two failure modes of male leaders: tyranny and abdication.

Some husbands and church leaders embrace their role as leaders with an ungodly ambition. They make tyrannical decisions that ruin the lives of their families and churches. Such men are abusive, and the people they lead do not flourish under their leadership.

To combat this failure, we must teach young men the principles of servant leadership that Jesus espoused in Matthew 20:25-28. Leaders serve the people they lead, and we must display that.

On the other hand, the far more common error for men is abdication. Adam was put in the Garden of Eden “to serve and protect it” (literal translation of Genesis 2:15). “Protect” implies an encroaching evil, and that manifested itself in Satan’s treacherous attack on the mind of Adam’s wife in the very next chapter. Eve did all the talking. Adam, “who was with her” (Gen 3:6), stood there and did nothing. Far more husbands and fathers, and possible church leaders, abdicate their responsibilities than use their position as tyrants.

Therefore, we must teach young men to step up to embrace the role of leadership with courage and humility. Again, your own role modeling of this cheerful willingness to lead in the pattern of Christ is vital. The young men need to see you leading both at home and in the church, neither as a tyrant, nor as a coward. Your own hospitality plays a critical role in this: have them over frequently to watch your patterns of gentle leadership with your children, and the loving way you encourage your wife.

4) Engender godly ambition based on 1 Timothy 3:1.

Paul says, “If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a good thing.” This is a godly ambition for the future, and every young man in the church should have it. Even if God does not bless the man with the gift of teaching necessary to the office, the rest of the attributes listed in 1 Timothy 3:2-4 are common to all Christian men: above reproach, husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, managing his family (children) well.

These virtues provide a roadmap for discipling young men. And even if they don’t show themselves as gifted teachers, they can still receive the same training as other future elders, because that doctrinal instruction will serve them well as future husbands and fathers.

So, a mature mentor should wisely implant a burning coal of godly ambition to be a future elder in the young man’s heart, and then fan it into flame as a central goal of his discipleship.

5) Give them opportunities to serve, then evaluate their service.

The discipler should constantly seek specific ministry tasks he can entrust to his disciple, appropriate to his level of development. That might involve opportunities to teach, evangelize, lead prayer meetings, do menial support tasks, plan events, or run the AV booth.

Perhaps you can entrust a man with a Wednesday night Bible study, and then take notes on how he did. In general you want to give gentle and loving feedback.

Or allow a man to organize a summer outreach event. He can research what other churches have done to connect with lost people, and let him come up with an idea, organize, and run it. Then evaluate the event, emphasizing the positive aspects, but giving clear guidance on ways to grow.

When evaluating performance, it’s vital for the mentor to be super-encouraging as a rule. The disciple truly yearns for the approval of his “spiritual father.” And so consistent words of love and admiration (like Paul does for Timothy) are essential to the relationship. Having said that, good, specific, and constructive criticism is also required.

6) Challenge them to memorize Scripture.

No discipline has been more helpful in the process of my spiritual maturity than the memorization of extended portions of Scripture. This commitment is quite doable, and will pay back huge interest for the investment made.

Scripture memorization will help a young man in his own personal walk with Christ, in his evangelism, in his (present or future) marriage and parenting, and in his ministry of the Word. This has been a central pillar of my discipleship of young men for decades.

7) Identify a “pipeline” of future leaders in your local church.

Be watching some men who may have the requisite characteristics to be a future disciple: faithful, available, teachable. A healthy local church will have an ongoing pattern of discipling young men as future husbands, fathers, and church leaders.

8) Pray daily for their growth.

Follow the patterns of the apostle Paul in praying for spiritual development in your disciples. Pray Ephesians 1:15-19 and 3:14-21 for them. Pray Philippians 1:9-11 and Colossians 1:9-14 as well. Let your disciples hear you praying these things for them, and encourage them to pray them for you as well.

A SWEETLY REWARDING MINISTRY

Discipling eager young men for future leadership in the home and the church is one of the most sweetly rewarding aspects of ministry that I’ve ever encountered. May God richly bless your efforts as you pour into the next generation of leaders of the glorious church of Jesus Christ!

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By Jen Wilkin

Counsel for a Complementarian Pastor

Complementarians celebrate that men and women are not interchangeable, that while we are created equal in value and dignity as image-bearers and co-rulers of creation, we are distinct from one another in good and mutually beneficial ways. Unless your church is a statistical outlier, more than half of its seats are filled each week by women, which means that a majority of your congregation is not like you in some fairly significant ways. Studies show that women form moral judgments differently than men do, that they have different communication styles and different relational needs. Their participation levels and contributions in mixed gender groups are different than men's. It would be logically inconsistent to affirm that men and women are not interchangeable and then disciple them as though they are. How should these differences impact the way your church ministers to women?

I believe it is a pastor's charge and privilege to value, cultivate, and deploy a discipleship vision for every woman of his church. But to do so will require that he think beyond a male perspective of ministry. I offer four suggestions to help you do just that.

1. Know what shapes their thinking.

The women of your church may not be listening to the same voices you are, nor may they filter messages the same way you do. While you were following blog posts about the latest mega-pastor downward spiral or creation debate, they were likely reading about the evils of yoga pants. Your women were probably aware of *Fifty Shades of Grey* far sooner than you were. They gave *Jesus Calling* a space on their bedside tables and a place in their quiet times for a full seven years before Challies blogged about it.

Do you know what books and blogs your women are reading, both secular and sacred? Can you name ten dominant female Christian voices on the internet or in the women's section of the Christian bookstore? Do you know the messages each of these women is communicating? Which female bloggers, writers, and teachers are faithfully pushing women toward godliness? Make it a point to educate yourself on the voices that are speaking to your women the loudest. Pastor them towards those voices (both male and female) that they can trust.

2. Seek their perspective.

We are all, to some extent, prisoners of our own experience. That's a simple reality, and it's only a liability if we are not aware of it. But it does mean we have to stretch ourselves to see another's perspective. If you've lived your entire life as a man it's possible you may not see the same needs, sense the same hurts, or value the same issues the women of your congregation do. But don't worry—help is at hand!

To be clear, I'm not talking about your wife. Though her perspective is valid and valuable, it's not likely to represent the normative experience of women in your church. Because of her relationship to you, she is usually connected, sought after to lead, and surrounded by attention without going through the normal channels the average woman does. This is not her fault, but it does mean you would be wise to ask some pointed questions of other women in your congregation about how connected, valued, and equipped they feel.

It takes bravery on your part to ask, and it takes a brave group of women to respond honestly to that inquiry. Help put them at ease by being the only man in the room. Studies show that even when meetings are split 50/50 along gender lines men do most of the talking. Women tend to be silent for fear of being [negatively stereotyped](#). You will be amazed at the vulnerability level that results when you shift the gender ratio heavily toward female. And remember, just because you may not be able to relate to her experience doesn't mean it isn't valid. Seek to understand as a brother.

3. Help them lead.

If Deborah or Huldah were a member of your church, would she have a place to exercise her gifts? We complementarians have some work to do to reclaim and celebrate the notion of women as leaders. Regrettably, many of our churches hold simultaneously a pure theology and a broken practice: We may affirm equal value and dignity with our lips, but our ministry structures tend to be far from it. And women are taking note. Seeing few or no places to serve, women with untapped gifts often conclude they must change their theology to be able to serve meaningfully in the church. We don't want our female leaders to leave. We want them to find their places in leadership with us, but how?

We must actively help them. Leaders rarely develop in a vacuum; most can point to a senior leader who advocated for them. Pastor, what gifted and able women in your church need your guidance and advocacy? Be proactive about identifying and empowering women to lead. Pursue them to serve, and then lend them credibility by publicly celebrating their gifts. Evaluate and, if necessary, adapt your ministry structures and hiring practices to ensure they reflect your belief in the vital contributions of women.

4. Set them up to win.

Because women are typically primary caregivers, ministry to women is a “ministry of more-than-halfway.” It requires us to think not just in terms of, “What discipleship opportunities can we make available?” but to meet women more than halfway by asking, “How can we remove as many participation barriers as possible?” If women's Bible study is scheduled at 6:30am on Wednesday it's probably not going to gel. If women don't have midsize settings to meet other women of varying life stages, organic mentoring relationships will likely be slow to form. Having gathered their input on needs and challenges, implement a ministry model that is both meaningful and accessible. How much budget can you allocate for childcare to ease the cost of participation? Is a retreat format or a conference format more doable for your women? What is the typical ebb and flow of the calendar for women in your demographic, and how can you accommodate it? Make participation as easy as possible, and women will invest their time.

Pastor, what elements of your discipleship strategy affirm the equal but distinct needs and gifting of women? Take steps to enter into our experience. We comprise over half your church, and we crave your empathy, your active attention, and your nurture to flourish both inside and outside its walls. We are not interchangeable, so help us be our best complementary selves.

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By Jodi Ware

Complementarianism in the Gray Areas

Some people with complementarian convictions may have questions in what might be called “gray areas.” These questions can include: Can a woman teach a mixed-gender Sunday school class? Is a woman allowed to preach as a guest in a church?

These are questions I hear somewhat regularly as I seek to encourage women in their understanding of their biblical roles, in the home and the church. Sometimes these questions are purely an academic exercise; other times they stem from a woman’s experience, or perhaps her desire to serve the church in these ways.

COED SUNDAY SCHOOLS?

My answer to these questions is quite consistent: first, women should not teach a Sunday school class in which adult males are present. In our American evangelical churches, which are committed to the authority and proclamation of the Word of God, our adult Sunday school classes are second in importance only to the worship gathering.

These classes, usually, are venues in which the Bible, or at the least biblical principles, are taught, with application made to living our lives as Christians. In many churches, the length of time for a Sunday school class is longer than the sermon. The teaching done in these classes is, or certainly ought to be, significant for the discipleship of church members.

Given the importance of these adult Sunday school classes, my understanding is that the teaching of such classes should be limited to qualified males.

GUEST PREACHERS

Second, a woman should not be allowed to preach as a guest in a church, even under the “authority” of the elders of that church. Again, the preaching of the Word is of highest importance in the life of the church, and God’s Word itself clearly limits this preaching to be done by qualified males.

“I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man” (1 Tim. 2:12). Paul prohibits both teaching and exercising authority. Though teaching involves the exercise of authority, these terms are not synonymous. And Paul precludes both. It is difficult, therefore, to know how we can square the practice of a female guest preacher with this command.

The idea that a woman can be a “guest preacher” under the authority of the elders of the church runs against the ultimate authority of the Lord over his church. And just as a wife should never follow her husband into sin, so a woman should never follow an elder board into sinful disobedience of God’s clear instruction.

In the midst of all the questions regarding women in ministry, every conversation must be framed by the reality that ministry is not a right—it’s a privilege. The issue is not about men versus women. The issue is that God cares deeply about his church, and he has the prerogative to say whom he does and does not choose to lead his flock (Ezekiel 34).

Simply being a man does not necessitate qualification for ministry. In fact, most men we know will not serve as leaders of the church. God has created, foreknown, purchased, redeemed, loved, saved, and is sanctifying his church. No wonder he wants to protect it from harm.

BIBLICAL ROLES

Now let us look at the basics of biblical roles within the church.

We learn from 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 that elders are to be qualified men. We also learn that elders are to fulfill particular ministries in the church, most pointedly teaching and exercising authority, managing the church body (1 Timothy 3:4-5), and being able to rebuke (Titus 1:9). Elders are to “hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught” (Titus 1:9). Elders are given the sober responsibility to teach and apply the Word of God in a way that is faithful and effective. Thus, 1 Timothy 2:12—“I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather she is to remain quiet”—seems to clearly limit the function of elder, as well as the office of elder, to qualified men.

In my opinion, these passages clearly prohibit women from teaching the Word of God to men. All adult members of a church are to receive their primary teaching in biblical exposition and doctrinal training from qualified men. This is the authority structure that God has put into place, and it is good. Additionally, this is the uniform testimony of the Bible. As theologian Wayne Grudem [said](#),

I base my position [of not allowing a woman to teach/preach to men] on a pattern in the whole [Bible](#), from Genesis to Revelation, where there is never an instance where a woman does teaching of God’s Word to an assembled group of men. It was the priests in the Old Testament who did the Bible teaching or the teaching of God’s law, and they were all men. In the New Testament, elders all had to be men. So that’s consistent with Paul’s specific instruction in 1 Timothy 2:12 where Paul says, ‘I do not permit a woman to teach or to [exercise](#) authority over a man; rather she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first then Eve and Adam was not deceived. But, the woman who was deceived then became a transgressor.’ That is not an isolated passage.

As we think about authority and submission within the church, we need to be reminded that our sinful inclinations rebel against such things. No one likes being told what to do, and we especially don’t like being told what we cannot do. Our hearts are inclined toward autonomy, and restrictions of any kind are hard to swallow. In addition, our Western culture prizes independence and disregards any structure of authority, any hierarchy. But we must remember that authority and submission are part of the biblical narrative, even part of the Godhead himself.

MODELING THE TRINITY

So, as we live according to God's clear teaching and instruction, our varying roles of authority and submission model Trinitarian relationships. The eternal Son was sent by the Father to become incarnate and accomplish the will of the Father. It was his joy to obey the Father, to do and say only what the Father wanted him to do and say (John 8:28).

It is apparent the Father and the Son are equal in worth and value since each is fully God, yet they model a relationship marked by authority and submission in the roles they carry out as eternal Father and eternal Son. In the same way, men and women within the church are equal in worth and value even as they live out differing roles.

The truth is, God designed his church this way, because he is the original designer of men and women. God knows what will work best. When women push to take on roles that are intended for men, it is far too easy for men to then sit back, passively letting the women "run the show." It seems quite obvious that as churches become more "feminized," men become less active and involved, and may even quit attending. We must constantly have our minds and hearts recalibrated by God's Word, seeing his authority as completely appropriate and completely beneficial. He is God, and we are not, I trust you know from experience, as I do, that appropriate submission to appropriate authority brings blessing, order, and flourishing to all involved.

TEACHING WOMEN?

Now, we must also affirm that women are qualified, indeed strongly encouraged, to teach other women (Titus 2) and children. Indeed, there are many instances in which it is far more appropriate to have women instructing women. This ensures that women who are gifted by the Lord with teaching ability have plenty of options for serving the church with their gifts. God so orchestrates a church body that all of the members are gifted in ways that all of the members need (1 Cor 12:22-23). There is no higher value to preaching and teaching than to other, more "behind-the-scenes" gifts; at least there is no such superior value in God's economy.

WHEN DO BOYS BECOME MEN?

But what about women teaching children? And when do young boys become men? At what point should young men in the church start receiving their primary biblical teaching from men rather than women? As my husband says, at what point does a man become bald? We know when a man has hair, and when he has no hair. In between, it is a bit difficult to say! This seems true for boys growing into manhood. It is difficult to say when a boy becomes a man. And such passages to adulthood can vary from culture to culture.

It seems true to say that at some point during senior high years, young boys become mature enough to be treated as young adults. It may be prudent to restrict the teaching of senior high boys (or mixed classes) to qualified men. May God give adult men the grace to see this is a high calling and responsibility to invest in the lives of the young people in their church.

