

# Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth

AN ANALYSIS OF MORE  
THAN 100 DISPUTED QUESTIONS



WAYNE GRUDEM

“In this day and age, any serious student of the Bible must wrestle with its teachings on the role of men and women. Featuring meticulous research in an easy questions-and-answer format, Wayne Grudem’s book is an invaluable resource.”

**MARY A. KASSIAN**, PROFESSOR OF WOMEN’S STUDIES, THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY; AUTHOR, *THE FEMINIST MISTAKE*

“After the Bible, I cannot imagine a more useful book for finding reliable help in understanding God’s will for manhood and womanhood in the church and the home. The practical design of this book will help laypeople find answers without having to read eight hundred pages. But the rigor of scholarship, the amazing thoroughness, and the unparalleled clarity (which Wayne Grudem is justly famous for!) will make this book the standard complementarian manifesto for many years to come. I thank God and stand in respectful awe of Grudem’s achievement.”

**JOHN PIPER**, FOUNDER, DESIRINGGOD.ORG; CHANCELLOR, BETHLEHEM COLLEGE & SEMINARY

“The entire body of Christ owes an enormous debt of gratitude to Wayne Grudem for his effort in producing this outstanding, comprehensive work; for his courage in taking on what has become a Goliath within the camp of modern-day evangelicalism; and for his noncombative, gracious spirit in doing so. Those who love the truth will find here an invaluable resource in a user-friendly format that is both scholarly and accessible. They cannot help but appreciate this fair, thorough, warmhearted treatment of one of the most significant issues facing the church today.”

**NANCY DEMOSS WOLGEMUTH**, AUTHOR; RADIO HOST, *REVIVE OUR HEARTS*

“The gender issue may well be the critical fault line for contemporary theology. Controversies over these issues involve basic questions of biblical authority, God’s order and design for creation, and Christ’s purpose for the church. Wayne Grudem cuts through the confusion, making *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* an important book that is urgently needed. This book belongs in the hands of every pastor, seminary student, and thinking person.”

**R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.**, PRESIDENT, THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

“In a troubling debate, resolution of which is currently out of sight, this extended monograph is a must-read for all who care about biblical authority, Christian relationships, and well-ordered church life. Laboriously and exhaustively, with clarity, charity and a scholar’s objectivity, Wayne Grudem sifts through 118 current challenges to the Bible’s apparent teaching on men and women. This is the fullest and most informative analysis available, and no one will be able to deny the cumulative strength of the case this author makes, as he vindicates the older paths.”

**J. I. PACKER**, BOARD OF GOVERNORS’ PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY, REGENT COLLEGE; AUTHOR, *KNOWING GOD*

“God’s beautiful plan for manhood and womanhood is under attack today, Wayne Grudem’s response to the onslaught of misinformation and distortion from evangelical feminists is clear, biblically sound, scholarly, and yet easy to grasp. If you’ve been sitting on the sidelines, if you’ve been indifferent on this issue, it’s time to care. The stakes are too high to remain uninformed and silent. This book will equip you with truth and inspire you to stand your ground.”

**JOSHUA HARRIS**, FORMER SENIOR PASTOR, COVENANT LIFE CHURCH, GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND;  
AUTHOR, *DUG DOWN DEEP*

“Wayne Grudem has produced an invaluable resource for refuting the confusing and tortured arguments evangelical feminists are using to redefine women’s roles in the church and home. His masterful work helps clarify what is at risk in this life-and-death issue—nothing less than the doctrine of God and the doctrine of Scripture. I highly recommend it.”

**BARBARA HUGHES**, AUTHOR, *DISCIPLINES OF A GODLY WOMAN*; COAUTHOR, *DISCIPLINES OF A GODLY FAMILY*

“*Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* is a tour de force. Over the last twenty years, no one has articulated, clarified, specified, and defended the Bible’s teaching on male and female role relationships in the home and church better than Wayne Grudem, and he once again shows that he is master of this field. Grudem faithfully and carefully sets out God’s instruction on this important aspect of Christian discipleship and then answers the whole range of questions and excuses that are raised against the plain teaching of Scripture. His analysis is trenchant, his presentation persuasive, his scope comprehensive, his grasp magisterial. In the old days, mathematicians and logicians would often place three letters at the end of a completed equation or proof: QED, an abbreviation of the Latin phrase *quod erat demonstrandum* (literally “that which was to be demonstrated”) indicating that the problem had been solved and the matter settled definitively. Well, you can write a QED at the end of this book. The debate is over. The only question now is whether we will bow our hearts to the authority of the Lord’s inspired, inerrant, perspicuous Word on the matter of biblical manhood and womanhood.”

**J. LIGON DUNCAN III**, CHANCELLOR, CEO, AND JOHN E. RICHARDS PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY, REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

“If you love truth more than feminism, you will treasure this book. If you love feminism more than truth, you will despise it.”

**STEVE FARRAR**, AUTHOR, *POINT MAN* AND *FINISHING STRONG*



“In his exhaustive treatment of the evangelical feminist debate, Wayne Grudem proves that the Word of God is still authoritative for all issues of faith and practice. His thorough scholarship, combined with a direct approach in an easy-to-read style, makes this work a vital reference for every Christian library.”

**ALISTAIR BEGG**, SENIOR PASTOR, PARKSIDE CHURCH, CLEVELAND, OHIO

“Forty years of feminist indoctrination has replaced a sound Christian worldview in many of our churches and seminaries. Wayne Grudem explores some of the most contentious issues in the church today and bases his studied responses upon Scripture and sound Christian doctrine. I recommend this book highly, especially to those women who have endured feminist studies in our colleges and universities and are trying to evaluate that teaching in light of their Christian profession of faith.”

**DIANE PASSNO**, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, FOCUS ON THE FAMILY; AUTHOR, *FEMINISM: MYSTIQUE OR MISTAKE?*

“With diplomacy and world-class scholarship, Wayne Grudem has taken on not just some of the thorny questions, but the entire briar patch! This book will be used and referenced by scholars, church leaders, and laymen and laywomen for decades.”

**DENNIS RAINEY**, PRESIDENT, FAMILYLIFE

“While our culture is careening out of control in its understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman, the winds of change have swept into evangelical circles and caused no little controversy. Many are confused by the streams of books and articles from evangelical feminists. In this magnificently clear and comprehensive work, Wayne Grudem calls the church of Jesus Christ back to the Scriptures, showing that the Bible itself prescribes different roles for men and women. Remarkably, almost every question a reader might have on this subject is answered here. This book is a treasure and a resource demonstrating that the complementarian view is biblical and beautiful.”

**THOMAS R. SCHREINER**, JAMES BUCHANAN HARRISON PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION, THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

“This book is the most thorough refutation of evangelical feminism you can get. Not only is it well organized and easy to navigate, but it provide the most up-to-date research on nearly every conceivable argument being put forth by egalitarians. And it is written with the superior precision and clarity we have come to expect from Wayne Grudem. Every Christian who is concerned about the negative impact of evangelical feminism, or who just wants to get up to speed on the debate, should take advantage of this great resource.”

**RANDY STINSON**, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION AND PROVOST,  
THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

“The evangelical world has waiting a long time for such a comprehensive work on what has become, sadly, a controversial topic. This is the most thorough, balanced, and biblically accurate treatment of feminism and the Bible I have seen. It also exudes kindness and grace, qualities sorely needed for meaningful dialogue on this foundational issue.”

**STU WEBER**, AUTHOR, *TENDER WARRIOR*

“This is an indispensable reference work. Wayne Grudem’s repeated call for upholding the equal worth, sanctity, and spiritual giftedness of both sexes should be welcomed by all sides. A major contribution to an increasingly crucial discussion.”

**ROBERT W. YARBROUGH**, PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT, COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

“The major strength of this work is that it engages with the best egalitarian writing over the past twenty years. This is a massive work which is unique in its breadth and detail.”

**SHARON JAMES**, *EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY*

“Though the [book’s] contents reflect Grudem’s commendable scholarly research and clear thinking, he also presents the material in an extraordinarily well-organized format and in highly readable prose. . . . Grudem proves masterful in his refutation of the arguments [of egalitarianism]. Yet, he maintains an unusually irenic and charitable spirit in so doing, for which he is to be commended. . . . [This book] should be read by anyone who wants to understand both Scripture and the current debate on this theme. I highly recommend this new volume by Dr. Grudem as the appropriate follow-up to and extension of the discussion in the earlier volume, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*.”

**RICHARD L. MAYHUE**, *THE MASTER’S SEMINARY JOURNAL*

“Impressive. . . . Leaves no stone unturned. Grudem deals with every question imaginable that is connected with the biblical texts on the topic from Genesis 1 to 1 Timothy 2. . . . In all cases Grudem tries to argue in the best way possible, taking into account the most recent research and literature on each topic. . . . The book is meant to be used as a reference book when looking for answers to a specific argument in the debate.”

**JÜRGEN BUCHEGGER**, *EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY*



# Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth

**An Analysis of More Than One Hundred  
Disputed Questions**

WAYNE GRUDEM

 **CROSSWAY**  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS



*Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth:  
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Copyright © 2004, 2012 by Wayne A. Grudem

Published by Crossway  
1300 Crescent Street  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Originally published 2004 by Multnomah Publishers, a division of Random House, Inc.