We never want to be unnecessarily restrictive in ways women participate in church life. The Bible is clear that walking in God's commands leads to life; man-made rules, however, produce discouragement and death. Therefore, we want to be careful to hold to the commands that God has made and not add to them.

READING, PRAYING, SERVING, COMMUNION, TESTIFYING?

In our church, women participate in public reading of the Word, in prayer, in serving the Lord's Supper, and in other ways deemed appropriate by our elder board. Certainly there is room for a woman to share her testimony, or to tell of some experience (perhaps a missions trip) to a group of men and women. This might be during a Sunday morning worship service.

Following God's wise guidelines for church leadership does not preclude women from being thriving, functioning members of the Body. We are co-heirs of grace.

GROWTH IN MATURITY

Growth in Christian maturity involves seeing and embracing the good of God's ways and submitting to his good and right authority. As a Christian woman, I am called to grow in this by submitting to the rightful authorities he has placed in my life, including the authority of the elders in my church. My submission to authority (elders, my husband, civil government) models Christ's submission to his heavenly Father. As I grow in knowing God, understanding his kindness and grace, being thankful for his redemptive plan accomplished through Christ—all of this helps me grow in glad-hearted submission. As Romans 8:32 reminds us, God has met our deepest need for a Savior in Christ Jesus; he is for us, and we can trust him to graciously give us all things, including appropriate opportunities to exercise the very gifts he has so kindly bestowed.

Rather than chafing at what seems to be God's clear restrictions upon a woman's role in the church, may all of us seek to honor the Lord by seeing his order in the church as good and lovely as we gratefully and whole-heartedly carry out the work of the church. For women who are gifted in teaching, there are women and children around you who need gospel truth, biblical and theological training, and spiritual discipleship. And may we all be faithful with the tasks God gives us, knowing that the days are short.

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By Daniel Schreiner

Complementarianism and the Next Generation

Most millennials have never heard of complementarianism. And I confess that in my eight years in student ministry, I haven't done much teaching on this issue. I know I'm not alone.

Here in Portland, Oregon, I get together with other pastors and youth workers at least a couple of times a month to discuss various ministry topics and to pray. Not once has the topic been women in the church. It would just be awkward. Okay, I admit, it would be *me* who would make things awkward. Because to many of my colleagues I would *sound like* a chauvinist.

Most Christian colleges and universities have already made up their mind what they will teach the next generation on this issue. And trust me, it isn't the complementarian model. Far from it. Just like in the rest of the world, many Christian professors, deans, and presidents laugh at this "ancient" and "oppressive" view.

Yet God's Word speaks clearly to the roles of men and women in the church. And while God's design is ancient, it is as liberating today as it was in Eden. Thus, we need to model and teach on this issue—especially for the next generation of believers. Why is this so crucial? Because when it comes to roles of men and women in the church and in the home, we are talking about the image of God. So how should we teach and model God's design for men and women? And why, as student pastors, are we being silent on this issue?

First off, the issue of a woman's role in the church and the home is not always black-and-white, certainly when it comes to student ministry in the church. Questions like, "Can a woman teach the Bible to teenage males?" hinge on when we understand a teenage male to become a man. It hinges on this because Paul makes it clear that a woman must not teach or assume authority over a *man* (2 Tim 2:12). It is clear that this principle is not grounded in culture but in God's creation design (2 Tim 2:13). This may feel like a hard pill to swallow in our cultural context.

I also think there are other, less obvious reasons why student and lead pastors may both refrain from addressing this issue. Here are three possible reasons.

1. Pornography.

The ubiquitousness of porn has distorted how men and women think about and treat one another. It has [re-wired our brains](#). A pastor will be reticent to teach Ephesians 5 if he is secretly indulging in porn. This pastor *should be* serving and laying down his life for his wife and providing leadership for his congregation. Instead, he's using images of the women he is called to serve for his own selfish and perverted gratification. This distorts the image of God in us—and our ability to see it in others. And in this context, to teach that it is a woman's role to submit to her husband simply seems self-serving and grotesque.

The porn problem in the church and amongst millennials makes the truth of different and complementary roles sound bizarre. That a wife is called by God to submit in love and trust to her husband, that it is not her role to serve as elder, seems strange in a pornographic, self-gratifying culture. But the "otherness" of Scripture's teaching *should* seem strange. In fact, the different and complementary roles between men and women are rooted in the Godhead, as the Son submits to the Father.

2. Pragmatism.

A pragmatic avoidance of complementarianism goes something like this: culture already takes issue with our main message (the gospel), so why put another stumbling block like complementarianism in the way of our cultural despisers?

Just last week I had a coffee with Tom, an agnostic father who attends our church because it's an opportunity for him to be with his family. Tom explained to me that it didn't make sense to him that his son-in-law Charlie could one day serve as an elder, but it was not possible for his daughter Cary to ever serve in that role. I had hoped to talk to Tom about the gospel, not men and women in the church. But it's clear just how off-putting this conviction is to our non-believing friends and neighbors. So, the pragmatic thinking goes, shouldn't we just give in on this issue and admit that our pastoral forebears were secretly chauvinistic and patriarchal women-haters? Isn't it about time to let women start serving as pastors?

Most now-egalitarian gospel-preaching churches and ministries still confess that their authority is the Bible and that complementarianism/egalitarianism is a matter of biblical interpretation. But this raises the question: In the midst of a culture that is not only predominately egalitarian but increasingly agnostic on the notion of gender at all, why are churches and ministries are just *now* switching sides on this issue? Were the 1,950 years of Christians who went before us just so blind by their patriarchal societies to rightly understand the Scriptures? Today, if the cultural elites argued for complementary roles for the genders, I do wonder if so many Christian ministries and pastors would still be arguing for egalitarianism.

3. Power.

Ecclesiastical, academic, and cultural power is all in the hands of the egalitarians. My father studied New Testament at Fuller Seminary. He saw the way the wind was blowing in the 1970s. He wanted to be a feminist. He wanted to be an egalitarian. But he would not exert his power nor his preferences over the Bible. The Scriptures held the final authority.

But scholars like my dad are rarer and rarer. Instead of the authority of Scripture being celebrated and submitted to, it is more fun to point out how Scripture has been used to rationalize all sorts of injustices. Isn't the abuse and tyranny of men over women just another example in this long and sad story of the abuse of Scripture?

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

The porn problem, pragmatism, and cultural power all seem to recommend that we not make complementarianism an issue. After all, wouldn't it just be easier if we were all egalitarian—or at least not loudly complementarian?

However, if we refuse to teach and model complementarianism for the next generation, we will distort the image of God for them. Further, we will suggest that what culture recommends is more important than what Scripture clearly teaches. We must conform to the Scriptures that teach us the glory and beauty of man and woman *both* created in the image of God and serving him in complementary, yet different roles.

Much could be said on *how* we can do this faithfully. But I see four obvious ways to model and teach God's design for men and women in the church and home.

1. Men need to step up in the home.

Many men are not loving their wives as Christ loved the church. Instead, they are abdicating their authority in the home. They aren't leading in the home by reading God's Word. All too often it's the woman who brings the children to church and leads the family in prayer and makes difficult decisions for the family. Men too often take advantage of the gifts and patience of their wives—and the children notice. So when Scripture paints a picture of men laying down their lives sacrificially for their wives—just as Christ has done for his bride, the church—nothing sounds more abstract or out-of-reach.

Children are first taught about love, or the lack thereof, in the home. Because of this, fathers must commit themselves to loving their wives with a sacrificial leadership. They need to be present and engaged. With God's help, years of modeling this well will help to create a category for the gospel for both their children and those who are in close contact with the family.

2. Men need to step up in the church.

Four years ago, our church's children's ministry was dominated by women volunteers. Few men were willing to change diapers, teach 4th graders, or provide leadership and vision in this area of the church. Then some of us in leadership were given the opportunity to observe a children's ministry at another church in which the leadership comprised almost entirely of elder-qualified men. Understand, this other church's children's ministry wasn't so healthy *because* men held the reigns of the ministry. Rather, it is God's design that men lead by humble service, not domineering, but providing leadership and serving the least of these. That is what made this ministry culture so healthy, and it was evident immediately. If you have benefitted from healthy male leadership in the church that is sacrificial, attentive to women, and in accordance to the authority of God's Word—you'll never want to go back to anything else! Unfortunately, few Christians have this kind of culture in their local church.

3. Women need to teach.

All too often, egalitarians argue with straw-man complementarians. In these cases, it is said that complementarians have no category for women with the gift of teaching; it's said we demand they stay quiet, and stay at home. Of course this is a misrepresentation. Titus 2:3 clearly teaches that older women should teach younger women. And what are they to teach?—"What is good, to love their husbands, and children, to be self-controlled, and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to subject to their husbands." All this "so that no one will malign the word of God."

There are many parallels between Titus 1's qualifications of an elder and this description of what women are to teach. The key difference is *who* Titus calls the older women to teach and that they are to be subject to their husbands. Older women teach the next generation the glorious way of humility and submission in the way of the Savior.

When there is a healthy women's Bible study at your church with wise, godly women teaching God's Word to women hungry for God's Word, it will be a blessing to your entire church and a profound witness to a watching world.

4. We all need to submit.

There are essentially two sides to the issue of women in the church. Are the students who come out of your church going to college with the question: “Which side has arguments that are most in submission to God’s Word?” Or, are they leaving with the question: “Which side has the arguments that sound the most intelligent and compelling *to me*? I’m afraid that many students follow arguments simply because they are attractive. Who sounds confident, cool, and smart? More often than not, those are the ones our students are submitting to.

This is why we need homes and churches built upon the authority of God’s Word, where even the most confident, cool, and smart among us are submitted under the authority of King Jesus. Who is the functional authority for the students in your context? The media, their friends, their parents, the pastor? Let’s pray that all of these lesser authorities would be increasingly submitted to the ultimate authority of God’s Word.

And you know what? Students will notice. When they see the husband, the father, the discipler, or the pastor confess sin in light of God’s Word, they notice. So pastor, when you preach on 1 Timothy 2, do you tell them that this is cultural and doesn’t really have any direct meaning for us today? Or do you say, “This is difficult; this is profoundly counter-cultural. But we need to hear this.”

Complementarians may be weird; they may be out of touch. But teaching and modeling faithful complementarianism in the home and the church will help make sense of the image of God and the gospel for our kids, that is to say, for the next generation of Christians who will, Lord willing, follow our example and do the same.

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By Steven Harris

The Egalitarian Impulse of the Black Church

There is an overwhelming sense among Christians in the West that we are not only in a time of cultural decline, but that it is gaining pace. If that's true, [how should Christians pray?](#)

Any social or theological critique of gender roles in African American homes and churches, or any discussion of the “break-down” of the black family, must not begin with our contemporary context. The present problem roots in past pain.

Millions of black bodies were wrenched from their homeland and forcibly transported to the Americas in the transatlantic Middle Passage. In all, just under 400,000 slaves were brought to what would become known as the United States. And while this first migration constituted the initial devastating disruption of the familial bond, it would be followed by what historian Ira Berlin refers to as the Second Middle Passage^[1]—the internal slave trade whereby a million blacks were relocated to the southern American interior via auction blocks and chains. It was during this period in between the American Revolution and abolition that the separation of black families became common. These migrations, coupled with the violent realities of plantation life, eventuated in the emasculation and disenfranchisement of black males. Thus, historic black matriarchy is not so much a myth as it is the result of generations of father figures rendered impotent and absentee not by choice, but by force.^[2]

In God's providence, just beyond the visibility of the slave master, an “invisible institution” came into being. The first sizeable wave of black conversions to Christianity took place during the Great Awakenings of the eighteenth century. Still, as African American scholar Albert Raboteau explains, the Christian faith was not only adopted by slaves, but adapted to the slave experience:

In the secrecy of the quarters or the seclusion of the brush arbors (‘hush harbors’) the slaves made Christianity truly their own. The religion of the slaves was both institutional and noninstitutional, visible and invisible, formally organized and spontaneously adapted. Regular Sunday worship in the local church was paralleled by illicit, or at least informal, prayer meetings on weeknights in the slave cabins.^[3]

Thus, the black church was birthed in protest. Given the privileging of Pauline “slave texts” and the overall oppressive tones of their “Christian” catechism, black slaves quickly discerned the hypocrisy inherent in the teaching they received from their slave masters.

With the subsequent rise of independent black congregations, the church meeting became a site of slave agency—a space where slaves could exert a degree, albeit limited, of self-sovereignty and rebellion. And the pulpit became a place where the black male could lay claim to dignifying leadership.

THE ECCLESIAL AND FAMILIAL EFFORTS OF BLACK WOMEN

In the decades following emancipation, the black church^[4] began to take a distinct shape: the overwhelming majority of church pews became filled with women. They got heavily involved within their congregations, and they began to create various auxiliary organizations and missionary societies. In all this, these black women expressed their “righteous discontent” at injustices identified both inside and outside of the church. Such efforts were most clearly seen among black Baptist women. Historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham writes,

The leadership of the women’s convention movement formed part of an emergent class of school administrators, journalists, businesswomen, and reformers who served an all-black community. This educated female elite, frequently consisting of teachers or wives of ministers associated with educational institutions, promoted middle-class ideals among the masses of blacks in the belief that such ideals ensured the dual goal of racial self-help and respect from white America. Especially in the roles of missionary and teacher, black church women were conveyers of culture and vital contributors to the fostering of middle-class ideals and the aspirations in the black community.^[5]

During the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, a distinctly black feminist theology would begin to emerge from a segment of the black church. Drawing on the liberation and resistance themes that served and solaced Christian slaves, and reminiscent of Sojourner Truth’s extemporaneously delivered “Ain’t I A Woman?,” black female theologians gave voice to their distinct grievances, and at the same time connected their causes to the waves of the broader feminist movement.^[6] Specifically, these women gave a liberal theological perspective to what one feminist activist would identify as the triply oppressed and exploited reality of black women at the interstices of race, gender, and class.^[7] As black men in the church were increasingly enjoying spaces of leadership and social recognition, an increasingly pressing question emerged from black women: “When will our season of affirmation begin?”

Moving to the mid-twentieth century, aside from a few noteworthy exemplars,^[8] the Civil Rights Movement originating within the black church was mostly male-led, with black women relegated to positions of administration with little-to-no recognition. That said, the twentieth century did bequeath something immensely useful to black women bent on laying claim to what they regarded as rightfully theirs: liberation theology. Though bereft of any gendered analysis in its initial articulations, liberation theology provided a vernacular that was easily adaptable to egalitarian aims.

In turning attention to the home, space does not allow for rendering proper praise to the indefatigable efforts of black women. It is no exaggeration to say that, ever since the days of slavery, black women have, in myriad ways, served as the glue that has held together the familial bond threatened by forces external to the family itself. Yet all too often, black women have also had to face the reality of managing single-parent homes due to the willful absence of black fathers. Through these challenges, black women present and past—particularly black Christian women—have modeled an enduring hope and an inimitable faith.