Cover design and image: Tyler Deeb

First printing of Crossway reprint edition 2012

Printed in the United States of America

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Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the *King James Version* of the Bible.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-3261-0

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-3262-7

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-3263-4

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-3264-1

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Grudem, Wayne A.

Evangelical feminism and biblical truth : an analysis of  
more than one hundred disputed questions / Wayne Grudem.

p. cm.

Originally published: Sisters, Or. : Multnomah Publishers,  
c2004.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4335-3261-0

1. Feminism—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Bible—  
Feminist criticism. 3. Evangelicalism. I. Title.

BT704.G78 2012

270.8'2082—dc23

2012015398

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Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

SH	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12			
14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

This book is dedicated to three friends  
who have played a significant role in this book,  
and in the controversy over  
biblical manhood and womanhood,  
and in my life:

AUSTIN CHAPMAN,  
retired businessman,  
Minneapolis, Minnesota,

ROBERT LEWIS,  
pastor-at-large of Fellowship Bible Church,  
Little Rock, Arkansas,

and

C. J. MAHANEY,  
president of Sovereign Grace Ministries,  
Gaithersburg, Maryland.

*Male and female he created them....*

*And behold, it was very good.*

GENESIS 1:27, 31

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# Preface to the Crossway Reprint Edition

I wrote this book as an all-purpose reference work to reply to every argument I have ever heard favoring evangelical feminism (the view that all leadership roles in the home and the church should be open to men and women equally). I am glad that Crossway is reprinting the book, because I think of it as a sort of timeless “encyclopedia” of evangelical feminist arguments. I poured into it everything I learned in twenty-seven years of research and writing (1977–2004) on the biblical teachings about gender roles.

This book responds to 118 specific arguments regarding the roles of men and women. My recent reading suggests that these same arguments continue to be used by evangelical feminists today, and I don’t expect that to change for a long time to come.

For example, at about the same time that *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* was first published in 2004, InterVarsity Press published *Discovering Biblical Equality*, edited by Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Groothuis, which took the evangelical feminist view. Because of their simultaneous publication, neither book took account of the other. Upon reading the IVP book, however, I found that nearly every argument in it was similar to something that had been published elsewhere, mostly by the same authors, and I had already answered their arguments in this book, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*.

I have designed this book for use as a reference tool. Everything is arranged within fourteen broad chapters, the first eight covering different parts of the Bible and the last six covering more general topics such as “fairness” and methods of interpretation. I suggest you take a few minutes to get an overview of the book by reading the fourteen main chapter headings in the Table of Contents.

Is “evangelical feminism” an important topic? I think it is crucial. When churches adopt an evangelical feminist (or “egalitarian”) position, they adopt viewpoints that undermine the effective authority of Scripture and thus start down a path toward liberalism, as I explain in chapter 13. Soon they begin to refer to God as “Mother” and eventually they endorse “faithful” homosexual relationships as morally right.

Sadly, this trend continues today. For example, when this book was first published in 2004, I noted (p. 513) that there were still three large denominations that had not yet approved the ordination of homosexuals even though they had approved the ordination of women

and adopted a more liberal view of the Bible. These were the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and the Presbyterian Church—USA (PCUSA). Predictably, however, the ELCA eventually voted to ordain homosexuals (August 21, 2009), and the PCUSA did the same on May 10, 2011. (For more detail on this inevitable trend from feminism to liberalism, see my book *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* [Crossway, 2006].) Feminism continues to be the first step toward liberalism in many churches, colleges, seminaries, and denominations.

Margaret and I have been married now for forty-three years, and some readers might be interested in how the Bible's teachings work out in our own marriage. I think we would both say that we have never been happier together than we are now, for God has given much blessing to our marriage. There is a video available where Pastor Mark Driscoll interviews Margaret and me (mostly Margaret!) about our marriage. It is easily found by Googling "Margaret Grudem," or else at this link: <http://theresurgence.com/2010/06/14/pastor-mark-interviews-wayne-and-margaret-grudem>.

In addition, Dennis Rainey and Bob Lepine at FamilyLife Today interviewed me at length about a decision to change jobs for the sake of Margaret's health, and that interview is here: <http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/familylife-today/listen/what-a-loving-husband-looks-like-152782.html>.

I am grateful to Crossway for agreeing to reissue this book. I hope that readers will find it to be accurate, clear, and persuasive, as they seek to be faithful to the teachings of the Bible—in particular, that God created men and women equal in personhood and importance but different in the roles for which He created us, roles in which we discover His greatest blessing.

—Wayne Grudem

July 2012

# Preface

In 1991, John Piper and I published a collection of essays by twenty-two authors titled *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991). We are grateful to God for the positive response it received: It was named *Christianity Today*'s "Book of the Year" in 1992 and it continues to be widely read. It remains the standard defense of the complementarian<sup>1</sup> position on manhood and womanhood.

Yet for some time I have thought that another book was needed to supplement *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* in several ways:

1. to answer new arguments made by evangelical feminists since 1991;
2. to summarize the results of new scholarly research in one place and in a form that can be understood by non-specialists;
3. to adopt a user-friendly format that would enable readers quickly to find a fair summary of egalitarian<sup>2</sup> arguments from the last thirty years, references to the best egalitarian literature supporting each argument, and clearly written answers to each of those arguments;
4. to provide an updated assessment of where the evangelical world is heading on this issue, along with actual policy statements about men and women in leadership from dozens of denominations and parachurch groups; and
5. to warn about troubling trends in the evangelical feminist camp that indicate increasing movement toward theological liberalism through various types of interpretation that imply a rejection of the effective authority of Scripture in our lives.

For these reasons, I have written this book.

The first two chapters contain a positive view of men and women in our similarities and differences as created by God. They can be read on their own, even if someone does not read the rest

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1. We chose *complementarian* to stand for our view that men and women are equal and different—equal in value and personhood, but different in roles in marriage and the church. (See also 639–40.)

2. Throughout this book I use *egalitarian* and *evangelical feminist* as synonyms that both refer to the view that the Bible does not teach different roles for men and women in marriage or the church that are based on gender alone (apart from our obvious physical differences). An egalitarian would say that there is no unique leadership role that belongs to the husband in a marriage, and that all governing and teaching roles in the church should be open to both men and women alike.

of the book. Chapters 3–12 then answer 118 arguments that evangelical feminists have made in an attempt to deny that any unique leadership role is reserved for men in marriage or in the church.

In chapter 13 I argue that many of these egalitarian arguments reveal a dismaying trend to deny the full authority of the Bible. This makes evangelical feminism a new path into liberalism as it leads to an increasing rejection of the authority of Scripture in our lives. I am troubled that even those egalitarian authors who do not explicitly deny the Bible's authority still refrain from renouncing the approaches of those who do, and that the influential egalitarian organization Christians for Biblical Equality promotes on its website all of the authors that I quote who deny the authority of Scripture in the ways I list in that chapter.

In chapter 14 I survey the current positions of many evangelical denominations and parachurch organizations on this issue and attempt to explain why many have adopted an egalitarian position. My conclusion at the end of the discussion is that evangelicals who believe the Bible will ultimately have to choose between evangelical feminism and biblical truth.

The appendices contain important material that cannot easily be found elsewhere, such as a collection of policy statements on women in ministry from several dozen denominations and parachurch groups, a list of over fifty ancient texts where the Greek word *kephalē* ("head") means "person in authority," and a complete list of quotations of all eighty-two examples of the word *authentēō* ("to exercise authority") from ancient literature (in English translation). I included these lists of actual examples of disputed words because they give all readers fair access to the original data upon which to base a decision about the meanings of those words.

The appendices also include a recent review I wrote of the influential book by William Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), three reviews of the book *I Suffer Not a Woman* by Richard and Catherine Kroeger (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), a recounting of procedures used by egalitarians to gain approval of women's ordination in the church of England (written by a bishop who opposed that action), and a reprint of a detailed scholarly article I wrote in 2001 on the meaning of the much-disputed Greek word *kephalē* ("head") in ancient literature.

I intend this book to be useful for all Christians who are wondering what to believe about biblical manhood and womanhood. It should especially be useful for college and seminary students, church study committees, and pastors and Bible study leaders looking for a summary of arguments on both sides of this issue. It will also provide a useful handbook for Christians to consult when they seek answers to arguments from their egalitarian friends.

But I think the book will also be useful for those who are not engaged in any controversy but who simply want to understand more deeply what the Bible teaches about men and women and about our similarities and differences as created by God in His infinite wisdom.

Controversy is never easy, but God in His grace often allows controversies to bring us to deeper understanding of His Word and deeper love and trust for Him. This has been true throughout history as Christians have grown in their understanding of the Bible when they had

to ponder and seek to answer controversial viewpoints on topics such as the Trinity, the person of Christ, justification by faith, the inerrancy of the Bible, and so forth. And so it has been in this controversy as well. As I have taught and written and debated about this topic for the past twenty-seven years, I know that God has given me a deeper love and appreciation for my wife, Margaret, a deeper respect for the wisdom that God gives to both women and men, a deeper desire to see women as well as men using all the gifts God has given them for the good of the church, and a deeper appreciation for the amazing wisdom of God in creating men and women so wonderfully equal in many ways, yet so delightfully different in many other ways.

One danger of controversy is that it can overwhelm us to the point that we lose our joy. With regard to this issue, there is a risk of being so entangled in controversy that we lose the joy of being men and women. I hope this book will enable women to rejoice once again that God has made them women, and men to rejoice once again that God has made them men. I hope that we will be able to look at each other once again as brothers and sisters in God's family and feel something of the joy that God felt just after He first created us male and female: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, *it was very good*" (Genesis 1:31).

Another danger of controversy is that we can lose our tempers or lash out in anger at those with whom we disagree. When we do this we forget what the New Testament teaches us about how we are to disagree with others:

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.  
(2 Timothy 2:24–25)

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.... But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace (James 3:13, 17–18).

I have tried to follow these principles even when I disagree very directly with my egalitarian brothers and sisters in this book. I hope others who read this book will seek to obey these verses as well, and I hope readers will call it to my attention if I have been unfaithful to these verses in anything I wrote in this book.

Another danger of controversy is the temptation to passivity and to avoidance of an important issue that the Lord is asking us to deal with in our generation. I have been saddened to hear of churches and institutions that decide not to take any position regarding roles of men and women in marriage and the church. "It's too controversial," people have told me.

But this was not the practice of the apostle Paul. He was the greatest evangelist in the



history of the world, but his concern to reach the lost did not lead him to shrink back from declaring unpopular doctrines if they were part of the Word of God. He told the elders of the church at Ephesus: "I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26–27).

The implication is that if he had avoided some unpopular teachings in the Word of God, he would have to answer to the Lord for his negligence on the Last Day (see 2 Corinthians 5:10).

There is a parallel today. If a pastor or other ministry leader decides not to teach about male headship in the home, and if marriages in his church begin to experience the conflict and disintegration that result from the dominant feminist mindset of our secular culture, then he cannot say like Paul, "I am innocent of the blood of all of you." He cannot say at the end of his life that he has been a faithful steward of the responsibility entrusted to him (1 Corinthians 4:1–5). Those who avoid teaching on unpopular topics that are taught in God's Word have forgotten their accountability before God for their congregations: "They are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give account" (Hebrews 13:17).

Churches and institutions that decide not to take any position on this issue are in fact taking a position anyway. They are setting themselves up for continual leftward movement and continual erosion of their obedience to Scripture (see chapters 13 and 14 for several examples). A church or organization that decides to have no policy on this issue will keep ratcheting left one cog at a time, in the direction of the main pressures of the culture. I hope this book will keep that process from happening in many churches and parachurch organizations.

I have dedicated this book to Austin Chapman, a retired businessman from Minneapolis, Minnesota, who has been a trusted board member and supporter of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood for many years, and has also been a wise mentor, advisor, and friend for me personally.

I have also dedicated this book to Robert Lewis, pastor-at-large of Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, who first encouraged me to write this book during a conversation at a restaurant in Dallas, Texas, in 1999. Robert has been a friend, advisor, example, and encouragement to me for many years. I am grateful to Robert's church, Fellowship Bible Church, for providing a grant that enabled me to take a leave of absence for one term from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in order to work on this book.

And I have dedicated this book to C. J. Mahaney, president of Sovereign Grace Ministries in Gaithersburg, Maryland, who has been a friend, example, and wise counselor for me for several years. I am also grateful to Sovereign Grace Ministries for providing me with an excellent computer and with additional funding for research support in this project.

I wish to thank the Board of Regents of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, for granting me a sabbatical and a leave of absence in the spring and fall of 2000 to work on this book. I also wish to thank the Board of Directors of Phoenix Seminary for granting me a sabbatical in the fall of 2003, during which I completed this manuscript.

Many others have had a significant role. My parents, Arden and Jean Grudem, provided additional funding for my leave of absence in 2000, and they have continued to pray for me and give me wise counsel for my entire fifty-five years. Stu Weber first put me in touch with Multnomah Publishers to inquire if they would publish this book. David Jones and Jeff Purswell, friends and former students from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, helped me write the first proposal and outline for the book and then worked many hours summarizing, classifying, and providing initial answers to the arguments in several influential egalitarian books.

At Phoenix Seminary, Travis Buchanan, my administrative assistant, and Steve Eriksson, my teaching assistant, gave excellent help in research and manuscript preparation, in proofreading, and in compiling the indices. Travis also spent many hours compiling the appendix with policy statements from various denominations. David Dickerson also helped with research, organization of information, and indexing and proofreading. Paul Wegner helped me with some details of Hebrew grammar, and Paul Wegner and Fred Chay (who are Phoenix Seminary colleagues and good friends) interacted with my critique of William Webb's writings. David Instone-Brewer at the Tyndale House Library in Cambridge, England, helped set up my computer when I spent research time there in 2002 and 2004. Chris Cowan at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and Justin Taylor at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis helped track down obscure library materials not available to me in Arizona, and Chris Cowan also compiled the list of examples of *kephalē* in Appendix 3. Gary C. Johnson called my attention to additional denominational policy material. Sarah Affleck and Heidi Frye compiled the bibliography. Tracey Miller, Sharon Sullivan, Travis Buchanan, and Susanne Henry typed various portions of the manuscript at different times, and Sarah Walker photocopied and mailed copies several times. Ron Dickison fixed my computer several times, including helping me recover from two crashed hard drives. Steve and Barb Uhlmann gave me a backup computer that protected my work and saved me countless hours.

Several longtime friends gave me advice on specific parts of the manuscript from time to time, including Vern Poythress, John Piper, Bruce Ware, Randy Stinson, and Tom Schreiner (who read the whole manuscript and made helpful suggestions at a number of points).

Rod Morris of Multnomah Publishers did an excellent job of shortening the manuscript and editing it for consistency and clarity.

As with all my other books, my wife, Margaret, has been my greatest encouragement and support as she prays for me, talks with me, keeps me from distractions, sacrifices some of her time so that I can write, and continues to remind me that I have to finish the book! I thank God for giving me such a wonderful wife.

—WAYNE GRUDEM

Phoenix Seminary, Scottsdale, Arizona

January 2004

“Male and female he created them...and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:27, 31).

# How to Use This Book

Chapters 1 and 2 give a positive picture of men and women in creation, marriage, and the church, and they should be read first. Many readers may then wish to skim the 118 arguments found in chapters 3–12 and read only those sections that they find of interest. These chapters contain detailed section headings to enable readers to see the argument quickly and skip over the details if they wish. Chapters 13 and 14 contain my conclusions about the state of evangelicalism on this subject, and they assume the conclusions I reached in chapters 1–12, but they may be read at any time.

However, some readers may just want to find an answer to a specific egalitarian book or argument, and this book is written in such a way that they can find the specific argument or author in the table of contents or indices. In every section of the book, I have provided frequent cross-references to other sections where appropriate.

**Note regarding references in the footnotes:** In order to save some space in what were already lengthy footnotes, the publisher decided to use an abbreviated form of references for the books I cite in the footnotes (giving only the author, a short form of the title, and, for the first instance in each chapter, the date). Full bibliographic information in each case can be found in the bibliography (pp. 767–81).

**Note on future arguments, additions, and corrections:** I have attempted to include in this book every major claim made in every influential evangelical feminist book up to 2003. However, it is possible that I will discover, after this book is published, that I have missed some claims. It is also possible that evangelical feminists will make additional claims in new books after 2003. Therefore I intend from time to time to post additional claims and answers, additional arguments, and any needed corrections to this book at a special web site that has been established for this book, [www.EFBT100.com](http://www.EFBT100.com).

# Abbreviations

- ANF: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5th ed., ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, et. al., 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969; first published 1885).
- BDAG: A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker, based on Walter Bauer's *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch...*, 6th ed., and on previous English editions by W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
- BDB: Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).
- DNTB: Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).
- DPL: Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).
- EDT: Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984).
- HALOT: The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, rev. and ed. Walter Baumgartner and Johann Stamm, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2001).
- ICC: The International Critical Commentary*, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G.N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark).
- JBMW: Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*.
- JETS: Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*.
- IS: Greek-English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement*, ed. Liddell, H. G. and R. Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
- NIGTC: The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall, W. Ward Gasque, and Donald Hagner (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans).
- NIDOTTE: The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997).
- NPNF: The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1 and 2, ed. Philip Schaff, et. al., 26 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974).

*TDNT: Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Freidrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 9 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964–1974).

*Trinj*: *Trinity Journal*.

*WTJ*: *Westminster Theological Journal*.

# A Biblical Vision of Manhood and Womanhood as Created by God<sup>1</sup>

Most of this book contains answers to 118 claims that have come from evangelical feminism. But before I can interact with those claims, I must first present a clear statement of what I stand for. Just what is a “complementarian” view of biblical manhood and womanhood? How does it work in the home and in the church?

In this chapter, I consider six key issues related to a complementarian view of men and women in creation and in marriage. In the next chapter, I present a complementarian view of men and women in the church.