Understandably, such realities progressively led to the formation of a female characteristic that, energized by the ongoing waves of feminism, persists today: the independent black woman.^[9] In light of the unique history of oppression and exploitation experienced by black women, progress and often times outright survival meant that they had to cultivate a persona marked by self-sufficiency, independence (even and especially from black men), and a determined drive for upward mobility, success, and social equality.^[10] To be sure, determination and a “go-getter” spirit is not all bad. Such qualities have marked the trail of progress in African American history. An imbalance of such qualities, however, can prove unhealthy for the home and the church. Unfortunately, such self-sufficiency and independence can become outright unbiblical.

THE BIBLE AND AN EGALITARIAN HERMENEUTIC

The aforementioned historical perspective, though brief and somewhat simplistic, is crucial in understanding the egalitarian positions of many contemporary black congregations. For many, the themes of resistance, progressive liberal ideology/theology, liberation, and the notions of equality and political correctness that have attended this present wave of the feminist movement have all coalesced in our contemporary moment. For other black egalitarians, the biblical witness alone is believed to settle the issue.

Liberation theology subsists on two undergirding perspectives: The first is that the Old Testament God made it his central aim to liberate an oppressed people from social and political bondage. The second is that the New Testament Christ has since self-identified with the marginalized and oppressed. Unsurprisingly, these two perspectives undergird many black egalitarians' hermeneutic. But their arguments orient around a unique reading of a few biblical passages.

Firstly, black egalitarians do not see gender role distinctives in the created order. Rather, appealing to Genesis 1:26-28, ontological equality is said to yield functional equality. If the *imago dei* is equally reflected in men and women, then equal roles must follow. Any distinction between gender roles is regarded as a result of the Fall.

Black egalitarians look to the prophetess and judge Deborah—as well as Esther and Miriam—as paradigmatic for women and church leadership. Moreover, Joel 2:28-29 is interpreted as the decisive Old Testament passage that foreshadows what is regarded as the democratization of the Holy Spirit, empowering and authorizing women for the preaching ministry.

In the New Testament, the picking of passages is a bit more complicated as blacks have always had a love-hate relationship with Pauline literature. Nevertheless, Galatians 3:28 serves as the interpretive lens through which to read all other Pauline passages relevant to this issue. It's argued that Paul's words demolish gender distinctions, making the function of men and women interchangeable in the home and in the church.

When it comes to the explicitly complementarian texts, the black egalitarian hermeneutic makes some interesting moves. For instance, 1 Timothy 2:12-15 is interpreted as an example of Paul dealing with a context-specific reality in the church at Ephesus. Whether Paul was faced with an uneducated female community or a persistent party of false female teachers depends on the interlocutor. Others interpret Paul as merely playing to the patriarchy that characterized his day.

Finally, there are other New Testament texts that supposedly bolster the egalitarian claim. It's frequently noted that Jesus' initial post-resurrection correspondence is with women who are thereafter instructed to "tell the good news" to his disciples (i.e. the first example of women "preachers"). Moreover, figures like Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11), Priscilla (Acts 18:26), Phoebe (Rom. 16:1), and Junia (Rom. 16:7) are all treated as examples of women in church leadership.

COMMENDING A CORRECTIVE

Before addressing the biblical data, the impact of the past on the present cannot be overstated. Again, for black Christians, biblical interpretation historically saw the Israelite experience as paradigmatic, while also treating justice, equality, and love as overriding Christian themes. These impulses—originating in the hearts of slave converts in the antebellum South and rehearsed by blacks during the Civil Rights Movement—proved to be much needed correctives to a compromised and contaminated Christianity in America.

Black egalitarians regard their stance on this issue as commensurate with such a history. In other words, many of the black male pastors I know who affirm egalitarianism regard their roles as ongoing civil rights actors as necessitating this

position. Moreover, following this line of thinking, to deny egalitarianism would be to align oneself with the racist, hegemonic, and oppressive European tradition that upheld the institutions of slavery and Jim and Jane Crow policies—all with Bibles in hand and fingers placed on self-justifying verses. While I understand this reasoning, it's at the heart of this felt-dilemma that I must direct my initial critique.

The question that black Christians must ask themselves—one that, in light of the history of race and religion in America, does not seem fair, but is yet posed to all image-bearers who profess Christ irrespective of ethnic identification—is a question of final allegiance. Is your fundamental commitment to blackness or to Christ? To be clear, the latter does not call one to deny the former, but rather submit the former in faithful obedience to the latter (Gal. 2:20). As one of my pastors recently intimated, Jesus came not to destroy our ethnic identities, but to purify each of them and unite them under his Lordship.

Additionally, another problem with this felt-dilemma is that it fails to acknowledge the true discerning agent in the aforementioned social realities—*biblical* Christianity. Black egalitarians often wrongly parse their choice of a hermeneutical paradigm as one between an oppressive lens or a liberating lens. However, the aim should be a biblical, Christ-centered lens. After all, true liberation is only found in union with Christ (John 8:31-36).

In an effort to deal with difficult and undesirable biblical passages, some have proudly affirmed what they call a “hermeneutic of suspicion,” ironically rendering themselves and their conclusions suspect according to orthodox standards. Instead, I commend a return to fundamental principles such as the inerrancy, infallibility, and authority of the Bible, a return to upholding and defending a literal interpretation of the Bible in its historical, grammatical, and canonical contexts.^[11] For many black Christians, such principles are untenable given certain Old Testament realities and New Testament statements. However, the Bible did not support the transatlantic slave trade, even if abusers of the text said it did. And abuse should not negate proper use.^[12]

In turning to the biblical witness on the distinct roles of men and women in church and home, I would suggest that the Bible teaches a complementarian relationship between men and women in both locations. It's a glorious truth that men and women were created equal in dignity and worth as bearers of the divine image. And yet God calls the man to lead, protect, and provide and the woman to affirm, actively support, and assist his leadership.

First, the narrator carefully demonstrates that Adam was created first (see 1 Tim. 2:13), and that the prohibitive command was given to him directly by God (Gen. 2:7-17). Moreover, the text goes on to state that Eve was created (i) *from* Adam (ii) in order to be a “helper” *for* Adam (Gen 2:18-22).

To conclude that distinguishing their roles negates ontological equality is to give credence to a culturally influenced worldview that runs afoul of basic Trinitarian theology. Within the Godhead we find equality of essence and worth, yet distinction in function. These functional differences show up in the economy of salvation. The Father possesses the distinct role of sending the Son for our redemption; the Son possesses the distinct role of accomplishing the work of redemption; and the Spirit possesses the distinct role of applying that redemptive work. The Son, having been sent by the Father, is subordinate to the Father, and the Spirit, having been sent by the Father and Son, is subordinate to both the Father and the Son. The Spirit does not share the prerogatives of the Son, and the Son does not share the prerogatives of the Father, and yet the three are co-equal and co-eternal. The complementarian position finds its legitimacy in such an understanding of the Trinity.

Regarding prominent women in the Old Testament, we certainly want to acknowledge their faithfulness and service as well as God's providence in choosing them to accomplish his purposes. Moreover, we should draw godly principles from their lives as we would of any other figure in the Old Testament. However, it does not follow that such Old Testament occurrences are paradigmatic for the church. The church born in Acts 2 is to be ordered by standards found in the New

Testament passages concerning church polity. Old Testament prescriptions for the civil order (as with Deborah) or even temple worship do not automatically equate to prescriptions for church order.

Regarding Deborah in particular, it's worth recalling that the book of Judges features Israel's disobedience and idolatry in the face of God's enduring faithfulness. The closing verse of the book states, "in those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Israel is hardly a model at this point, but more a picture of disobedience. Why would one use *this* book to look for standards for the church?

Much has also been made in black egalitarian circles about Joel's prophecy and its fulfillment on the day of Pentecost. Egalitarians explain, "the Bible is clear that 'your sons *and* your daughters shall prophesy'!" However, two things must be acknowledged. First, there is no reason to think that Peter's statement concerning Joel's prophecy had anything to do with church polity and who is qualified to preach/pastor in the local church. Second, Peter clearly indicated what constituted the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: "*this* is what was uttered through the prophet Joel." The antecedent for the demonstrative pronoun, *this*, is the occurrence described in Acts 2:5-11. To apply Joel's prophecy to the issue of church polity is illegitimate.

The case remains that 1 Timothy 2:12-14 prohibits women from serving in the office of elder in the local church. One of the problems that has further complicated the interpretation and application of this verse is the persistent misunderstanding regarding the local church office of elder, and the relationship between preaching and that office. The New Testament Greek makes it clear that "elder," "pastor," and "bishop" are used interchangeably.^[13] Any distinctions attached to these designations are mere fabrications. Also, the main role of the elder/pastor *is* preaching.

Traditionally, the pastorate in the black church has included an exhaustive list of tasks and responsibilities. Many of those tasks are inherent to the calling of pastoral ministry. However, it remains the case that the most important of those tasks is delivering the Word of God, which builds the church of God. I make this point because some have thought it expedient to make a distinction between preaching and pastoring so as to allow for women preachers. To be sure, every who preaches is not a pastor. However, every preacher, in the preaching event, does take part in what is the central role of the pastor in shepherding the congregation according to the Word of God.

In other words, the issue is not merely titular.^[14] It's also an issue of function. Thus, the prohibition: when the church is formally gathered in any respect,^[15] women should not serve as teachers of men. The reason for the prohibition is clearly stated in verse 13: the created order and the process by which the Fall occurred.^[16] The immediate historical context of a text is important for interpretation and application. But our reconstruction of the historical context should hardly cause us to interpret the text contrary to what the grammatical context itself conveys.

This brings us to the question concerning the egalitarian interpretation of Galatians 3:28. An important question to consider would be: What is the book of Galatians in general or chapter 3 in particular about? I would argue that the answer has everything to do with justification by faith (as opposed to works of the Law) and nothing to do with church polity. In other words, the issue at stake is equal access to salvation in Christ and the promised Spirit, not the pulpit. Moreover, contrary to the egalitarian reading of the passage, Paul is not saying that in Christ gender disappears (i.e. there is no such thing as a "man" or a "woman"). Rather, Paul is concluding that, in Christ, no one is spiritually superior over anyone else. A believing Jew, free person, or man does not possess a more privileged position before God than a believing Greek, slave, or woman. Noteworthy, the egalitarian interpretation of this passage is *identical* to that which is made by those who would argue in favor of an alternative sexual ethic. Logical consistency would almost demand that those in favor of an egalitarian position from this passage also affirm the validity of homosexual practice as commensurate with a Christian testimony.

Lastly, there is no indication that the women often appealed to throughout the New Testament as examples of female leadership behaved in any way contrary to the prohibition that is given in 1 Timothy as explained above and in the

footnotes below. Rather, what we do find in the New Testament are clear, prescriptive passages in Titus 2:3-5 and 1 Timothy 5:14 where women are encouraged to teach other women, submit to their husbands, and manage their households.^[17] The appeal to these passages is not to suggest that women are not gifted in other areas of ministry in the local church. God has gifted women to serve in every capacity that does not run afoul the prohibition previously discussed. According to this view, women possess the gift of teaching and are also called to serve as deaconesses.^[18]

For black female egalitarians, the question of identity needs to be addressed. The suggestion that women are prohibited from preaching and pastoral ministry and are called to submit to their husbands is not a denigration of personhood and value any more than any man's calling to submit to church leaders (Hebrews 13:17) is a denigration of his personhood and value. As with the Trinity, function is not indicative of value and worth. To say otherwise is a cultural claim, not a Christian one.

A FINAL WORD

Based on my convictions concerning the Word of God, I do believe that many black women are functioning in homes and in the local church in ways contrary to God's intended design. However, the indictment is not to be initially laid at their feet. Just as God asked Adam in the garden, so too does the question need to be posed to many black men today: "Where are you?"

This article has sought to provide a historical perspective in an attempt to begin to answer that question. However, what is needed is the gospel and the truth of God's Word. What's needed is the mentoring of young black men by godly Christian men, and the mentoring of young black women by godly Christian women. What's needed are testimonies of healthy black marriages—faithful husbands and faithful brides—that will serve as enduring paradigms of what covenants really are, especially those modeled after Christ and his bride, the church. What's needed is a model of complementarity that does not relegate itself to caricatures of female mindlessness and male machismo. And yes, what's needed are pastors with deep convictions, pastors who refuse to cave to cultural pressures, but rather hold in high esteem God's Word rightly taught for the good of the church.

May all our prayers be to this end, not just for the "black church," but for the Lord's church, wherever it may be found.

[1] Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004). Space does not allow for the analysis of what was yet another site of familial disruption: female slave rape. The mulatto offspring of such horrid encounters were often relegated to both fatherlessness and communal ostracization.

[2] Of course, an immediate causal relationship between slavery and fatherless homes in the contemporary black community cannot be argued. However, it is more than reasonable to suggest a correlation whereby the absence of a generationally ingrained ideal model, coupled with certain besetting sins common to all men—such as lasciviousness, selfishness, and outright unbelief—has resulted in the present plight of many black homes.

[3] Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 212.

[4] My use of the phrase "black church" is in like manner to that of C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya: "...as a kind of sociological and theological shorthand reference to the pluralism of black Christian churches in the United States." *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 1.

[5] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 14.

[6] For a historical analysis of black feminist thought see: bell hooks, *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1999).

[7] See: Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[8] I.e., Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Daisy Bates, Prathia Hall, Diane Nash, Coretta Scott King, Rosa Parks.

[9] This characteristic can be seen championed in black popular culture. From the 1999 song by Destiny's Child, "Independent Women," to the 2008 song "Miss Independent" by the artist, Ne-Yo, to the even more recent 2011 song by Beyonce, "Run the World (Girls)." Presently, this theme is exemplified in the television drama characters of Olivia Pope (*Scandal*) and Professor Annalise Keating (*How to Get Away with Murder*).

[10] Understandably, even for black fathers who are present in the home, often the decision is made to inculcate in their daughters the pursuit of this persona in an effort to ensure the security and protection from former oppressive and exploitative realities.

[11] See: William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004); Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006); Andreas J. Kostenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011); Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2010).

[12] I have written an article on this issue, here: <http://www.canonandculture.com/the-problem-of-hearsay-hermeneutics/>

[13] See Acts 20:17,28. In the former verse, Paul calls for the Ephesian elders (*presbuteros*). In the latter verse he says that the Holy Spirit has made them "overseers" (*episkopos* – which is often translated, "bishop"). Also, see 1 Peter 5:1-2. In his exhortation to "elders" (*presbuteros*), Peter admonishes them to "shepherd" (*poimaino*, the verb form of the word for "pastor/shepherd") God's flock. He then tells them to exercise "oversight" (*episkopeo*, the verb form of the word for "bishop").

[14] The same is also often done with the title of "Associate Minister."

[15] In 1 Timothy 3:14-15, Paul indicates the sphere to which his instructions refer: "in the household of God." Moreover, given that the prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:12 refers to teaching or exercising authority over men, it would seem appropriate to apply the prohibition to all contexts within the local church where the instructed community consists of both men and women. However, the prohibition does not extend to those instances and areas where the community gathered is not the local church community. The reason for Paul's focus on the formal gathering of the community is due to the fact that, contrary to the conviction of many contemporary Christians, the local church is to be the main source of one's spiritual development.