## KEY ISSUE #1: MEN AND WOMEN ARE EQUAL IN VALUE AND DIGNITY

On the first page of the Bible we read that both men and women are “in the image of God.” In fact, the very first verse that tells us that God created human beings also tells us that both “male and female” are in the image of God:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; *male and female he created them.* (Genesis 1:27)

To be in the image of God is an incredible privilege. It means *to be like God* and *to represent God*.<sup>2</sup> No other creatures in all of creation, not even the powerful angels, are said to be in the image of God. It is a privilege given only to us as men and women.<sup>3</sup>

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1. This chapter is taken and modified from *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* ed. Wayne Grudem, © 2002. Used by permission of Crossway Books, a division of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL.

2. For further discussion, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (1994), 442–50.

3. God created us so that our likeness to Him would be seen in our moral judgment and actions; in our spiritual life and ability to relate to God, who is spirit; in our reasoning ability; in our use of language; in our awareness of the distant past and future; in our creativity; in the complexity and variety of our emotions; in the depth of our interpersonal relationships; in our equality and differences in marriage and other interpersonal relationships; in our rule over the rest of creation; and in other ways. All of these aspects are distorted by sin and manifest themselves in ways that are *unlike* God and are displeasing to Him, but all of these areas of our lives are also

Any discussion of manhood and womanhood in the Bible must start here. Every time we talk to each other as men and women, we should remember that the person we are talking to is a creature of God who is *more like God than anything else in the universe*, and men and women share that status equally. Therefore we should treat men and women with equal dignity and we should think of men and women as having equal value. We are *both* in the image of God, and we have been so since the very first day that God created us. “In the image of God he created him; *male and female he created them*” (Genesis 1:27). Nowhere does the Bible say that men are more in God’s image than women.<sup>4</sup> Men and women share equally in the tremendous privilege of being in the image of God.

The Bible thus corrects the errors of male dominance and male superiority that have come as the result of sin and that have been seen in nearly all cultures in the history of the world. Wherever men are thought to be better than women, wherever husbands act as selfish “dictators,” wherever wives are forbidden to have their own jobs outside the home or to vote or to own property or to be educated, wherever women are treated as inferior, wherever there is abuse or violence against women or rape or female infanticide or polygamy or harems, the biblical truth of equality in the image of God is being denied. To all societies and cultures where these things occur, we must proclaim that the very first page of God’s Word bears a fundamental and irrefutable witness against these evils.<sup>5</sup>

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being progressively restored to greater Godlikeness through the salvation that is ours in Christ, and they will be completely restored in us when Christ returns.

For a fuller discussion on what it means to be in the image of God, see Bruce Ware, “Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God” in Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, (2002), 71–92.

4. In 1 Corinthians 11:7, Paul says, “For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.” He is not denying here that woman was created in the image of God, for that is clearly affirmed in Genesis 1:27. Nor does he say that woman is the image of man. Rather, Paul is simply saying that *in the relationship between man and woman*, man in particular reflects something of the excellence of the God who created him, and woman *in that relationship* reflects something of the excellence of the man from whom she was created. Yet Paul goes on almost immediately to say that men and women are interdependent (see vv. 11–12) and that we could not exist without each other. He does not say in this passage that man is more in the image of God than woman is, nor should we derive any such idea from this passage.
5. A tragic example of male dominance was reported on the front page of *USA Today: International Edition* (September 6, 1994). “No girls allowed: abortion for sex selection raises moral questions” was the caption on a photo of a doctor performing an ultrasound on a pregnant woman in India. The cover story, “Asians’ Desire for Boys Leaves a Deadly Choice,” reported that according to Dr. Datta Pai, a Bombay obstetrician, “Ninety-nine percent of those found to be carrying female fetuses aborted their unborn children” (2A). The story explained that “modern technology, the strong cultural desire for boys and pressure to reduce population have joined forces in a deadly combination in India, China and much of Asia to produce a booming business in sex selection.... The practice of aborting female fetuses appears common judging by emerging statistics that show lopsided sex ratios throughout Asia and into North Africa. Nor is the practice of sex selection limited to abortion. Female infanticide, the abandonment of baby girls, and the preferential feeding and health care of boys contribute greatly to the imbalanced ratios” (1A–2A). The story goes on to quote Harvard professor Amartya Sen as saying that there are now more than 100 million women “missing” in the population of the world, including 44 million fewer women in China and 37 million fewer in India than should be alive, according to normal sex ratios at birth (2A).

This is a tragedy of unspeakable proportions. In addition to the harm of these lost lives, we must think of

Yet we can say even more. If men and women are equally in the image of God, then we are equally important and equally valuable *to God*. We have equal worth before Him *for all eternity*, for this is how we were created. This truth should exclude all our feelings of pride or inferiority, and should exclude any idea that one sex is better or worse than the other. In contrast to many non-Christian cultures and religions, no one should feel proud or superior because he is a man, and no one should feel disappointed or inferior because she is a woman. If God thinks us to be equal in value, then that settles forever the question of personal worth, for God's evaluation is the true standard of personal value for all eternity.

Further evidence of our equality in the image of God is seen in the New Testament church, where the Holy Spirit is given in new fullness to both men and women (Acts 2:17–18), where both men and women are baptized into membership in the body of Christ (Acts 2:41),<sup>6</sup> and where both men and women receive spiritual gifts for use in the life of the church (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; 1 Peter 4:10). The apostle Paul reminds us that we are not to be divided into factions that think of themselves as superior and inferior (such as Jew and Greek, or slave and free, or male and female), but rather that we should think of ourselves as united because we “are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

Whenever husbands and wives do not listen respectfully and thoughtfully to each other's viewpoints, do not value the wisdom that might be arrived at differently and expressed differently from the other person, or do not value the other person's different gifts and preferences as much as their own, they neglect this teaching on equality in the image of God.

Speaking personally for a moment, I do not think I listened very well to my wife, Margaret, early in our marriage. I did not value her different gifts and preferences as much as my own, or her wisdom that was arrived at differently (often, it seemed, quickly and instinctively) and that she expressed differently from how I expressed things. Later we made much progress in this area, but, looking back, Margaret told me that early in our marriage it felt as though her voice was taken away, and as though my ears were closed. I wonder if there are other couples where God needs to open the husband's ears to listen, and needs to restore the wife's voice to speak.<sup>7</sup>

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the destructive consequences in the lives of those women who survive. From their earliest age, they receive the message from their families and indeed from their whole society that “boys are better than girls” and “I wish you were a boy.” The devastation to their own sense of self-worth must be immense. Yet all of this comes about as the result of a failure to realize that men and women, boys and girls, have equal value in God's sight and should have equal value in our sight as well. The first chapter of the Bible corrects this practice, and corrects any lurking sense in our own hearts that boys are more valuable than girls, when it says we are both created in the image of God.

6. The fact that both men and women are baptized stands in contrast to the Old Testament, where the outward sign of inclusion in the community of God's people was circumcision. But circumcision by its nature was administered only to men. By contrast, both men and women are baptized in the New Testament church. In this way, every baptism should remind us of our equality in the image of God.
7. I realize that there is an opposite mistake in which the husband listens so much and the wife has so great a voice that she becomes the governing partner in the relationship. I am not advocating that mistake either, and in what follows I will argue for the necessity of a male leadership role in decision-making within marriage.



A healthy perspective on the way that equality manifests itself in marriage was summarized as part of a “Marriage and Family Statement” issued by Campus Crusade for Christ in July of 1999. After three paragraphs discussing both equality and differences between men and women, the statement says:

In a marriage lived according to these truths, the love between husband and wife will show itself in listening to each other’s viewpoints, valuing each other’s gifts, wisdom, and desires, honoring one another in public and in private, and always seeking to bring benefit, not harm, to one another.<sup>8</sup>

Why do I list this as a key issue in the manhood–womanhood controversy? Not because we differ with egalitarians<sup>9</sup> on this question, but because we differ at this point with sinful tendencies in our own hearts and with the oppressive male chauvinism and male dominance that has marred most cultures throughout most of history.

Anyone preaching or teaching on manhood and womanhood has to start here—where the Bible starts—not with our differences, but with our *equality* in the image of God.

If you’re a pastor and you don’t start here in your preaching on biblical manhood and womanhood, affirming our equality in the image of God, you simply will not get a hearing from many people in your church. And if you don’t start here, your heart won’t be right on this issue.

There is yet one more reason why I think this is a key issue, one that speaks especially to men. I personally think that one reason God has allowed this controversy on manhood and womanhood to come into the church at this time is so that we could correct some mistakes, change some wrongful traditions, and become more faithful to Scripture in treating our wives and all women with dignity and respect. The first step in correcting these mistakes is to be fully convinced in our hearts that women share equally with us men in the value and dignity that belongs to being made in the image of God.

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8. Policy statement announced and distributed to Campus Crusade staff members at a biannual staff conference on July 28, 1999, at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado. The statement was reported in a Religion News Service dispatch July 30, 1999; a Baptist Press story by Art Toalston on July 29, 1999 ([www.baptistpress.com](http://www.baptistpress.com)); an article in *World*, September 11, 1999, p. 32; and it was also quoted in full in James Dobson’s monthly newsletter *Family News from Dr. James Dobson*, September 1999, 1–2. The statement is also reproduced and discussed in Rainey, *Ministering to Twenty-First Century Families* (2001), 39–56.

Carolyn Custis James misrepresents my position when she attributes to John Piper and me the view that “a man is abdicating his headship when he listens to his wife” (James, *When Life and Beliefs Collide* [2001], 192). The book she quotes, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, refutes that view on pp. 62, 195, 482, n. 50 and elsewhere. (Carolyn James assures me this will be corrected in future printings.)

9. Throughout this chapter, I use the word *egalitarian* to refer to those within the evangelical world who say that no differences in the roles of men and women should be based on their gender alone. In particular, egalitarians deny that there is any unique male leadership role in marriage or in the church. Sometimes I use *evangelical feminist* to mean the same thing as *egalitarian*.

## **KEY ISSUE #2: MEN AND WOMEN HAVE DIFFERENT ROLES IN MARRIAGE AS PART OF THE CREATED ORDER**

When the members of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood wrote the “Danvers Statement” in 1987, we included the following affirmations:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart.
3. Adam’s headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin.<sup>10</sup>

The statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in June 1998 and affirmed (with one additional paragraph) by Campus Crusade in July 1999 also acknowledges God-given differences:

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God’s image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to his people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility *to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family*. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility *to respect her husband and serve as his helper* in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.<sup>11</sup>

By contrast, egalitarians do not affirm such created differences. In fact, the statement on “Men, Women and Biblical Equality” published by Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) says:

1. The Bible teaches that both man and woman were created in God’s image, had a direct relationship with God, and shared jointly the responsibilities of bearing and rearing children and having dominion over the created order (Gen. 1:26–28).
5. The Bible teaches that the rulership of Adam over Eve resulted from the Fall and was, therefore, *not a part of the original created order....*
10. The Bible defines the function of leadership as the empowerment of others for service rather than as the exercise of power over them (Matt. 20:25–28, 23:8; Mark 10:42–45; John 13:13–17; Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 5:2–3).

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10. The Danvers Statement was prepared by several evangelical leaders at a CBMW meeting in Danvers, Massachusetts, in December 1987. It was first published in final form by the CBMW in Wheaton, IL, in November 1988. See Appendix 1 for the full text of this statement.

11. The entire statement in the form adopted by Campus Crusade for Christ is available at [www.baptistpress.com](http://www.baptistpress.com), in the archives for July 29, 1999 (italics added).

11. The Bible teaches that husbands and wives are heirs together of the grace of life and that they are bound together in a relationship of mutual submission and responsibility (1 Cor. 7:3–5; Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:1–7; Gen. 21:12). The husband's function as "head" (*kephalē*) is to be understood as self-giving love and service within this relationship of mutual submission (Eph. 5:21–33; Col. 3:19; 1 Pet. 3:7).<sup>12</sup>

So which position is right? Does the Bible really teach that men and women had different roles from the beginning of Creation?

When we look carefully at Scripture, we can see at least ten arguments indicating that God gave men and women distinct roles before the Fall, and particularly, that there was male headship in marriage before the Fall.

### A. Ten arguments showing male headship in marriage before the Fall

1. *The order*: Adam was created first, then Eve (note the sequence in Genesis 2:7 and Genesis 2:18–23). We may not think of this as very important today, but it was important to the original readers of this text, and the apostle Paul sees it as important: he bases his argument for different roles in the assembled New Testament church on the fact that Adam was created prior to Eve. He says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man. . . . For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:12–13).

According to Scripture itself, then, the fact that Adam was created first and then Eve has implications not just for Adam and Eve, but for the relationships between men and women throughout the church age.<sup>13</sup>

2. *The representation*: Adam, not Eve, had a special role in representing the human race.

Looking at the Genesis narrative, we find that Eve sinned first, and then Adam sinned: "She took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6). Since Eve sinned first, we might expect that the New Testament would tell us that we inherit a sinful nature because of Eve's sin, or that we are counted guilty because of Eve's sin. But this is not the case. The New Testament does not say, "*as in Eve* all die," but rather, "*For as in Adam* all die, so also *in Christ* shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

This is further seen in the parallel between Adam and Christ, where Paul views Christ as the "last Adam":

12. The entire statement is available from the website of Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE), [www.cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org) (italics added to the statement as quoted above). The CBE statement regularly portrays a non-egalitarian position in pejorative language such as "the rulership of Adam over Eve" and fails to even mention a third alternative, namely, loving, humble headship. (For a discussion of repeated ambiguities in the CBE statement, see Piper and Grudem, "Charity, Clarity, and Hope," in Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* [1991], 403–22.)

13. Bruce Ware adds yet another reason related to this temporal priority in creation, namely, that woman was created "from" or "out of" man. See his discussion in Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, 82–84. Although I have not listed it separately here, it could be counted as an eleventh reason along with the ten I list.

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.... The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.... Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:45–49; see also Romans 5:12–21, where another relationship between Adam and Christ is developed.)

It is unmistakable then that Adam had a leadership role in representing the entire human race, a leadership role that Eve did not have. Nor did Adam and Eve *together* represent the human race. *Adam alone* represented the human race, because he had a particular leadership role that God had given him, a role Eve did not share.

3. *The naming of woman*: When God made the first woman and “brought her to the man,” the Bible tells us, “Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.” (Genesis 2:23)

When Adam says, “she shall be called Woman,” he is giving a name to her. This is important because in the context of Genesis 1–2, the original readers would have recognized that the person doing the “naming” of created things is always the person who has authority over those things.

Some egalitarians (such as Gilbert Bilezikian and Stanley Grenz) deny that Adam gives a name to his wife in Genesis 2:23.<sup>14</sup> But this objection is hardly convincing when we see how Genesis 2:23 fits into the pattern of naming activities throughout these first two chapters of Genesis. We see this when we examine the places where the same verb (the Hebrew verb *qārā*, “to call”) is used in contexts of naming in Genesis 1–2:

14. See Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (1985), 259, where he says, “No mention of ‘giving a name’ is made in reference to the woman in verse 23.” He also says, “The contrast between Genesis 2:23 and 3:20 bears out the fact that there was no act of naming in the first instance. When Eve actually receives her *name*, the text uses that very word, ‘The man called his wife’s *name* Eve’” (261).

Bilezikian apparently thinks that where *name* (the Hebrew noun *shēm*) is not used, no act of naming occurs. But he takes no account of the fact that the noun *shēm* is not used in Genesis 1:5, 8, or 10 either, where God names the Day and the Night and Heaven and Earth and Seas. The idea of naming can be indicated by the verb *qārā* without the noun *shēm* being used.

Grenz, *Women in the Church* (1995), 163, says, “The usual Hebrew construction for the act of naming is not present in the Genesis 2:23 text. Phyllis Trible points out that in order to denote naming, the Hebrew verb ‘call’ must be followed by an actual name.... In the Genesis 2:23 text, however, no actual name is present, only the designation *woman*.... The narrator does not state that the man did in fact name his wife when God brought her to him.... It is not until after the Fall that Adam calls her Eve.”

But Grenz (and Trible) are incorrect in this because they wrongly assume that *woman* (Hebrew *ishshāh*) is not a name—it is surely taken as a name here in Genesis, and is parallel to the other naming verses in this context, and with Genesis 5:2 where it is said that “God blessed them and *named* (*qārā*) them Man when [literally (“on the day”)] they were created.” Grenz and Trible fail to account for the special nature of Genesis 1–2, where this same naming pattern is used of whole broad categories of the created order and an individual personal name (like Eve) would not yet be expected.

- Genesis 1:5: “God *called* the light Day, and the darkness he *called* Night.”
- Genesis 1:8: “And God *called* the expanse Heaven.”
- Genesis 1:10: “God *called* the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he *called* Seas.”
- Genesis 2:19: “So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would *call* them. And whatever the man *called* every living creature, that was its name.”
- Genesis 2:20: “The man *gave names* to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field.”

In each of these verses prior to Genesis 2:23, the same verb, the Hebrew verb *qārāʾ*, had been used. Just as God demonstrated His sovereignty over day and night, heavens, earth, and seas by assigning them names, so Adam demonstrated his authority over the animal kingdom by assigning every living creature its name. The original readers would have easily recognized the pattern and they would have seen a continuation of the pattern when Adam said, “she shall be *called* Woman.”

The original readers of Genesis and of the rest of the Old Testament would have been familiar with this pattern, a pattern whereby people who have authority over another person or thing have the ability to assign a name to that person or thing, a name that often indicates something of the character or quality of the person. Thus, parents give names to their children (see Genesis 4:25, 26; 5:3, 29; 16:15; 19:37, 38; 21:3). And God is able to change the names of people when He wishes to indicate a change in their character or role (see Genesis 17:5, 15, where God changes Abram’s name to Abraham and Sarai’s name to Sarah). In each of these passages we have the same verb (*qārāʾ*) as is used in Genesis 2:23, and in each case the person who gives the name has authority over the person who receives the name. Therefore when Adam gives to his wife the name “Woman,” this indicates a kind of authority that God gave to Adam, a leadership function that Eve did not have with respect to her husband.<sup>15</sup>

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George W. Ramsey, “Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?” (*Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50, 1988), argues against Tribble’s claim, saying, “It is an error to argue that Genesis 2:23 is not an instance of name-giving. . . . The use of the noun *shēm* is not absolutely essential to the naming formula. *Qārāʾ* plus *lāmed* with an object indicates naming just as well as *qārāʾ* plus *shēm*” (29). Ramsey points out similar examples, such as the naming of Ichabod in 1 Samuel 4:21, “And she named the child Ichabod,” where the word *shēm* (“name”) is not used, but the verb *qārāʾ* is used plus *lāmed* with an object, as in Genesis 2:23.