[16] The Greek word translated "for" (*gar*) in verse 13 indicates that what follows is the grounds, or reason, for the statement made in verse 12. The reason stated is *not* the education of women, or the errant actions of a particular group of local women, or any other occasion-specific reason. Paul grounds his reason in something that transgresses the

bounds of his own historical context—the order of creation itself. Moreover, he appeals to the details of the fall. These reasons imply that the prohibition given is universal in scope, and ought be universal in application.

[17] Whether reference is made to the admonishment to be “keepers at home” (Titus 2:5) or to manage the house (literally, “rule” the house, 1 Timothy 5:14), it is not my contention that these verses prohibit women from working outside of the home. The virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31 precludes such a conclusion. However, these passages do teach that the home should be the place of priority for women.

[18] To affirm deaconesses might seem contradictory in light of the previous arguments. However, a right regarding of the deacon’s role is a much needed corrective in many black churches. The role of the deacon is not one of authoritative, spiritual leadership, but rather service. As a matter of fact, Phoebe is commended by Paul as a servant (same word translated “deacon” elsewhere, diakanos) of the church.

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By Gavin Peacock

Four Truths About Complementary Marriage

Every pastor wants the marriages in his church to be healthy. Here are four biblical truths pastors should teach with respect to marriage, manhood, and womanhood, not just for the sake of marriage, but for the sake of the gospel.

1. Manhood and womanhood uniquely display God's glory.

God created the universe for his glory, including both men and women. And he gets more glory because he created each for its part. We were not created as androgynous beings. Instead, God created us male *and* female, in his image, to display physical and functional complementarity. This is what it means to glorify God!

Men and women are physically and biologically different. Both are created equal in the image of God, but we're not the same. Physical complementarity can be seen through the possibility of a one-flesh union in marriage. A man and a woman literally physically fit together.

Functional complementarity is more controversial these days. In short, God has designed man as the leader. God gave Adam the moral teaching (Gen. 2:17) as well as the authority to name the animals and even his wife. He made Eve to be his helper, fit for him (Gen. 2: 18, 20). Both the leader and the helper image God in unique ways, because both reflect aspects of his character, and his relational nature.

There is equality but difference, unity but plurality—a physical and functional complementarity. We need to declare the equality and delineate the difference and celebrate both, because together they display God's glory more fully. Pastors, teach this to your churches.

2. Manhood and womanhood in marriage displays the gospel.

Men and women are also uniquely designed to display the glory of God in the gospel through marriage. God creates marriage (Gen. 2:18-25) and Paul tells us that when we embrace biblical headship and submission, we help to illustrate the gospel (Eph 5:22-33).

Christ does not submit to the church, but loves her as he lays his life down for her. And the church submits to Christ. Paul therefore commands husbands and wives to reflect this same ordering, and just as the roles of Christ and church cannot be reversed, the roles of husband and wife cannot be reversed. They exist due to divine design.

Erasing the differences between men and women in marriage blurs the gospel picture. And same-sex marriage destroys the picture. Pastors, teach your church to celebrate the divine design by teaching them to embrace the pattern for the sake of the gospel.

3. Marriage conforms us to Christ.

As husbands and wives together pursue this gospel picture of Christ and the church, they personally pursue Christlikeness.

Christ is head of the church, and Christ submits to the Father's will. So husbands become more like Christ as they lovingly lead, and wives become more like Christ as they submit in the way Christ submitted to the Father. As each fulfills their roles, they encourage one another.

Pastors, remind husbands and wives that God has given them to each other, with both sets of strengths and weaknesses, precisely designed to conform one another to Christ. Wives are helpmates fit for their husbands, perfectly suitable for them alone and designed to help them conform to Christ. Husbands, too, are equipped to lead and so help conform their wives to Christ.

Since the Fall, sin has polluted our hearts and behaviors, and none of this happens easily, and certainly not perfectly. So what's required? Mercy! As we have received, so must we give. Forgive more. Exercise patience more. We always start by taking the log out of our own eye first.

Husbands should ask whether their wives are more Christ-like after 5, 10, 20, or 30 years into your marriage because of their leadership.

Wives should ask whether their husbands are growing as Christ-like leaders because of their respect and encouragement.

4. Manhood, womanhood, and marriage serve the gospel's spread.

Further, we must resist and decry moral hypocrisy in the church. We might be outraged at homosexual marriage all the while going soft on other kinds of sexual immorality. Do we preach about divorce? Do we call people to repent from watching pornography? Do we pray publicly against sex trafficking? God calls the church to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). If there's no holiness in the church, then there will be no power to display and proclaim biblical sexuality in the culture and serve the spread of the gospel.

We are Christ's ambassadors. We live for a great purpose. The body was created and redeemed for the Lord (1 Cor. 6:13 cf. Ro.12:1). It is not for self-gratification but for God-glorification.

This means pastors must equip the saints for the work of ministry to one another *and* to a watching world.

Biblical masculinity, femininity and marriage glorify God and display the gospel, which means it is true and good. And we are called to proclaim and display this truth and goodness to the world, that it may commend the gospel and compel others to praise God. That's why Jesus calls Christians to be salt and light in the world (Matt. 5:13-16). We show the

world we are disciples by the way we love one another (John 13:35). The Christian faith and life is not private because the gospel is not a private affair.

Many Christians have begun floating downstream with the culture on same-sex marriage and male-female roles because their pastors have not been bold enough to oppose the culture. Pastors must equip the saints. They need to find their voice. Men too often sin by their silence, just as the silence of Adam was at the root of the fall.

Our present cultural contest over men, women, marriage, and sexuality presents the church with a mission moment that will define us. Contests reveal what you believe and what you love. Will we choose cultural relevance and the approval of man over gospel relevance and the approval of God?

Christians must speak out of love for God and love for people. Everyone needs the gospel. We are all sinners before God. How can those who have been forgiven much not speak for the sake of souls? So we risk being disliked, even hated, all for the sake of him who bled for us and redeemed masculinity and femininity.

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Pastors' Forum: What do you do to equip and empower women for ministry in your church?

Editor's note: We asked a bunch of pastors about the practical processes and structures built in the life of their local churches that are specifically geared toward equipping women for ministry. We hope you'll find some of their prescriptions useful and easily reproduced.

At Christ Covenant Church, we have the following avenues of growth for women:

1. For new attenders: We have a four to six week course built around a meal where the basics of biblical femininity are taught and testimonies are given as to how these truths flesh out in real life. We do this for non-Christians as well (members invite a friend) seeking to give biblical truth on womanhood in a more comfortable context. This offers a way in to the life of the community for new attenders or non-Christians.
- 2.
3. A women's weekly Bible study that combines teaching and prayer/fellowship. This includes a homework component as well as times of discussion for greater understanding and application in small groups. This offers opportunities for growth in the Scriptures and proper application.
4. A mentoring ministry where women in groups of 10-12 agree to gather together for one year to read a book on a theological/practical topic and walk it out over time meeting monthly for prayer and discussion. This offers the real possibility of developing relationships among women.

—Tom Mercer, Senior Pastor of Christ Covenant Church in Raleigh, North Carolina

You would think in a church as diverse as Redeemer Church of Dubai (with over 60 nationalities) that it would be impossible to equip such a diversity of women for the diverse ministries to which God has called them. But that's just not the case! I think one of the key things the elders do to equip our women is to preach expositionally, modeling what it looks like to approach God's authoritative and sufficient Word. We also have women's classes led by other women to talk through various subjects. We've also held women's training sessions that are focused on inductive Bible study. And we work hard to build a culture of discipleship in our church where men are meeting with men and women are meeting with women for the purpose of studying Scripture and praying in groups and in pairs.

—Dave Furman, Senior Pastor, Redeemer Church of Dubai

I was struck a couple of years ago by a friend's observation that Paul charged *Titus* to train the older women to train the younger women. For too long I was waiting on the older women to get to this training on their own without fulfilling my part of the ministry. Last year we started meeting with a group of older women to teach and train them in the areas of Biblical theology, hermeneutics, leadership, Biblical counseling, and complementarianism. It has been a wonderful time and helped to empower our sisters to effectively lead the next generation. These monthly meetings taught by one of our pastors lead into a much larger Ladies Fellowship that is led by these sisters. This has also resulted in many more mentoring relationships between sisters in the church.

—Paul Martin, Pastor of Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto, Ontario

This year my two associate pastors and I started an equipping meeting that we call "Shepherdess Training." The three of us gather on Mondays at noon with 20-25 women who are church members. We spend about 45 minutes discussing assigned reading and then the women break up into small groups for another 45 minutes to practice inductive Bible study. The idea is to give the women 1) a vision for personal Word ministry to other women, 2) a broader theological knowledge base, and 3) skill in leading a simple inductive Bible study.

For those interested, their reading list includes John Frame's brief systematic theology [*Salvation Belongs to the Lord*](#), Colin Marshall and Tony Payne's call to personal Word ministry [*The Trellis and the Vine*](#), Vaughan Robert's introduction to biblical theology [*God's Big Picture*](#), [*Glimpses of Grace*](#) by Gloria Furman, and for a vision of Word ministry in the local church they read Jonathan Leeman's [*Reverberation*](#).

—Jeramie Rinne, Senior Pastor of South Shore Baptist Church in Hingham, Massachusetts

We are intentional about our women being strong theologians who are engaged in the ministry of the Word to one another and seek to create a culture where it is normal and expected for our women to be strong in the Word. We pursue this by:

- Consistently offering robust Bible classes for women taught by women.
- Equipping and using our women to minister the Word to one another in counseling and mentoring.
- Specifically inviting women to attend seminary level classes in the church.
- Publicly thanking God for the passion that our women have to know God.
- Hosting and promoting women's conferences where the Word is competently taught by women.

—Bob Johnson, Senior Pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Roseville, Michigan

Here's my quick answer.

In addition to the normal activities of the church (preaching, sacraments), we use the Simeon Trust training program to help women in our congregation prepare to understand and teach God's word more effectively. We also have a one-to-one Bible reading program where women in the church are paired up with each other to study the Bible and help each other grow in Christ. This helps the women who participate to build discipling relationships and become more proficient and using the Bible to do spiritual good for another woman.

—Mike McKinley, Senior Pastor of Sterling Park Baptist Church in Sterling, Virginia

At Immanuel Baptist Church our regular preaching ministry is our main vehicle for equipping the women of the Church. The preaching ministry of the Word has cultivated a culture of 'every member ministry' where many mature, godly women reach into the lives of other women through prayer, service, and Word-centered encouragement. In addition to this many of our Gospel Community Groups spend regular time where the women mutually build one another up and hold one another accountable. Our prayer meetings are also places where the women of the Church intercede for one another, the men of the Church, and those who have gone out among the nations. In addition to this we are blessed to have a skilled Women's Ministry Director who serves the saints in the following way:

- 1 By leading quarterly "Women's Ministry Events" that focus on Biblical teaching and fellowship.
- 2 Regular in-depth Bible studies that equip women with the Word.
- 3 Leading a women's ministry team that seeks to find ways to disciple the women of Immanuel.
- 4 Counseling many of the women of Immanuel and equipping and encouraging others to do the same.
- 5 Assisting the pastors in some marriage counseling situations.

In the coming year, we also hope to have her teach our Gospel Community Group leaders wives during our leadership equipping times. Finally, it has also been my joy to attend our "Women's Ministry Events" annually. Each year I try to preach expositionally from a text that deals explicitly with the glory, the calling, and the roles of women in the Church.

—Ryan Fullerton, Senior Pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky

In Niddrie, we encourage a Titus 2 approach to ministry in the local church. Mature Christian ladies discipling younger women in the faith. We have a woman's pastoral worker who leads Bible studies and groups for our women and reports to the elders monthly on the specific pastoral needs of our ladies.

We are currently training several young women for ministry with young people and as Female Gospel Workers for ministry in schemes across Scotland. They are trained theologically through our basic Discipleship Course and our Access to Theology Course at a local seminary.

At Niddrie, we have Elders and Deacons (all male) and a Ministry Team which deals with the on-the-ground ministry of the church and 20schemes. Of 6 Senior people, 3 are women who participate in the decision making process of the work.

We offer summer internships anywhere between 2-9 weeks in duration and have had multiple women through our programme. We also offer the position of Female Gospel Workers which can last up to 2 years and currently have three women in process to join us in the next 12 months. We take the training of women seriously at 20schemes and see them as having a vital role in our ministry.

—Mez McConnell, Senior Pastor of Niddrie Community Church in Edinburgh, United Kingdom

At High Pointe, we are seeking to develop a culture of discipleship in which it is natural for our members to develop same-gender relationships to read the Bible together and pray for and encourage one another. Such mutual encouragement may also occur in same-gender small groups. Recently, our biblical counselor developed on-going biblical counseling training to equip men and women to apply the gospel to one another in specific situations. And for the first time, we are offering a Sunday morning class for women to address issues of biblical womanhood. All this is supported by regular preaching application as to what such a culture might look like.

—Juan Sanchez, Senior Pastor of High Pointe Baptist Church in Austin, Texas

At La Plata Baptist, our women recently held an Inductive Bible Study training event. It was planned and led by one of our Women's Small Group teachers. She systematically walked the women through how to observe, interpret, and apply God's Word with others. The material was outstanding and the turnout for the event was tremendous. In fact, nearly every woman in our church came to the training.

The women of our church also lead an annual Christmas Tea. It is our best attended evangelistic event of the year. As we go forward, I see the need to get them more involved. God is giving us fruit through their faithful work.

—Garret Conner, Pastor of La Plata Baptist Church in La Plata, Maryland



By Jackie Hill-Perry

From Lesbianism to Complementarianism

He wanted to watch wrestling; I wanted to watch the Food Network.

As we both raced to grab the remote, in hopes of having first dibs on our entertainment for the evening, I lost the battle. So I grabbed his arm, pulling and tugging as hard as I could, trying to pry the remote out of his hand—a hand much larger and an arm much stronger than my own. I continued to fight for the remote until I realized that, no matter how hard I tried, I was not stronger than him.

He was a man, and I was a woman. We were both human, yet very different in how we were built—and I HATED IT.

The “War of the Remote” is a trivial story, but it was for me a very new experience that sparked my journey to complementarianism.

THE ROOTS OF MY LESBIANISM

Seven months prior to my short-lived relationship with the guy who won the battle over the remote, I was a lesbian. My long black hair neatly tied into a ponytail. My jeans sagging just enough to show off the boxer briefs I wore faithfully. My white t-shirt covering the breasts that I worked diligently to keep flat, lest I look too much like the woman God made me. And beneath it all lay a soul that God died to save.

Born with an inherent disposition to sin mixed with fatherlessness, molestation, and limited-to-no examples of trustworthy men led me into a lifestyle of homosexuality. It was a way of life I willingly embraced. My style of dress and behavior was somewhat indicative of my personality. A girly-girl could never be used to describe Jackie. An aggressive tom-boy was more like it. Therefore, the girls I attracted were typically everything that allowed me to become what I thought I wanted to secretly be: a man.