15. William Webb claims that when Adam calls the woman (*ʾishshāh*) in Genesis 2:23, it shows her role as an equal partner with Adam, because her name is similar to the name for man (*ʾish*) (Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals* [2001], 116). This argument is not convincing because the names for “man” and “woman” are similar but they are not identical (*ʾish* and *ʾishshāh*), so they are somewhat the same and somewhat different.

The words mean different things: *ʾish* means “man” or “husband” (BDB, 35), and *ʾishshāh* means “woman, wife, female” (BDB, 61), and though the words look similar they are related to different roots (the BDB *Lexicon* speaks of “the impossibility of deriving *ʾish* and *ʾishshāh* from the same root,” 35).

For Webb to say that this name *only* indicates equality is simply reductionistic—it is taking part of the truth and making it the whole truth. The names signify *both* similarity *and* difference.

Linda Belleville objects that naming in the Old Testament “was not an act of control or power.”<sup>16</sup> But this misses the point. The point is not that in the act of naming the person controls or exercises power over someone else (in a sort of magical way). The point is that the authority to give a name in itself assumes that the person giving the name *already has authority* over the person or thing receiving that name.<sup>17</sup>

We should notice here that Adam does not give the personal name Eve to his wife until Genesis 3:20 (“the man *called* [qārā’] his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living”). This is because in the creation story in Genesis 2, Adam is giving a broad category name to his wife, indicating the name that would be given to women generally; he is not giving specific personal names designating the character of the individual person.<sup>18</sup>

16. Linda Belleville, “Women in Ministry,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* [2001], 143. Belleville refers to Anthony Thiselton, “Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S., vol. XXV, pt. 2 (October 1974) 283–99, and also to an article by Ramsey (see footnotes 14 and 17 for a discussion of Ramsey’s article).

Thiselton’s article does not really address the question under discussion here in Genesis 2:23, however, because his concern is to show that name-giving does not have some sort of automatic or magical power in the biblical writings. That of course is not what I am claiming here, but rather that the right to give someone a name implies that the name-giver has authority over that person or thing.

17. Ramsey, “Name-Giving?” 24–35, provides evidence that enables us to make a helpful qualification, however, between what we may term “private” and “public” names (this is my distinction, not his). Ramsey points out that Hagar gave a name to God in Genesis 16:13: “So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, ‘You are a God of seeing.’” He rightly says, “It is difficult to imagine that the narrator intended us to understand that this woman...is exercising some sort of control over God” (34). I agree, but what this verse demonstrates is simply a common human activity whereby people can make up all sorts of “private names” by which they refer to someone else, even someone great or famous (for example, someone who admires a current president of the United States might often refer to him as “our great president,” while someone who opposes his policies might frequently refer to “that dummy in the White House”). Such private names do not change the public or official or widely used name of that person, and Ramsey is right to see that in a case such as this there is no indication of authority over the person named. Ramsey is wrong, however, to take this unusual example and from it derive a general conclusion that name-giving does not indicate power or authority over the person or thing named.

The example of Hagar is not like the many other biblical examples of giving a public or official name to someone, a name commonly used by other people and a name by which the recipient of the name henceforth identifies himself or herself. In the Old Testament, that kind of bestowal of a public or official name is regularly done by those in authority over the person or thing named (as the many Genesis passages cited in my earlier paragraphs clearly demonstrate, as do the passages Ramsey cites [32] in which kings bestow names, and warriors who conquer territories bestow names). God gives public and official names frequently in Genesis, and parents also give such names, and they are able to do so because of their authority over the person named.

Ramsey’s citation of Genesis 26:17–21 as a counterexample is hardly persuasive, for in that very context there is significant evidence that the act of bestowing a name on a well is an act of asserting dominion over that well. Note Genesis 26:18: “And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them.” The fact that Isaac names two more wells Esek (“contention”) and Sitnah (“enmity”) before he leaves them for a third well (which he names!) shows that he is still asserting an inherent right to dominion over them, though he is temporarily relinquishing the exercise of that right for the sake of peace. Note that all of this contention over wells is carried out in the light of Genesis 26:3, where God had promised him, “To you and to your offspring I will give all these lands.”

18. Similarly, because God is having Adam examine and name the entire animal kingdom, it is likely that Adam gave names to one representative of each broad category or type of animal in Genesis 2:19–20 (such as dog, cat, deer, or lion, to use English equivalents). We hardly expect that he would have given individual, personal names (such as Rover, Tabby, Bambi, or Leo), because those names would not have applied to others of the same kind. This distinction is missed by Bilezikian (*Beyond Sex Roles*, 259–61), and Grenz (*Women in the Church*

4. *The naming of the human race:* God named the human race “Man,” not “Woman.” Because the idea of naming is so important in the Old Testament, it is significant to notice what name God chose for the human race as a whole. We read,

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and *named them Man* when they were created. (Genesis 5:1–2)

The word that is translated “Man” is the Hebrew word *’ādām*. But this is by no means a gender-neutral term in the eyes of the Hebrew reader, because in the four chapters prior to Genesis 5:2, *’ādām* has been used many times to speak of a male human being in distinction from a female human being. In the following list, the italicized word *man* represents the Hebrew word *’ādām* in every case:

- Genesis 2:22: “And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the *man* he made into a woman and brought her to the *man*.” (It does not say that God made the rib into another *’ādām*, another “man,” but that he made the rib into a woman, which is a different Hebrew word.)
- Genesis 2:23: “Then the *man* said, ‘This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman.’”
- Genesis 2:25: “And the *man* and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”
- Genesis 3:8: “And the *man* and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God.”
- Genesis 3:9: “But the LORD God called to the *man* and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”
- Genesis 3:12: “The *man* said, ‘The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.’”
- Genesis 3:20: “The *man* called his wife’s name Eve.”

When we come, then, to the naming of the human race in Genesis 5:2 (reporting an event before the Fall), it was evident to the original readers that God was using a name that had clear male overtones or nuances. In the first four chapters of Genesis the word *’ādām* was used thirteen times to refer not to a human being in general but to a male human being. In addition to the eight examples mentioned above, it was used an additional five times as a proper name for Adam in distinction from Eve (Genesis 3:17, 21; 4:1, 25; 5:1).<sup>19</sup>

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[1995], 163) when they object that Adam did not name Eve until Genesis 3:20, after the Fall. (See also Brown, *Women Ministers According to Scripture* [1996], 31.) He did give her a specific personal name (“Eve”) after the Fall, but he also gave her the general category name “woman” before the Fall. The one does not exclude the other, for the Bible reports both events.

19. There are actually more than thirteen instances where the Hebrew word *’ādām* refers to a male human being, because prior to the creation of Eve there are twelve additional instances where references to “the man” spoke only of a male person God had created (see Genesis 2:5, 7 [twice], 8, 15, 16, 18, 19 [twice], 20 [twice], 21). If we add these instances, there are twenty-five examples of *’ādām* used to refer to a male human being prior to Genesis 5:2. The male connotations of the word could not have been missed by the original readers.



I am not saying that *'ādām* in the Hebrew Bible always refers to a male human being, for sometimes it has a broader sense, and means something like “person.” But in the early chapters of Genesis, the connection with the man in distinction from the woman is a very clear pattern. God gave the human race a name which, like the English word *man*, can either mean a male human being or can refer to the human race in general.<sup>20</sup>

Does this make any difference? It does give a hint of male leadership, which God suggested in choosing this name. It is significant that God did not call the human race “Woman.” (I am speaking of Hebrew equivalents to these English words.) Nor did He give the human race a name such as “humanity,” which would have no male connotations and no connection with the man in distinction from the woman. Rather, He called the race “man.” Raymond C. Ortlund rightly says, “God’s naming of the race ‘man’ whispers male headship.”<sup>21</sup>

When Genesis 5:2 reports this naming process, it refers to an event prior to sin and the Fall:

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man *when they were created*.  
(Genesis 5:1–2)

And, in fact, the name is already indicated in Genesis 1:27, “So God created *man* in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

If the name “man” in English (as in Hebrew) did not suggest male leadership or headship

20. Linda Belleville denies that God’s use of *'ādām* indicates male headship, because there were other male-oriented words available. She says, “*'ādām* is not a term that denotes gender. It...is properly translated with a generic term like *human* or *humankind*. When gender comes into play, the Hebrew terms *zākār* (‘male’) and *neḡēbāh* (‘female’) are used.... That *'ādām* is a gender-inclusive term is clear from the repeated reference to *'ādām* as ‘them’ (Genesis 1:26–27; 5:2). The Septuagint’s consistent choice of the generic term *anthrōpos* (‘person,’ ‘human’) to translate *'ādām* points to the same thing” (*Women Leaders and the Church* [2000], 102).