I always saw men as being something to envy. They seemed strong, powerful, in control. Femininity, or the skewed view of it that I held, seemed weak. Part of my embracing masculinity and rejecting femininity was my own way of protecting myself from pain—pain that I believed men were capable of subjecting me to. After all, that’s what my father did to me. That’s what I saw men do to my mother. That’s what I witnessed my guy friends do to the women they claimed to love.

All I knew of men was that they used their manliness as a means to inflict pain. And us women—us “weak beings”—were target practice.

ANOTHER MAN

In comes Jesus. A man, yet fully God. One who is completely faithful to his bride.

He died for her sins. He loves her not just in words but in deed. He secured not just her eternity, but protects her on earth. He provides for her needs. He leads her into all truth by his Spirit. He daily lavishes her with himself, the one thing that will make her truly happy.

I met this man in October 2008.

THE NEED FOR REVIVAL

Though my soul was saved, and my clothing and affections had begun to change, my mind still needed to be renewed. And my relationship with the “stronger armed-wrestling lover” was the beginning of my walk to complementarianism. I had started embracing God’s will for my life in regards to my sexuality, which in turn forced me to wrestle with the nuances of manhood and womanhood.

The moment I was unable to grab the remote from his hand, I realized that I needed to reckon with the fact that I would no longer be able to be in a relationship with those I was stronger than—i.e., women. No, I’m not encouraging men to use their strength to grab whatever they want from women. But I knew I had to deal with the truth that God had not only made me a woman, but he had called me to be a biblical woman and to potentially love something completely different than what I was used to, and that those differences were for his glory. Those differences that made this guy a man and me a woman were not bad things to be feared. They were beautiful things to be delighted in.

FROM FEAR TO TRUST

But first—my identity needed new soil to place its roots. For too long, I had seen womanhood through the lens of fear and manhood through the lens of pain. And I rejected womanhood because of pride mixed with ignorance over what God intended for gender roles. I had been raised observing dysfunctional relationships between men and women. But I could no longer let those determine how I would define femininity and manliness. Rather, the Scriptures had to become my guide.

And I realized, it was not that men were strong and women were weak; it was that both genders were sinful and needed a Savior. God has given women a sort of softness that has the ability to complement men in very fruitful ways, mainly as their helpers. He has given men a “hardness” or strong backbone and called them to be the protectors and leaders. Neither is better than the other; both are actually servants of each other for the glory of God. And that is a *good* thing.

THE SON WHO BECAME A SERVANT

But it took much humbling for me to see this as a good thing. Even with a clear understanding of biblical gender roles, my pride had to die and my faith had to soar for me to live those truths. My entire life had consisted of being terrified of being perceived as weak, to the point that I tried to live and act like a man. The idea of being “the weaker vessel” or being a “helper” didn’t seem flattering—until I took my eyes off myself and remembered Christ.

I had to remember that God the Son himself, the Creator of the universe, the one whom angels worship and demons fear, did not count equality with God the Father as something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. **God became a servant.**

With this in mind, ultimately my embrace of complementarianism became possible when I was willing to see my womanhood as a means to look and live like Jesus.

A HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER

I haven't been on this journey for too long, and it has definitely been a difficult one. But God is faithful. He has sent me a husband who is not a lover of wrestling but a basketball fanatic who doesn't fight with me over the remote but humbly offers to watch Food Network with me. He leads me in humility in the small and large things of life. God has given me a gift in my daughter Eden Grace, who is slowly bringing out the gentle parts of me that I tried for so long to hide.

I am a Christian, a wife, a mother, and a woman who is being made strong in her weaknesses, and I love it.

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By Dave Wilezol

Art, Beauty, and Complementarianism

The Genesis 2 narrative of Adam and Eve has been for centuries a popular muse for visual artists.

Maybe that's because painters like to titillate, and the pre-Fall duo's lack of clothing provides an artistic rationale to display the human body. Or maybe it's because artists enjoy the subversive or the reinterpreted, and the Adam and Eve story, being one of the first pieces of human history, is ripe for deconstruction. For example, the theologically misinformed Hendrick Goltzius [shows](#) an Adam and Eve whose first sin against God was a sexual coupling, not eating the fruit forbidden to them. Likewise, Michaelangelo [depicted](#) Eve's tempter as a half-woman, half-snake, an unscriptural anthropomorphization of the serpent.

But the primeval account of the first man and woman has, I think, served as a frequent inspiration for artists because we can see how the same characteristics attending the first man and woman—relationship with God, love, desire, sin—still indwell us today. Virtually all canvas renderings of Adam and Eve capture the anguishes of sin now embedded in all men: guilt, curse, regret, banishment, judgment. Examine this work by the painter Domenichino: God's obvious [displeasure](#) with Adam leads him to shovel blame onto Eve. Eve, in turn, points to the serpent lying on the ground. Aren't we just as quick to distribute our guilt when the Spirit convicts us of our sin?

Adam and Eve as the archetype of sinful man is well-documented in art. But absent from the aesthetic record is their embodiment of the complementarian model which God has instituted. Where is the painting that isolates the fulfillment of Adam's desire for a helpmate, as expressed in Gen. 2:23's resounding "At last!"? What about a scene (admittedly hypothetical) of post-fall Adam grateful for Eve, his helpmate, rubbing his sore feet after a day of hunting, or Eve rejoicing in how her husband provided for her as he displays the day's kill?

Some might suggest that art which does not challenge a traditional narrative is boring. But Christians should maintain that these missing scenes of Adam and Eve are *more* worthy of a visual rendering than so many bleak portraits of the Fall. A pictorial recapturing of the first man and woman faithfully conforming to their God-authored roles as husband and wife displays God's original plan for mankind. And this plan itself is beautiful and worthy of attention if only for its divine provenance. Fixing our focus on the good in God's original design, and subsequently praising him for it, is untold orders of magnitude more wonderful than dwelling on the rupture of Paradise.

But this concentration ought not only be expressed in art. We must also cultivate in our hearts a reverence for God's complementarian schematic. Here are some ways to do it:

1. Remember that complementarianism is from God.

In our time it is fashionable, even for Christians, to scoff at the biblical arrangement of a man leading his wife and his wife submitting to her husband. First, the word “submission” does not have a nice connotation. When I hear the word I think of the finishing moves of wrestlers like Bret Hart and Ric Flair, moves which my brother and I mercilessly used to perform on each other as kids. They were painful, and their great object was to induce “submission,” a term of art that expressed the victim's surrender.

Secondly, our own hearts are perpetually in rebellion to the authorities appointed over us, and the culture reverberates with notions of gender identity that oppose God's authorship. But God's understanding is unsearchable, writes Isaiah (40:29), and his wisdom makes foolish the wisdom of the world (1 Cor. 1: 20). God's ways are often inscrutable, but as Psalm 18:30 makes clear, God's Word will ultimately prove to be flawless: “This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true.”

2. Consider that complementarianism points to the unity of Jesus and God the Father.

A husband and wife's mutual conformity to biblical ideas of headship and submission is beautiful because it reflects a unity of being found in Jesus' relationship to God the Father. In John 6:38, Jesus states his mission: “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.” We should also remember Jesus' pre-crucifixion cry: “Yet not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36).

Without God the Father sacrificially offering up his Son, and without the Son submitting to God the Father, we would have all perished in our sin. Fortunately, both fulfilled their appointed roles: God “made him who had no sin to be sin for us” (1 Cor. 5:21), and Jesus “humbled himself by being obedient to the point of death” (Phil. 2:8). In many ways, we will never fully grasp the architecture of the atonement. But it is worth considering that it was not possible without submission—and leadership.

3. Remember that complementarianism depicts the union of Christ and the church.

Lastly, the biblical idea of complementarianism is beautiful because it prefigures a Christian's great hope: his eternal, indivisible union with Christ. From Adam and Eve, to Ruth and Boaz, to Paul's theological description of husband and wife in Ephesians 5, the Bible's treatment of husband and wife points toward a greater idea of spiritual fulfillment: Christ as the head of the Church, redeemer of the wicked, the broken, and the needy—“Love to the loveless shown,” as the hymn goes, “that they might lovely be.” In the same way, the wife's (often difficult) submissive reverence for her husband images how members of Christ's body forego their own desires out of sheer love and obedience, not self-interest.

In fact, some of the artistic renderings of the Garden do offer a flash of the glory of the complementarity of the man and the woman. Quite poignant, for instance, are the paintings which capture the sublime entwinements of flesh and gaze which a husband and wife enjoy in the height of physical intimacy. Adam's physical embrace of Eve in so many works exalts an a supremely intimate, God-designed arrangement between the two that foreshadows the experience the church will enjoy on that day of perfect unification with Christ. On that day, we the bride of Christ, seeing Jesus face to face, will too exclaim, “At last!”

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By Mathew Freeman

Complementarianism and the Single Man

Complementarianism affects more than marriages. As a single man, that's an obvious statement, but I've been tempted to think that being a man was on hold until I "grew up" and got married. Wrong.

I'm not going to make the argument for "complementarianism." For that, check out The Gospel Coalition's confessional statement, specifically point three, "[Creation of Humanity](#)." Or, to give you the theological and practical foundation for the doctrine, take a look at John Piper's sermon "[What does it mean to be complementarian?](#)"

Being a Christian man means stepping into responsibility and stewardship. This means, whether married or single, Christian men are primarily concerned with leadership, provision, and protection.

So, I hope to offer a brief word from a single man's perspective on our role as complementarian Christian men.

PRACTICE LIKE YOU HOPE TO PLAY

When I first moved to Washington D. C., from Sydney, Australia, there were many adjustments to be made. Most significantly, I went from living in my own apartment to living with a large group of guys.

Thinking about others, acting in a way that cared for them and not just myself was a harder transition than I care to admit. Having a dozen different opinions, schedules, and ideas of the definition of "clean" was, as you can imagine, rather challenging.

Holding it all together was our house manager. Not until years later did I understand how hard that job was. One night, he returned home to find me reading in the living room. After long day at work, he sat down and asked me "Mathew, when you're married, who do you think should do the dishes?" Sensing a trap, I ducked and weaved. We both quickly realized that I had no idea how to answer the question, so he stepped in to help me out. Without exaggeration, that conversation about the dishes was one of the most formative conversations I had in that house.

If you claim to be the head of your household, then the dishes are your responsibility; the vacuuming is your responsibility; the budget, taking out the trash, fixing the radiator, where you live, what you do, all the ironing and cooking dinner. . . all of this is your responsibility. They are your responsibility because you are the leader of the home.

Being a man who subscribes to complementarianism does not mean that I plan on barking orders at my future wife—no way! Instead, I aspire to lead and serve her in a way that causes her to flourish in the gifts the Lord has given her. That could well look like me doing the dishes, or asking her to wash while I wipe and put away. But it does mean, fundamentally, that I must take responsibility. To lead means to take responsibility over what appears to be small and mundane; to serve means to consider the needs of others and act with those needs in mind.

As a single man, this responsibility of household leadership is not put on hold until marriage. If you watch the documentary “All Access” with the Ohio State Buckeyes from two years ago, you find out the secret behind their winning the National Championship game this year. “Practice like you play!” Head coach Urban Meyer demands the players go as fast or faster than they expect to play so that they know what it is to excel when game time comes. In the same way, brothers, let’s practice in our singleness the same way we hope to play in our marriages.

What does this “practice” look like? Serve your room mates, take responsibility for the home, clean up after yourself, apply Scripture to conflict, speak gently, don’t hold grudges, and take action with a humble confidence. We so often serve ourselves by pointing out the errors and flaws of those we live with, while neglecting to compliment or encourage the things they do well. We should pray that we’ll reverse that trend in our own lives.

As I stand before the cupboard, staring at the empty shelf where glasses should be, I know what’s coming. I reach down and open the dishwasher; it’s finished and every dish is clean. The question is now clear: “Am I man enough to empty the dishwasher?!”

That said, if the way we interact with our roommates is important, then the way we treat our sisters at church is critical, too.

CLEAR, BOLD LEADERSHIP

The Lord has given me many gifts in this life; one very clear gift has been my friendship with Ken and his wife, Kelli. Ken has been my friend and mentor for over five years. Thankfully, that has meant seeing a model of marriage and safe environment to ask Kelli “single guy” questions. There are very few ladies that I can be open and emotionally transparent with but because of my friendship with Ken, I count Kelli as one of my consiglieres. Kelli’s opinion is valuable to me because I trust her. She loves the Lord and speaks from a perspective I have little to no access to: a woman’s. Single brothers, invest in relationships with families in your church; there are so many benefits.

If your church is anything like mine, then there are lots of wise and encouraging married couples to get to know, and there are lots of single folks. Because of limited space, let’s just cut to the chase. How do we live—and worship—alongside single ladies at church?

How are we, single men, called to relate to our single sisters? A good question, one that was put to me by a sister recently. She pressed me to not just come up with general advice, but to point to Scripture. Well, what about Ephesian 5? This chapter gives a helpful framework for how married men are to serve their wives, a good model that singles should seek to apply and emulate, as far as it goes. Galatians 3 speaks about fruits of the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 13 outlines what love looks like, and 1 Timothy 3 describes what a Christian leader looks like. A mosaic of those texts leads me to respond this way to the question of how we are to relate to our single sisters: “Loving initiation of friendship and fellowship marked by leadership, protection, and provision.”

Practically, this means, we take the initiative and lead your friendships with your single sisters in the church. Breaking it all the way down, how about this: Walk over to a group of girls and start a conversation. Know what you’re going to say before you go over there; don’t be that awkward dude who just wanders over and stands idly by. Serve your sisters by planning events, and think about how you will protect them by not sending them into the night without a ride home. If it’s

dark out after church, offer to walk them to where they are going. If it's raining, hand over your umbrella, and walk on the outside of the sidewalk so you get splashed, not her. And never ever demand recognition; it's the quiet faithfulness of those unseen acts that brings God glory. Sacrifice your comfort for the protection and provision of your sister; though you are not married, think about how you will walk in the role of the man in Ephesians 5.

HOW TO LEAD FRIENDSHIPS

Let's resolve to carefully thinking about how to lead friendships. Let's speak gently and patiently and carefully to our sisters. Encourage and affirm them; be specific and heartfelt. Point out the ways the Lord has used them in your life as your friend and sister in Christ. But brothers, above all else do not be mysterious about your intentions. Don't allow your emotions to take control of how you lead your relationships. Confusing your intentions by acting in a way that does not line up with your words does not serve her well, and is not loving.

But if it is time to "become more than friends," then don't wait for your sister to get frustrated and confused at your intentions; even in this—no, *especially* in this—you're called to lead. So, lead. Men, we are to be bold; and if any ladies are reading this, please do serve us by being clear in your response.

HOW TO LEAD DATING RELATIONSHIPS

You've read this far, so let's get to the fun and slightly terrifying bit. How does complementarianism affect dating? Others have written books on the topic so I won't try and replicate that, but, here are a couple of thoughts that speak to the topic considering your role as a single man.

First—and I can't say this enough—be bold.

Take the initiative, show her what you're made of and step forward. It's been helpful for me to remember that men are called to be "bold" and our sisters are called to be "clear" in dating. Set the pattern from the beginning. Be thoughtful, careful, patient. But most of all, be bold in the way you initiate. "Boldness," though, does not mean simply dramatic action, but rather clear and intentional action. Thoughtfulness and servant leadership here looks like understanding the best way to communicate your feelings to your sister. If she needs time, doesn't like a crowd, and would be served by having space to process, then being "bold" does not mean, among other things, making the announcement of your affection at church in front of everyone.

Second, lead the relationship.

This means that it's your responsibility to move the relationship forward at the right pace. "But what's the right pace?!" you cry. I don't know, dude, but you have to figure that out. Read your Bible, pray a lot, get good council from godly and married brothers (not just your other single buddies), and pay attention to her. Ask good questions, and keep asking good questions; work hard to understand her, not just what she is saying but how she is feeling. The toughest part about being the one who is leading is understanding what's going on in her heart and mind. But this is part of your responsibility, so work hard at it. And listen to her when she talks to you; don't simply try to intuit what you think she means by "reading between the lines."

Third, come to a decision.

The most dangerous boat to be in is one whose rudder is not in the water. If you're drifting then you're in trouble. Fight the urge to abdicate your responsibility to lead; it's on you, brothers, to take the lead and continue leading. The pattern you are setting is the pattern set out in Ephesians 5, laying your life down for your wife as Christ, in love, laid down his life for the church. Sacrifice your comfort by making hard decisions about what's next. Again, seek the Lord and seek godly and married men's council.

The gift of singleness is often returned, but while we have it, single brothers, let's lead well by showing up to church, loving our friends, and dating our sisters well. Let's date in a way that leads to a decision, serves our sisters, and displays the gospel to the people around us.

God has designed us uniquely for his glory. For me, a single man seeking to bring glory to God, it often looks like trying to love my roommate, being a leader (sometimes awkwardly) at work, and caring for my sisters at church. I pray that the Lord would one day bless me with a wife and that I would be a good servant leader to her, but until then, I rejoice in the awesome responsibilities he has given me to love, lead, and serve.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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By Katie Van Dyke

Complementarianism and the Single Woman

I am single. I am complementarian. A lot of times people don't see how those things go hand in hand. Most of the time when we think about complementarianism, we automatically envision marriage and the relationship between husband and wife. To be sure, marriage is an excellent example of what complementarianism looks like. However, complementarianism can still shape and influence how singles live their lives.

COMPLEMENTARIANISM & AUTHORITY

Marriage is a great example of complementarianism, but it actually points to something far greater. In Ephesians 5, Paul explains that biblical marriage is a picture of the gospel. The relationship between a husband and wife is to reflect the relationship between Christ and his church. The husband loves as Christ loves and the wife submits as the church submits.

There is more here, though, than the outlay of marital relationships. This passage trains our eyes on the authority of Christ over his people. Every member of the church is to submit to Christ. What we call a “complementarian worldview” is not just for those who are married. It’s also for me as a single woman. It helps me to have a correct view of how I am to personally submit to Christ as the supreme authority in my life. Christ is Lord. I am his servant. Submission is not a dirty word; it is a high calling, the calling of every Christian (James 4:7).

COMPLEMENTARIANISM & SCRIPTURE

Being complementarian also shapes my understanding of Scripture. It allows me to affirm with gladness that there are many passages in Scripture that point to the fact that men and women were created equal, but with different roles. From the beginning, we see that God created us in his image as male and female (Genesis 1:27). Continuing through the rest of Scripture we see clear evidence that men and women were created for roles that are different—but equal (Gen 3; Prov 31; Eph 5; 1 Peter 3; Titus 2, to name a few).

When I see the beauty and truth in God creating us equal but different, I see the beauty and truth in everything else he has said to us. It's not just simply about me believing in different roles for men and women. It's about me believing God is true in his holy Word, and this biblical teaching informs everything I do in life. Complementarianism gives me a framework by which to make sense of my world, and my life.

COMPLEMENTARIANISM & THE CHURCH

Since complementarianism has shaped my understanding of Scripture and submission to Christ, it has laid the groundwork for my participation in the life of a congregation. Submitting to Christ means submitting to his great plan and purpose that can only be fulfilled by his body, the church. God has made it clear in his Word the importance of being a part of a local body of believers (Heb 10:25; 13:17). This speaks not just to weekly attendance, but to a spirit of sacrificial involvement in the body. Through the Holy Spirit, we have each been gifted in a certain way (Romans 12:3-8) and we are to cultivate and use those gifts for the building up of believers all for the glory of Christ.

As a complementarian, I hold to the conviction that women should not be in leadership or teaching positions over men in the church. Some believe this means that I'm oppressed and not fully able to use my gift of teaching. However, I have never felt that my church is discouraging me from using my gift for the glory of God. My experience has actually been quite the opposite. I have the honor of teaching God's Word to women multiple times a week, and it is a joy to do so.

Complementarianism has shown me that there is great beauty in God's plan for diversity within the church. We can't all do the same things, and we shouldn't all do the same things. The body of Christ would not function properly if we did. There is happiness in owning this truth on a personal level. It speaks to what Elisabeth Elliot, no mean teacher herself, called a "glad surrender."

COMPLEMENTARIANISM & CAREER

Complementarianism has also encouraged me in my career. It has helped me understand the importance of submitting to my authorities at work. Some days it is nearly impossible to submit to those above me. I often think I know how to do things better, and without a healthy view of authority, I would constantly be going against those who lead me. However, I know that sometimes submission means doing things I really may not want to do. Of course, if it is ever a sin issue, I must always follow Christ. But, there are some things that aren't sin that I just don't like or don't want to do. Submission means I do them anyway because I am called to obey my authority. This is an unpopular mindset, but I think it is a modern application of biblical texts like Colossians 3:22 and Ephesians 6:5. In this regard, of course, men in the workplace are no different.

This speaks to my overall position in life as well. There are plenty of times Christ seems to be leading me to do something I may not want to do, but I still do it because he is my authority and I am commanded to submit to him in everything. The same principle should be followed at work. Scripture tells us that the authorities in our lives, like the government, are placed there by God (Romans 13:1-7). God never makes mistakes. The authorities in our lives are not just random and meaningless. In God's sovereignty, he has carefully placed certain people over us and he calls us to submit to them and obey them. I see the beauty in godly submission, so I am better able to display this in my workplace. I am not afraid of it, because I know God has a great purpose and plan in it. It is part of his beautiful, created order.

COMPLEMENTARIANISM & DATING

Lastly, complementarianism has even shaped how I view dating. For me, dating must always be marriage-focused. I don't date just to date. If there's no possibility of future marriage, I will not date someone or continue dating someone.

Of course, being complementarian means I view marriage as a covenant in which the husband is the head and the wife submits to him as the head. As the head of marriage, the husband exemplifies Christ's servant-leadership as one who pursues the church, loves the church, gave himself up for the church, and leads the church.

Therefore, I look for these characteristics in a potential husband. I realize he should not fully embrace these responsibilities since they are specifically meant for marriage. Nonetheless, there should still be evidence of them, seeds for their future growth. I want to see glimpses of these characteristics so I know there is a willingness and capability of fulfilling them if marriage does eventually take place. If a man is not already showing signs of leadership, pursuit, and selfless sacrifice, I can be pretty confident they won't suddenly appear in a marriage.

In the same way, I need to be self-reflective in determining if I am capable of being a godly wife, able to respect and encourage and submit to my husband. Again, I should not fully embrace these characteristics until marriage, but I still should be able to tell if I am willing and able to carry them out if I get married. I want to be in a marriage that is a great display of the gospel. I want to be in a marriage that shows the world what Christ's relationship is to his people and vice versa. Therefore, I must be mindful of these things in my dating.

COMPLEMENTARIANISM IS FOR EVERYONE

Complementarianism has greatly influenced how I live my life as a single. I have come to understand it's not simply for those who are married. It's for everyone. Man. Woman. Single. Married. For me, this conviction is rooted in two things: 1) a correct view of submission to Christ; and 2) an understanding that Scripture is completely true and completely sufficient.

I cannot afford to see it any other way, and I must not ever fall into the temptation to reinterpret God's Word simply because it seems unfair or because it makes me uncomfortable. At the end of the day, my life is about bringing glory to God. I believe I am able to do this best by living, in a comprehensive and joyful way, according to my complementarian convictions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Katie Van Dyke lives right outside of Houston, Texas. She is a member of Northeast Houston Baptist Church, where she teaches women's Bible study and life group classes. You can find her on Twitter [@katiejovandyke](https://twitter.com/katiejovandyke).



By Courtney Reissig

A Complementarian Where You Least Expect Her

I don't remember when I first heard the word complementarian, but I'm sure it was at some point in my early years as a Christian. God saved me a couple of months before my 21st birthday, and like many new Christians who are eager to learn about their newfound faith, I devoured everything offered to me. Most days, I felt like I was standing in front of a fire hydrant as I read my Bible, listened to sermons on Sunday mornings, read books by authors I had never heard of before, and talked to my parents and new friends about things I didn't understand in Scripture. I had a lot to learn—and still do.

God saved me out of a lifestyle not uncommon for your average college student. And like many young women in my generation, feminism was very much part of my ideology. While not all Millennial women claim to be feminist—and some may even reject the label—you would be hard-pressed to find a woman under 40 who doesn't have some form of feminism living inside of her. I was no different.

WHAT IS FEMINISM?

Feminism takes on many definitions—most notably that men and women are created equal in every way and every respect. But that definition can be a little misleading, especially when you listen to the conversations of some modern-day feminists who see men as a punch line. For our purposes, I'm defining feminism as "equality equals sameness," meaning that men and women not only are created equal in personhood, but also equal in role and function. This is seen most evidently in the competitive spirit that marks so much of the gendered conflict in our culture, but because we live in a post-modern culture, feminism can actually mean many things to many people, and is fairly hard to pin down.

While I grew up in a Christian home, and even had complementarian parents, my independent spirit won out, leading me to believe that I was the one who would call the shots for my life. I devoured feminist theory in my college classes, fully believing that every great work of literature had in it a hidden message about the oppression of women. Like Eve before me, I questioned every form of authority, especially God's. "Has God really said?" became the motto of my life—that is, until that cold December morning when the Holy Spirit broke through my cold heart, and I felt guilt for the first time in a long time. In that moment, I knew I could never go back to the life I once lived. I was a new creation.

LEARNING TO WALK

In the early days of my walk with Christ I stumbled like a toddler learning to walk. I would see fruit, only to be met with a harsh fall as I got my bearings in this new world of faith. I was seeing so many things for the very first time, including what it meant to be a woman in God's economy.

As a self-proclaimed feminist I had no problems with being a woman. I just wanted to call the shots. As a Christian woman, however, I learned that the only one who calls the shots for us is the one in whose image we were made—God. As I grew in my walk with Christ, renouncing the feminism of my past was not hard intellectually. I was every much a third-wave feminist as the next Millennial woman, so much of what I believed I knew was incompatible with following Christ. What I didn't expect was how the roots of feminism still lingered in my heart long after Christ redeemed it.

I may have turned from my more overt man-hating days, but I wasn't above a good boy-bashing session in my dorm room after my roommate (or I) had been spurned by a guy again. I liked the idea of marriage and children, yet secretly judged all the girls who proudly displayed their "ring by spring," while I sat alone again another Friday night. I was going to do something with my life, like serve on the mission field or write for a living. What I failed to recognize was that my disdain for my friends and siblings who married much younger than I did was actually disappointment in disguise. Rather than admit I wanted that life, or could even see myself married with children, I scoffed at people who succumbed to such seemingly insignificant things like being tied down to a family. And in God's kindness (and humor), here I am nearly six years of marriage and two (about to be three) kids later. Even recovering feminists need a good humbling.

NOT A UNIQUE STORY

I suspect my story is not unique, though.

What feminism did for women was give us options and opportunity. Not all of this is a bad thing, of course. I'm glad I can vote. I'm glad I can own property. I'm glad I get paid the same rate as a man for the same work. As a writer, I'm glad I can publish under my own name and not a man's in order to be recognized.

But what I didn't understand in my pre-conversion days, and what I've struggled to come to terms with post-conversion, is that feminism is not the answer to the inequality women have faced and sometimes still do face. Feminism claims to promote equality among the sexes, but God has done that since the beginning of time. It is God who gives us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), and it is his Word that, at creation, established men and women as those created equal because they both bear the image of our Creator (Gen. 1:26-28). We don't need a modern movement to tell us what has been in existence from the beginning.

But feminism also failed to answer the problem that has plagued us since we fell from perfection that fateful day in the garden. Feminism promised a new identity for us as women, one that was no longer defined by a man or society, but by our newly unfettered selves. I clung to this idea like a starved infant. However, as I grew in my understanding of Scripture, I began to see that the only one who has the right to define our identity is God and his Word. Because of this, our identity shouldn't be found in "ourselves" any more than it should be found in a man or society.

As women who have grown up in a post-women's movement society, it's hard to see how this ideology influences us. But it does in more ways than we probably even recognize. Maybe you embrace the truth that God created men and women equal in dignity, value, and worth, but with differing roles. But do you feel resentment rise up in you when a man offers to help you with something that you feel completely capable of handling yourself? Do you value God's good design for marriage and children, but think those things can wait while you establish your career for a few years? Do you believe that modesty and purity matter but bristle when confronted with your own wardrobe?

GOD'S WORD IS GOOD

Feminism is not relegated to women in corner offices, man-haters, and television pundits. It's staring at us every morning when we put on our make-up. Feminism, while birthed as an ideology with the suffragists, is actually an idea of the oldest kind, an idea that reared its head when Eve believed the lie of Satan that God's Word really wasn't good, and especially not for her.

My journey toward complementarianism started when God invaded my dark soul and showed me my need for him. Since then, I've given myself to understanding who I am in light of his image and how this has implications for every facet of my Christian life, including my understanding of Christ's glorious work of redeeming his Bride, the church. I wish I could say that I've got this whole complementarian thing down, but that would be a lie. The truth is I still see the old seeds of feminism rise up in me, from how I listen to my husband when he leads us to how I view the authority of my pastors. Like Eve before me, I want to be the master of my own destiny. But like Eve, there is hope for this accidental feminist. The promised seed, Christ, crushes every sin that so easily entangles—including feminism. And while I won't fully be free from my anti-authoritarian heart until that final day, I take great hope in the fact that the God who shined light into my darkened life that December day will bring me all the way home until I'm finally and completely made new.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Courtney Reissig is a wife, mom, and writer. She is the author of the upcoming book, *The Accidental Feminist: Restoring Our Delight in God's Good Design* (Crossway, May 2015). She and her husband live in Little Rock, Arkansas, and are members of Midtown Baptist Church. You can find her on Twitter [@courtneyreissig](https://twitter.com/courtneyreissig).