Belleville here misses the point: The Hebrew word *'ādām* is not exclusively male-oriented (as *zākār* is), but can be used in four senses: (1. to refer to the human race as a whole, (2. to refer to a human being or a person, (3. to refer to a man in distinction from a woman (especially in the early chapters of Genesis), and (4. as a proper name for Adam (see Brown, Driver, and Briggs *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [BDB], 9). The Septuagint’s term *anthrōpos* is therefore a useful translation of *'ādām*, because it can mean either person or man, depending on context. Belleville surprisingly gives readers only half the relevant evidence at this point, neglecting to mention that *anthrōpos* can also mean “a male person; *man*” (see BDAG, 81).

Belleville says nothing about the most significant evidence in these chapters: the male connotations that readers would pick up from the use of *'ādām* twenty-five times in the early chapters of Genesis to refer to Adam or to a male human being in distinction from a woman.

Aida Spencer, on the other hand, tries to deny the male nuance in *'ādām* by making it always collective, saying, “‘The Adam’ is a ‘they’.... ‘The Adam’ is a ‘male and female.’ Thus ‘the Adam’ could be translated ‘human’ or ‘humanity.’” She even goes so far as to speak of “Adam, the female” (*Beyond the Curse* [1985], 21). But her argument will not work, because it is contradicted by many verses in Genesis 2–3, where *'ādām* has to refer to Adam alone, not Adam and Eve together (and it is never used of Eve alone). Spencer’s attempt to squeeze all examples of the word into one meaning would yield absurd sentences like, “And *the humanity* and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25) and “*The humanity* and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God” (Genesis 3:8).

21. Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” in Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 98.



in the human race, there would be no objection to using *man* to refer to the human race today. But it is precisely the hint of male leadership in the word that has led some people to object to this use of *man* and to attempt to substitute other terms instead.<sup>22</sup> Yet it is that same hint of male leadership that makes this precisely the best translation of Genesis 1:27 and 5:2.

5. *The primary accountability*: God spoke to Adam first after the Fall.

After Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from the Lord among the trees of the Garden. Then we read, “But the LORD God called to *the man* and said to *him*, ‘Where are *you*?’” (Genesis 3:9).

In the Hebrew text, the expression “the man” and the pronouns “him” and “you” are all singular. Even though Eve had sinned first, God first summoned Adam to give account for what had happened in his family. Adam was the one primarily accountable.

An analogy to this is seen in the life of a contemporary human family. When a parent comes into a room where several children have been misbehaving and have left the room in chaos, the parent will probably summon the oldest and say, “What happened here?” Though all are responsible for their behavior, the oldest child bears the primary responsibility.

In a similar way, when God summoned Adam to give an account, it indicated a primary responsibility for Adam in the conduct of his family. This is similar to the situation in Genesis 2:15–17, where God gave commands to Adam alone before the Fall, indicating there also a primary responsibility that belonged to Adam.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, the serpent spoke to Eve first (Genesis 3:1), trying to get her to take responsibility for leading the family into sin, and inverting the order that God had established at Creation.

6. *The purpose*: Eve was created as a helper for Adam, not Adam as a helper for Eve.

After God had created Adam and given him directions concerning his life in the Garden of Eden, we read, “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him’” (Genesis 2:18).

It is true that the Hebrew word here translated “helper” (*‘ēzer*) is often used elsewhere in the Bible of God who is our helper. (See for example Psalm 33:20; 70:5; 115:9.) But *helper* does

22. Several gender-neutral Bible translations have changed the word *man*, which was standard in earlier English translations. *Humankind* is used in the New Revised Standard Version of Genesis 1:26–27. The New Living Translation uses *people*, while the inclusive language edition of the New International Version uses *human beings*. In Genesis 5:2, various gender-neutral substitutes replace the name *man*: *humankind* (NRSV), *human* (NLT), or *human beings* (NIV–Inclusive Language Edition, CEV, NCV).

23. Gilbert Bilezikian claims that when God approached Adam first, it did not indicate any greater accountability for Adam as leader, but was only because God had earlier spoken to Adam alone: “As the sole recipient of God’s original order prohibiting consumption from the tree, God asked Adam to give an account of himself. That order had been given to Adam as a personal prohibition (2:17 is also in the second-person singular) when Eve was not yet formed. . . . God did not ask him any questions about Eve. Her turn would come” (*Beyond Sex Roles* (1985), 51).

I agree with Bilezikian that God had earlier commanded Adam alone regarding the forbidden tree, but this just reinforces the point that God’s actions in both cases imply a leadership role for Adam with respect to Eve. Just as God gave the command first to Adam alone, but Eve was also responsible to obey as soon as Adam told her of the command, so now God speaks to Adam first and holds him primarily accountable for disobeying the command he had received directly from God. This does not deny Eve’s personal accountability (God also speaks to her), but it does assume Adam’s leadership.

not by itself decide what God intended the relationship to be between Adam and Eve. The activity of helping is so broad that it can be done by someone who has greater authority, someone who has equal authority, or someone who has lesser authority than the person being helped. For example, I can help my son do his homework.<sup>24</sup> Or I can help my neighbor to move his sofa. Or my son can help me clean the garage. Yet the fact remains that *in the situation under consideration*, the person doing the helping puts himself in a subordinate role to the person who has primary responsibility for carrying out the activity. Even if I help my son with his homework, the primary responsibility for the homework remains his and not mine. I am the helper. And even when God helps us, He still holds us primarily responsible for the activity, and He holds us accountable for what we do.

But Genesis 2 does not merely say that Eve functions as Adam's helper in one or two specific events. Rather, it says that God made Eve to provide Adam with a helper, one who *by virtue of creation* would function as Adam's helper.

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." (v. 18)

The Hebrew text can be translated literally as, "I will make *for him* (Hebrew, *lô*) a helper fit for him." The apostle Paul understands this accurately, because in 1 Corinthians 11 he writes, "for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake" (v. 9, NASB). Eve's role, and the purpose that God had in mind when He created her, was that she would be "for him...a helper."

Yet in the same sentence God emphasizes that she is not to help him as one who is inferior to him. Rather, she is to be a helper "fit for him" and here the Hebrew word *kenegdô* means "a help corresponding to him," that is "equal and adequate to himself."<sup>25</sup> So Eve was created as a helper, but as a helper who was Adam's equal. She was created as one who differed from him, but who differed from him in ways that exactly complemented who Adam was.

7. *The conflict*: The curse brought a distortion of previous roles, not the introduction of new roles. After Adam and Eve sinned, God spoke the following words of judgment to Eve:

To the woman he said,  
"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
in pain you shall bring forth children.  
Your desire shall be for your husband,  
and he shall rule over you." (Genesis 3:16)

The word translated "desire" is an unusual Hebrew word, *teshûqāh*. In this context and *in this specific construction* it probably implies an aggressive desire, perhaps a desire to conquer

24. I am taking this analogy from Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality," 104.

25. This is the definition given in BDB, 617.

or rule over, or else an urge or impulse the woman has to oppose her husband, an impulse to act against him. This sense is seen in the only other occurrence of *teshûqâh* in all the books of Moses and the only other occurrence of *teshûqâh* plus the preposition 'el in the whole Bible. That occurrence is in the very next chapter of Genesis, in Genesis 4:7. God says to Cain, "Sin is crouching at the door. Its *desire* is for you, but you must rule over it."

Here the sense is very clear. God pictures sin like a wild animal waiting outside Cain's door, waiting to pounce on him and overpower him. In that sense, sin's "desire" or "instinctive urge" is "against" him.<sup>26</sup>

What a remarkable parallel this is to Genesis 3:16! In the Hebrew text, six words are the same words and found in the same order in both verses. It is almost as if this other usage is put here by the author so that we would know how to understand the meaning of the term in Genesis 3:16. The expression in 4:7 has the sense, "desire, urge, impulse *against*" (or perhaps "desire to conquer, desire to rule over"). And that sense fits very well in Genesis 3:16 also.<sup>27</sup>

26. The ESV provides an alternative translation "*against*" for *teshûqâh* + 'el in Genesis 3:16 and 4:7. This seems to be the most accurate rendering. The preposition 'el can take the meaning "against," as is clear from the next verse, Genesis 4:8, where "Cain rose up against ('el) his brother Abel, and killed him." BDB give sense 4 for 'el as: "Where the motion or direction implied appears from the context to be of a hostile character, 'el = against." They cite Genesis 4:8 and several other verses.

27. The only other occurrence of *teshûqâh* in the entire Hebrew Old Testament (apart from Genesis 3:16 and 4:7) is found in Song of Solomon 7:10 (v. 11 in Hebrew), "I am my beloved's, and his *desire* is for me." In this context the word does not indicate a hostile or aggressive desire, but indicates the man's sexual desire for his wife.

I had previously argued that a positive kind of "desire to conquer" could be understood in Song of Solomon 7:10, indicating the man's desire to have a kind of influence over his beloved that is appropriate to initiating and consummating the sexual relationship, an influence such that she would receive and yield to his amorous advances. This sense would be represented by the paraphrase, "His desire is to have me yield to him."

However, I am now inclined to think that *teshûqâh* itself does not signify anything so specific as "desire to conquer" but rather something more general such as "urge, impulse." (The word takes that sense in Mishnaic Hebrew, as indicated by David Talley in footnote 30 below.) In that case, Genesis 3:16 and 4:7 have the sense "desire, urge, impulse *against*" and Song of Solomon 7:10 has the sense "desire, urge, impulse *for*." This seems to me to fit better with the context of Song of Solomon 7:10.