By Grace-Anna Castleberry

My Journey to Complementarianism

As a young girl, I always hoped I would grow up to be a wife and a mother. I had other aspirations too, including becoming a singer-songwriter or maybe a novelist. But being a wife and a mom were at the top of my list. I wanted those things because I grew up in a home where I saw them as valued and esteemed roles. My own understanding of biblical manhood and womanhood would be further developed in college and afterwards as I read good books affirming distinct gender roles. But it was in my formative years where I first saw the beauty of God's design for marriage and family. And my heart longed for it.

Growing up as the only girl sandwiched between two older and two younger brothers, I was "blessed" with an understanding that boys and girls, though similar in many ways, are also quite different. Some of my favorite things to do were building forts in the woods, digging up vintage bottles we found stuffed in old chimneys and barns on the acres of nearby farmland, and jumping from the perfect tree branch in our backyard into a sink hole of South Carolina "pluff" mud. But while I loved keeping up with my brothers, I was also aware that I was different from them. It was me (not them), who turned the clump of trees in our front yard into a playhouse and pretended that my husband was off "fighting in a war." It was also me who lined the shelves of my bedroom with teapots and teacups (as opposed to shark teeth and bottles). Running through the woods playing manhunt with my brothers one afternoon and holding high tea the next did not conflict in my childhood mind. And even now, I don't think they should. Although girlhood and boyhood may be defined at times by pretend play, those things are only linear representations of a truth about manhood and womanhood that is wondrously deeper than toy guns or porcelain cups.

"GOD MADE YOU A GIRL"

"God made you a girl." I don't remember the first time my mom told me this, but I never forgot it. Those five words were an anchor even to my childhood heart. I was not a girl by chance. God created me to be a girl. My parents taught me Psalm 139:13-14 and told me that God was knitting me together even in my mom's womb. My life was not by chance. Knowing God made me to be a girl allowed me to run free in the woods and get dirty in the mud. I could not mess up what God had made firm. Understanding God's specific intention in creating me was particularly comforting during my adolescent years. I remember blurting out once in frustration, "I just wish I were a boy!" My mom's words were there to steady me, "GraceAnna, first, being a boy is also hard. But second, God made you a girl." Sometimes I wonder what

confusion might have entered my life if she had not been there to point me very simply to God's truth. It wasn't complicated, but it set me free.

BIBLICAL WOMANHOOD IS STRONG

When my brothers and I were young, my mom was intentional about making our home her main ministry. As a pastor's wife, she turned down many speaking and ministry opportunities, and I heard her say often, "My kids are my greatest ministry." She modeled for us that it is a strong woman, not a weak one, who is willing to truly live out the principles of Titus 2. I grew up knowing motherhood was a good gift that took every ounce of a woman's mental and physical energy.

I saw biblical leadership and submission modeled in my parents' marriage, too. My dad is a pastor and a man of firm conviction. My mom is full of spunk and wisdom. I know this is one of the many things my dad loves about my mom. She helps and encourages him. It was always clear who the leader in our family was, and my mom consistently affirmed my dad's decisions and was faithful not to disagree with him in front of us. "Your dad and I are on the same page," "We are a team," and "God has placed your dad as the leader of our family" are all phrases that still echo in my mind from my growing up years. My parents modeled for us that leadership and submission are not in conflict or competition with each other, but are part of God's harmonious design.

Now, as a mom of two little girls myself, I am humbly aware that I am the first example of a wife and mother my daughters will see. By God's grace, my husband and I hope to model before them what it means to walk as redeemed sinners in our marriage relationship. One day, they will have to ask the question for themselves, "Is God's design good?" I pray they will believe his Word more than anything we will ever do or say. I also pray they will remember me looking into their eyes and telling them the same thing my mother told me, "God made you to be a girl. And that is good."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

GraceAnna Castleberry is a wife, mother, and worker at home. She lives in Louisville, Kentucky, with her husband Grant, where they attend Kenwood Baptist Church. You can find her on Twitter [@gacastleberry](#).



By Amanda Peacock

When Your Husband Is in the Line of Fire

Editor's note: Insofar as complementarianism emphasizes male leadership, the conclusion is sometimes drawn that complementarians mean for the men to be strong and the women to be weak. In fact, complementarians know that, for a man to be strong, he needs a strong woman fighting for him. The biblical wife isn't afraid of her husband's strength; she prizes it. And when he comes under criticism for his convictions (like in the case of the article below), she'll come out swinging if she has to. So, we at 9Marks have included this article, among other reasons, because it exemplifies a biblical femininity with all its requisite pluck and fight.

In the horror of war we see glimpses of biblical, masculine sacrifice and bravery for the greater cause and the common good. A man with the courage of his convictions, who stands firm when others fall away, is the kind of man that others should aspire to be, and that women should delight to have by their sides.

Recently my husband [tweeted](#) about biblical headship and submission in marriage. Given his previous career as a professional soccer player and BBC broadcaster, his views created a Twitter storm in the online United Kingdom national newspapers.

Some people suggested that I must be unaware of his archaic statements. Or else I must "gagged and chained to the kitchen sink," as one commentator put it. Such thoughtful journalism!

In fact, the opposite is true: I delight to be by this courageous man's side.

I DON'T WANT A WEAK HUSBAND

My husband's headship is not a right, it is a God given responsibility and privilege to sacrificially love and lead me. My submission is not a burden, it is joyful response to Christ, because ultimately it represents my submission to him. My husband's leadership and my submission will not always be what it ought to be. We are sinners. However, our trust is in God. He provides. He designed the goodness of biblical manhood and womanhood, which depicts Jesus Christ laying down His life for His Bride.

The most wonderful thing about my husband is that, above all, he loves God and delights to do His will, without fearing man. This shapes his loving, Christ-like leadership which is designed for my (and his) flourishing.

I don't want a weak husband, swayed by every wind of doctrine, one who cowers in the public square. I want a man who will stand on the truth of God's Word and defend it at all costs, even if he is the last man standing.

Isn't that what happened to Jesus? The Apostle Paul? To Jim Elliot? Isn't that what is happening today around the world in places like North Korea, India, Egypt and Syria, to name but a few? In the West we fear the raised eyebrow and vitriolic rhetoric, while our brothers and sisters in the East fear the fist and sword.

A HERO

My husband has been in the line of fire for targeting biblical sexuality as the watershed issue of our day where the authority of God's Word is challenged. He stands firm in the public square and resists the enemy with their bullets and bombs. Where the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture, as well as the character of God and the gospel of Christ, are being undermined, every Christian ought to be willing to stand in the line of fire. But we need men to take the lead.

For that and for many other reasons my husband is my hero. It is to a man like this that I gladly submit.

Heroes come in many shapes and sizes. They don't have to look like a Navy Seal, six feet tall and muscle bound. but a hero must be a real man, a man of God.

God uses men who fear Him and not public opinion—men like Hudson Taylor, a diminutive man of no extraordinary appeal, but the weight of God rested upon his shoulders. Or the one true Man, Jesus of whom Isaiah says “he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.”

Heroes come in many shapes and sizes, and women need only to look to Christ to see what a real man looks like. These are the kind of men the Bible calls women to gladly affirm and encourage in leadership.

HELPING THEM TO STAND

Not all men lead well. Some even abuse that privilege. Scripture tells us they will answer to God for how they use their authority.

Women, meanwhile, should not throw the baby out with the bathwater and give up on godly male leadership. No woman should want a coward by her side. Yet many women cultivate cowardly men when they usurp the roles God designed in headship and submission.

As Christian women, we should instead stand with our husbands and pastors in the line of fire against the prevailing culture that erodes the biblical distinctions between men and women. If wives are called to be suitable helpers, we ought to be their biggest supporters on the battlefield. We can encourage and respect our husbands, drawing out their leadership qualities, by our speech and actions. And, as women, we can teach younger women biblical femininity, and what to look for in a man worthy to be her spiritual leader.

Men and women are confused over biblical manhood and womanhood, sexuality, identity, headship, and submission because of the dearth of good teaching. That's why we need people who are not afraid to speak plainly from Scripture.

We are engaged in a war to contend for the truth of God's Word and His divine design for men and women. And we need godly heroes who will speak that Word, with its often inconvenient and uncomfortable truth.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Amanda Peacock is a wife and mother. She and her husband, Gavin, live in Canmore, Alberta. They are members of Calvary Grace Church, Calgary, where Gavin serves as one of the pastors and Amanda co-leads the women's ministry.

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Greg Gilbert
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By Owen Strachan

A Brief History of Complementarian Literature

They say that the Reformation was a revolution not of weapons, but of words. The movement advanced through the preached Word and the written word in particular. Just as the Reformation constituted a mighty preaching and writing engine, so evangelical complementarianism has produced many millions of words that have revived and strengthened God's church.

Should one desire to acquire a pastoral and theological foundation for a biblical view of manhood and womanhood, where does one begin? The following is a non-chronological crash-course in The Complementarian Writing Revolution (the books that pastors should read and gladly give away as resources).

The book that kicked it all off was [*Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*](#) (Crossway, 1991). It's often called the "blue book" because this edition (the first of many) had a memorable (and friendly) light-blue shade. John Piper and Wayne Grudem edited the volume, with contributions from leading complementarians like Douglas Moo, D. A. Carson, Elisabeth Elliot, Dorothy Patterson, and Vern Poythress. The book is a theological masterpiece. It is still relevant and readable today, and if one wants a starting place to understand rock-ribbed, scholarly complementarianism, this is the place to start.

One further note about this scholarly text: it has given life to people. I heard from Louisville pastor Ryan Fullerton, for example, how *RBMW* opened his eyes to the beauty of biblical manhood and womanhood. Never assume that because a text traffics in high-level theology, it's inaccessible to everyday concerns. The effect of *RBMW* in sustaining a generation—now two generations—of complementarians was simply massive.

Wayne Grudem has published multiple landmark books on complementarianism. Grudem's writing is measured, biblical, and unafraid of convictional statement. He thinks logically and searchingly about everything he covers. His [*Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth*](#) (Crossway, 2004, 2012) answers basically every argument leveled against biblical gender roles. I used the book to prepare for a debate session with some folks and found they raised nearly ten of the objections Grudem's text covers. On each point, I was fully ready to give a sound and logical biblical answer. I have heard Bruce Ware say that Grudem, his close friend, has almost singlehandedly represented the complementarian movement. Books like this—just one of numerous other volumes on the subject—show the truth of that judgement.

Ware, like Grudem a past President of the Council on Biblical Manhood & Womanhood, has contributed numerous journal articles and book chapters to scholarly complementarianism. His book on the Trinity entitled [*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*](#) (Crossway, 2005) shows the necessary linkage between authority-submission relationships in the Godhead

and authority-submission relationships in the church. Ware's writing is readable and pastoral, though it covers some of the grandest doctrinal territory arrayed before the church. This view has been challenged (with Tom McCall forming the most vocal sparring partner), but the foundation laid in this book is very sturdy indeed.

Andreas Kostenberger recently published [*God's Design for Man and Woman*](#) (Crossway, 2014) with his wife, Margaret Kostenberger; in fact, this book [was reviewed](#) in this Journal. The text is a rich biblical-theological approach to complementarianism that unfolds numerous passages of Scripture and places them within broader perspective. Both Kostenbergers have written numerous helpful resources in this area; Andreas's book with Thomas R. Schreiner, [*Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*](#) (Baker 1995, 2005) has been called the definitive study of this contested but authoritative passage. Margaret has powerfully engaged feminist theology in her book [*Jesus and the Feminists*](#) (Crossway, 2008).

Mary Kassian has made huge contributions to evangelical scholarship and practice with her writings. [*The Feminist Mistake*](#) (Crossway, 2005) represents her own interaction with feminist theology and has proved helpful to many who have had little theological guidance on the issue. Kassian has started the TrueWoman conference with Nancy Leigh DeMoss, whose [*Lies Women Believe*](#) (Moody, 2006) has helped many women find their way out of unbiblical viewpoints. DeMoss wrote the foreword to Carolyn Mahaney's [*Feminine Appeal*](#) (Crossway, 2012), which articulated the beauty of complementarianism to many thousands of women. Mahaney's [GirlTalk blog](#) (written with her daughters) and the [TrueWoman](#) website are each excellent resources for godly women who love biblical teaching and find no offense in it.

Tim and Kathy Keller have written a much-loved book entitled [*The Meaning of Marriage*](#) (Dutton, 2011) that has done a great deal to advance a complementarian view of marriage. Tim has taken a great deal of heat for being a complementarian over the years, but has bravely stood firm in the trustworthy word. His preaching, like Piper's, is one of the central reasons for the spread of complementarian theology among the "young, restless, and reformed" crowd. Kathy Keller's book [*Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles*](#) (Zondervan, 2012) showcases her strong mind and ability to foresee tough issues on the horizon. The issue of "gender justice" is a live one in our world and demands a good gospel answer.

There are many books to name that have made serious contributions to the church. Danny Akin's [*God on Sex*](#) (B&H, 2003) is an honest and practical look at the goodness of covenantal union. Eric Mason's [*Manhood Restored*](#) (B&H, 2013) is a strong and accessible introduction to the subject of manhood, much like Darrin Patrick's [*The Dude's Guide to Manhood*](#) (Thomas Nelson, 2013). Randy Stinson and Dan Dumas offer sound practical reflections in [*A Guide to Biblical Manhood*](#) (SBTS, 2011). J. Ligon Duncan and Susan Hunt yield needed wisdom in their book [*Women's Ministry in the Local Church*](#) (Crossway, 2006). Gloria Furman is an eloquent writer whose book [*Glimpses of Grace*](#) (Crossway, 2013) found an enthusiastic audience, as did Rachel Jankovic's [*Loving the Little Years*](#) (Canon, 2010), to name just two titles from these prolific authors.

Mark Chanski's [*Manly Dominion*](#) (Calvary Press, 2007) and [*Womanly Dominion*](#) (Calvary Press, 2008) each lend valuable perspective to a robust complementarian theology. Steve and Candice Watters have written [*Start Your Family*](#) (Moody, 2008), which gives valuable guidance on a controverted subject. Carolyn McCulley's [*Radical Womanhood*](#) (Moody, 2008) gives winsome and faithful voice to the experience of single complementarian Christians, as does Jennifer Marshall's [*Now and Not Yet*](#) (Multnomah, 2007). Matt Chandler (with Jared Wilson) has just published [*The Mingling of Souls*](#) (David C. Cook, 2015), which will no doubt find an enthusiastic audience due to its winsome conviction, as will David Platt's [*Counter Culture*](#) (Tyndale, 2015). Denny Burk has written a very helpful book in [*What Is the Meaning of Sex?*](#) (Crossway, 2013) to follow on his numerous contributions for the [*Journal for Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*](#), which he edited for nearly a decade, and which is and has been the top academic resource on complementarianism in the scholarly community for nearly three decades.

JBMW can be found on the website of the Council on Biblical & Manhood (cbmw.org), the organization established in the late-1980s to promote a vibrant and unblinking vision of the goodness of God's design. Other strong complementarian online outfits include Desiring God Ministries, 9Marks Ministries, The Gospel Coalition, Together for the Gospel, Ligonier, Grace to You, Revive Our Hearts, to name a few. The online presence of R. Albert Mohler, Jr. deserves special mention here, as does his booklet [*From Boy to Man*](#), easily one of the best resources on training boys to be men.

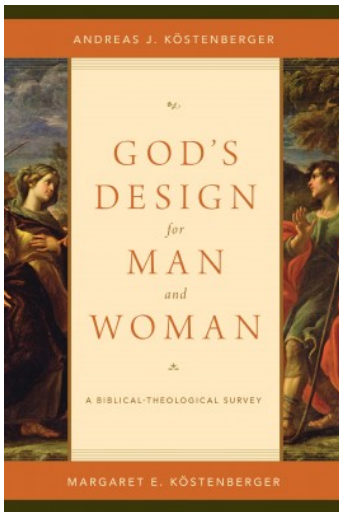
CBMW is hard at work to raise up a fresh generation of gospel-gripped authors to articulate complementarian convictions in a winsome way. [*Designed for Joy*](#) (Crossway, 2015) was edited by Jonathan Parnell and Owen Strachan and features a bevy of young complementarians excited to celebrate God's anthropological wisdom. Courtney Reissig's [*The Accidental Feminist*](#) (Crossway, 2015) details her journey from feminism to complementarianism.

The preceding shows that complementarianism has been powered by many millions of words. The future, by God's grace, is very bright, and is limned with the promise of many millions to come. Perhaps the central indicator of health for complementarianism as a movement is that all these words—in all these and many forthcoming books—are not only read, but are preached. It is because of tens of thousands of local churches that believe that God's design for men and women is so irrepressibly good that the movement has not died out, as some predicted, but is teeming with health, and trained like a laser on the glory of God.

As in movements past, so may it be in this one in days to come.

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BOOK REVIEW:

God's Design for Man and Woman

Reviewed by David Schrock

Andreas J. and Margaret E. Köstenberger. [*God's Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey*](#). Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. 380 pp. \$22.99.

Defending a biblical view of gender complementarity have been a cadre of pastors and theologians like Wayne Grudem and John Piper, who led in founding the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood in 1987. More recently Bruce Ware, Mary Kassian, and Owen Strachan, to name only a few, have taken up the banner. Yet, in the last three decades there has not been a comprehensive and scholarly biblical theology of manhood and womanhood.[1] Until now.

THE KOSTENBERGERS' BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL SURVEY

In *God's Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey*, Andreas and Margaret Köstenberger have given the church an erudite and elegant defense of biblical complementarity. Written with a single voice, the married Köstenbergers are uniquely qualified to write on this subject. A professor of New Testament at Southeastern Seminary, Andreas has written numerous books on marriage, hermeneutics, and biblical theology. Likewise, Margaret is a well-respected theologian and author (see her [*Jesus and the Feminists*](#)). Together, they have written a book that not only advocates biblical complementarity, but that displays it as well.

At about 350 pages (including three valuable appendices), *God's Design for Man and Woman* is not a short book, but neither is it esoteric or difficult to read. Following the course of biblical revelation, it moves quickly. Each chapter begins with the summary points of the chapter. The method of writing is primarily exegetical, but not overly technical. Helping readers keep up with all the names, verses, and attributes of men and women are a bevy of tables (55 in all) that classify the disparate information. And throughout the rhythmic drumbeat of gender complementarity is evident.

Chapter 1 focuses on Genesis 1–3, where God reveals his original and programmatic design for men and women. Paying close attention to the biblical text, the Köstenbergers deftly handle disputed interpretations and show God creating mankind in his image, as two genders with “different roles or functions,” not “superiority or inferiority” (23). After affirming God’s good creation, they show the effects of the fall on men and women and how God’s design is marred (relationally) but not changed (teleologically). The rest of the book then explains how God reiterates and redeems his people as men and women.

Chapter 2 surveys the Old Testament. Regarding the home, the Köstenbergers state, “leadership within the family was focused on the male head,” something they call *patricentricism* rather than *patriarchy*—the latter being a pejorative or misunderstood term (60). At the national level, the Köstenbergers comb through the kings and priests to show that Israel’s leaders were always male. Prophets, conversely, could be male or female because the role was not institutional and permanent like that of priests, kings, or elders in the New Testament (65). Importantly, the Köstenbergers situate their findings into a redemptive-historical framework (71–74). This strengthens their argument by showing the continuity and discontinuity between Israel and the church, but also because it demonstrates why the Old Testament pattern of male leadership has relevance for today.

The next five chapters examine the New Testament. Broken down into chapters on the Gospels (ch. 3), Acts (ch. 4), Paul’s “First Ten Letters” (ch. 5), the Pastoral Epistles (ch. 6), and the General Epistles and Revelation, or “The Rest of the Story,” with a tip of the hat to Paul Harvey (ch. 7), the Köstenbergers prove the point: gender roles are a big deal to Jesus Christ and his bride. More than just listing biblical data, they demonstrate how the design in creation is reiterated by Christ and is relevant to his church. The Köstenbergers do not shy away from controversial passages, and every significant text is treated thoroughly (e.g., Gal 3:28; Eph 5:21; 1 Tim 2:12–15; 1 Pet 3:1–7; etc.).

The final chapter draws the threads of biblical theology into a number of practical applications. They esteem the unique differences of each sex and list numerous ways that men and women can fulfill God’s mission and purpose. Standing firmly on their biblical-theological findings, the Köstenberger’s address many issues that Christians debate. Can men stay at home? Should women serve in public office? Rightly, they recognize that Scripture offers principles for addressing such questions, more than dogmatic particulars.

In the three appendices, they complete their work by offering (1) a survey of the three waves of feminism, (2) a general discussion about hermeneutics, and (3) a specific article addressing interpretation of gender passages.

THE GOOD, THE BETTER, THE BEST

Everything about *God’s Design for Man and Woman* commends it for wide dissemination and consumption, but let me mention the three reasons why pastors and thoughtful Christians should read it.

The Good

The proven-scholarship of Andreas and Margaret Köstenberger shines again in this volume. From the exhaustive lists of names, offices, and verses that categorize their research to the careful exegesis of difficult passages, the authors have provided the church with a good foundation for men and women to think about gender. More than that, because the

book is written by a man and woman, it has greater rhetorical punch in the sections calling women to work in the home (Titus 2:5) or submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22–25; 1 Pet 3:1–6).

The Better

The clarity of their writing makes the Köstenbergers book accessible to the pastor, Bible study leader, and college student alike. Before reading the whole book, I used it as a resource for preaching on elders. Any pastor preaching through any book could do the same to see how Luke or Paul or Jesus stresses biblical complementarity. Because of its clear outline and introductory points to each chapter, it provides at-a-glance biblical answers, while the rest of each chapter supplies the undergirding exegesis. For the college student bombarded with arguments against marriage and for the social construction of gender, this book will be a lifeline. While it doesn't tackle social or ethical questions head on (15–17), it provides the necessary framework to establish a biblical worldview of manhood and womanhood.

The Best

The content of the volume is so rich because it is so biblical. Skimming the book for tables and summary points serves as an edifying entrée into Scripture's unified message about men and women. However, for those who understand and apply the biblical-theological meat of this book, the nourishment will be transformative. In addition to arguing that God's complementarian design for men and women is biblical, the Köstenbergers present it as beautiful (258). Sadly, advocates for egalitarian rights of women miss or distort the beauty of God's *imago Dei* and the way that women's inner beauty is meant to complement men's holy strength. This is most evident in marriage (cf. Eph 5:22–33; 1 Pet 3:1–7), but also in the ways that men and women interact in the church and the world.

ONE MINOR QUIBBLE

Because *God's Design for Men and Women* is so biblically rich, I was left wanting more. One minor quibble is that some key texts in the Old Testament were overlooked. To include them may have exceeded page requirements, but consideration of Numbers 30, Ruth, Esther, the Wisdom books (esp. Proverbs 1–9 and 31), and David's manly instructions to Solomon in 1 Kings 2 would have added depth to the Old Testament section. Whereas the chapters on Genesis 1–3 and the New Testament take the reader into mines of gold, the single chapter on the Old Testament rakes up the nuggets while leaving other canyons unexplored. This by no means diminishes the argument of the book; it simply reminds us that when doing biblical theology we can't say everything.

CONCLUSION

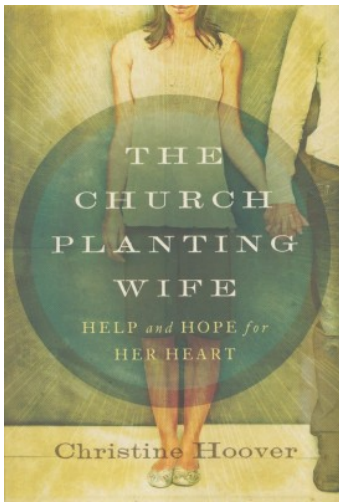
The Köstenbergers have given the church a foundational resource to understand what it means to be made in the image of God—as a man or a woman.

Since even that twofold division (male or female) is disputed by the world today, their book could not have come at a more crucial time. Indeed, it helps the church plant its feet on the solid rock of God's Word, and it opens our eyes to behold the wisdom and wonder of God's design.

[1]*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (1991, rev. 2006) has an extensive exegetical and theological section, but these 12 chapters are not technically presented as a contiguous biblical theology of manhood and womanhood.

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BOOK REVIEW:

The Church Planting Wife

Reviewed by Erin Wheeler

Christine Hoover, [*The Church Planting Wife: Help and Hope for Her Heart*](#). Moody Publishers, 2013. 208 pps. \$15.99.

Ministry life. More particularly, life as a ministry wife. Over 16 years ago I married an institutional investment consultant, bound for the fast track of life, who also loved the Lord Jesus. In the course of the two short years after we said “I do,” our lives were turned upside down. He left corporate life and entered the daunting and mysterious halls of ministry. And I was now a ministry wife.

Every ministry wife has her tale of how God drew her to this calling, this life poured out in kingdom work. My story has its own twists and turns, but in the end I find myself in line with all the other wives whose husbands identify themselves as ones singled out by God for the purpose of preaching and teaching the precious Word of God.

We’ve been meandering through the twists and turns of God’s sovereign calling on our lives in some capacity for over 14 years now. Whether my husband has been a pastoral assistant, aiding in church revitalization, eldering, completing seminary studies, or more recently as an assistant pastor, it has all been for the purpose of kingdom work.

Twice monthly a group of ministry wives gather in our home to consider issues related to our work of supporting the men we love in the life of ministry to which God has called them. We are an eclectic bunch. We are wives of missionaries, Christian editors, senior pastors, associate pastors, church planters, church revitalizers, and others who are trying to find their specific calling in ministry.

When Christine Hoover's book happened upon me I was reluctant as to its relevance for our group. We didn't identify ourselves simply as "church planting" wives. But then I read it. I was pleasantly surprised. After reading a number of "how tos" for pastor's wives, this Scripture-saturated book was refreshment for my soul. Although geared most specifically for the wives of church planting pastors, almost all of her words can be applied to wives of men in any kind of ministry. She strikes a pleasant balance of real transparency and joyful perseverance. It reads like our discipling of others should be, honest and yet encouraging, something like a virtual poke in the chest followed by a strong hug full of hope.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Christine Hoover, mother of three, is married to a church planting pastor where they serve together in Charlottesville, Virginia. Her book, *The Church Planting Wife*, is written in a God-honoring and autobiographical way. Reading it feels like you are sitting in the living room of a church planting wife listening to her tell you stories of how God brought them to where they are today and dishing out advice of things she wish she knew "way back when."

She begins her story where all lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ should begin, with her heart. Regardless of your ministry status, the most important thing we can do is recognize our desperate dependence upon God. For all of us pursuing vocational ministry, in any form, God's glory should be the motivating factor behind all that we do. It is clear from her writing that she believes the words she writes, that ministry is a "privilege, not a burden."

Filled with tangible analogies and anecdotes, Hoover takes her readers through nine heart issues related to ministry wives. Focusing on the importance of keeping priorities straight, these nine things can be summarized in her statement: "Follow (God). Serve your family. Love people." She gently reminds the reader that church planting is a marathon, not a sprint, exhorting them to pace themselves for the long road ahead.

Strongly complementarian, she highlights the vital importance of the ministry wife to support her husband spiritually, emotionally, and physically in order to free him up to do that very same thing for the church, noting that she can only do this as she herself cultivates her relationship with God. While tackling issues such as friendship, fear, being a helpmate, pride, people pleasing, discouragement, hurt, and stress (issues relevant to all Christians) she spins out the application and uses personal stories to focus on her target audience of church planting wives.

However, this book is not strictly autobiographical. Each chapter ends with a short interview of another church planting wife, giving the reader different perspectives on the topic at hand. Some interviews are more helpful and God-centered than others, but Hoover draws other women who have gone before her into the discussion in order to provide varying perspectives for the reader.

Hoover concludes her nine heart issues with a section titled, "A Word to those Preparing to Plant." It is a scattershot of practical advice for setting the expectations of your heart as you begin the hard work of church planting and a helpful summary of the book itself.

POINTS TO CONSIDER AS YOU READ

Both practical and encouraging, *The Churching Planting Wife* is well worth the time of any wife married to a man pursuing or involved in ministry. She does at one point include some unhelpful statistics concerning depression and loneliness that should be overlooked. They do not seem necessary to support her point and only seemed to increase concern in the women of our group.

There is also a quick reference to the need to be open to having “lots of sex” while in the throes of the early years of church planting. This may be the case for some husbands, but I also know that the opposite is true. For those women, this section may further discourage them or solicit unnecessary concerns. A simple caveat in this section could broaden her scope and reach women with various kinds of husbands without causing them undue alarm.

Hoover does wrestle with the often confusing and complicated issue of a wife’s needs. With the numerous ministry wives that have marched their way through our lives, this is undoubtedly the number one struggle I have encountered. It would have been helpful to have her address this issue in a more developed manner and possibly earlier than halfway through her book. Personally, I wish she’d write another book addressing this issue alone.

CONCLUSION

A life of full time ministry is one in which we hold fast to promises like those in Jude reminding us that we are called, loved, and kept by the Creator of the universe. Paul tells us that the God of peace will sanctify us, keeping us blameless until the return of Jesus. And he who promises these things is faithful; “he will surely do it.” Promises like these are the hopes upon which we hang our dreams, seek hard after the lost, and wait day after day for him to help us, strengthen us, and ultimately to return for us and bring us home. They fuel us for a life of ministry. Hoover has known this in her own life and shares her stories and wisdom with us. Again, you don’t have to be church planting wife to be encouraged by this book. Any woman who supports a man in ministry can grab nuggets of wisdom from this book.

So, to you ministry wives out there, laboring in the fields ripe for harvest, in Hoover’s words I want to tell you to “dream big. . . . Pace yourself. . . . Follow God. Serve your family. Love people.” For the King of Glory awaits.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Erin Wheeler lives in Washington, D. C., with her husband, Brad, and their four children. She attends Capitol Hill Baptist Church, where Brad serves as an Associate Pastor.

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