The difference in meaning may also be signaled by a different construction. The Genesis and Song of Solomon examples are not exactly parallel linguistically, because a different preposition follows the verb in Song of Solomon, and therefore the sense may be somewhat different. In Song of Solomon 7:11 (Hebrew), *teshûqâh* is followed by 'al, but it is followed by 'el in Genesis 3:16 and 4:7.

(The preposition 'al is misprinted as 'el in Song of Solomon 7:11 as cited in BDB, 1003. BDB apparently do this because they follow the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* editors [1334] who in the margin suggest changing the Hebrew text to 'el, but this is mere conjecture with no manuscript support. The LXX confirms the difference, translating with *pros* for 'el in Genesis 3:16 and 4:7, but with *epi* for 'al in Song of Solomon 7:11, which is what we would expect with a literal translation.)

In any case, while the sense in Song of Solomon 7:10 (11) is different, both the context and the construction are different, and this example is removed in time and authorship from Genesis 3:16 and must be given lower importance in understanding the meaning of the word in Genesis. Surely the sense cannot be "sexual desire" in Genesis 4:7, and it seems very unlikely in the context of Genesis 3:16 as well.

Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (1988), 34–35, argues that *teshûqâh* in Genesis 3:16 means "turning" and the passage means that Eve's "turning" would be away from God and toward her husband. The problem is that the text has no hint of any sense of "away from God," and Kaiser has to import that idea into the verse. In addition, the lexicons show no support for even considering Kaiser's meaning for *teshûqâh* as a possibility (see BDB and *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon [HALOT]*, as well as *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology [NIDOTTE]*, under *teshûqâh*). However, Kaiser rightly argues that the meaning "sexual desire" is contrary both to the context in Genesis 3:16 and to the rest of the Old Testament.

Some have assumed that the “desire” in Genesis 3:16 refers to sexual desire.<sup>28</sup> But that is highly unlikely because (1) the entire Bible views sexual desire within marriage as something positive, not as something evil or something that God imposed as a judgment; and (2) surely Adam and Eve had sexual desire for one another prior to their sin, for God had told them to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28), and certainly He would have given the desire that corresponded to the command. So “your desire shall be for your husband” cannot refer to sexual desire. It is much more appropriate to the context of a curse to understand this as an aggressive desire *against* her husband, one that would bring her into conflict with him.

Then God says that Adam, “shall *rule* over you” (Genesis 3:16).<sup>29</sup> The word here—translated “rule”—is the Hebrew term *māshal*, a common term in the Old Testament that regularly if not always refers to ruling by greater power or force or strength. It is used of human military or political rulers, such as Joseph ruling over the land of Egypt (Genesis 45:26), or the Philistines ruling over Israel (Judges 14:4; 15:11), or Solomon ruling over all the kingdoms he had conquered (1 Kings 4:21). It is also used to speak of God ruling over the sea (Psalm 89:9) or God ruling over the earth generally (Psalm 66:7). Sometimes it refers to oppressive rulers who cause the people under them to suffer (Nehemiah 9:37; Isaiah 19:4). In any case, the word does not signify one who leads among equals, but rather one who rules by virtue of power and strength, and sometimes even rules harshly and selfishly.

Once we understand these two terms, we can see much more clearly what was involved in the curse that God brought to Adam and Eve as punishment for their sins. One aspect of the curse was imposing *pain on Adam’s particular area of responsibility*, raising food from the ground:

Cursed is the ground because of you;  
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.  
By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground. (Genesis 3:17–19)

Another aspect of the curse was to impose *pain on Eve’s particular area of responsibility*, the bearing of children:

28. See, for example, Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church*, 106. She claims the use of *teshûqāh* in Song of Solomon 7:10 (11), but she fails to discuss the different construction in that distant context, where *teshûqāh* is followed by ‘*al*’ rather than by ‘*el*’ as in Genesis 3:16 and 4:7.

29. Belleville says a “plausible” suggestion that “nicely fits the context” is “to read the pronoun *hû*’ as *it* (neuter), rather than *he* (masculine). The wife’s desire will be for her husband, and *it* (the desire) will rule her” (107). Belleville shows no awareness that the word for “desire” (*teshûqāh*) is not masculine or neuter but feminine, and it would ordinarily require a feminine pronoun (*hî*’) for such a meaning. The pronoun *hû*’ and the verb *yimshāl* (“he shall rule”) are both masculine, and there is a corresponding masculine noun (“your husband”) that makes good sense in the immediate context. Belleville’s suggestion simply does not match the Hebrew grammar of the verse.

"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
in pain you shall bring forth children." (Genesis 3:16)

And a third aspect of the curse was to introduce *pain and conflict into the relationship* between Adam and Eve. Prior to their sin, they had lived in the Garden of Eden in perfect harmony, yet with a leadership role belonging to Adam as the head of his family. But after the Fall, God introduced conflict in that Eve would have an inward urging and impulse to oppose Adam, to resist Adam's leadership (the verb *teshûqāh* + 'el). "Your impulse, desire will be *against* your husband." And Adam would respond with a rule over Eve that came from his greater strength and aggressiveness, a rule that was forceful and at times harsh (the verb *māshal*). "And he, because of his greater strength, will *rule* over you." There would be pain in tilling the ground, pain in bearing children, and pain and conflict in their relationship.

It is crucial at this point for us to realize that *we are never to try to increase or perpetuate the results of the curse*. We should never try to promote Genesis 3:16 as something good! In fact, the entire Bible after Genesis 3 is the story of God's working to overcome the effects of the curse that He in His justice imposed. Eventually God will bring in a new heaven and a new earth in which crops come forth abundantly from the ground (Isaiah 35:1–2; Amos 9:13; Romans 8:20–21) and in which there is no more pain or suffering (Revelation 21:4).

So we should *never* try to perpetuate the elements of the curse! We should not plant thorns and weeds in our garden, but rather overcome them. We should do everything we can to alleviate the pain of childbirth for women. And we should do everything we can to undo the conflict that comes about through women desiring to oppose or even control their husbands, and husbands ruling harshly over them.

Therefore Genesis 3:16 should never be used as a direct argument for male headship in marriage. But it does show us that the Fall brought about a *distortion* of previous roles, not the introduction of new roles. The distortion was that Eve would now rebel against her husband's authority and Adam would misuse that authority to rule forcefully and even harshly over Eve.<sup>30</sup>

**8. The restoration:** When we come to the New Testament, salvation in Christ reaffirms the creation order.

If the previous understanding of Genesis 3:16 is correct, as I believe it is, then what we would expect to find in the New Testament is a reversal of this curse. We would expect to find an *undoing* of the wife's hostile or aggressive impulses against her husband and the husband's response of harsh rule over his wife. In fact, that is exactly what we find. We read in the New Testament,

30. The understanding of Genesis 3:16 as a hostile desire, or even a desire to rule over, has gained significant support among Old Testament commentators. It was first suggested by Susan T. Foh, "What Is the Woman's Desire?" *WTJ*, 37 (1975): 376–83. David Talley says the word is attested in Samaritan and Mishnaic Hebrew "with the meaning urge, craving, impulse," and says of Foh, "Her contention that the desire is a contention for leadership, a negative usage, seems probable for Genesis 3:16" (*NIDOTTE*, 4:341, with reference to various commentators).

Wives, *submit to your husbands*, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, *love your wives*, and *do not be harsh with them*. (Colossians 3:18–19)

This command is an undoing of the impulse to oppose (Hebrew *teshûqāh* + *’el*) and the harsh rule (Hebrew *māshal*) that God imposed at the curse.

God reestablishes in the New Testament the beauty of the relationship between Adam and Eve that existed from the moment they were created. Eve was subject to Adam as the head of the family. Adam loved his wife and was not harsh with her in his leadership. That is the pattern that Paul commands husbands and wives to follow.<sup>31</sup>

*9. The mystery:* Marriage from the beginning of Creation was a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church.

When the apostle Paul discusses marriage and wishes to speak of the relationship between husband and wife, he does not look back to any sections of the Old Testament telling about the situation after sin came into the world. Rather, he looks all the way back to Genesis 2, prior to the Fall, and uses that creation order to speak of marriage:

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that *it refers to Christ and the church*. (Ephesians 5:31–32)

Now a “mystery” in Paul’s writing is something that was understood only faintly if at all in the Old Testament, but which is now made clearer in the New Testament. Here Paul makes clear the meaning of the “mystery” of marriage as God created it in the Garden of Eden. Paul is saying that the “mystery” of Adam and Eve, the meaning that was not previously understood, was that marriage “refers to Christ and the church.”

Although Adam and Eve did not know it, *their relationship represented the relationship between Christ and the church*. They were *created* to represent that relationship, and that is what *all marriages* are supposed to do. In that relationship, Adam represents Christ and Eve represents the church, because Paul says, “for the husband is the head of the wife *even as Christ is the head of the church*” (Ephesians 5:23).

Now the relationship between Christ and the church is not culturally variable. It is the same for all generations. And it is not reversible. There is a leadership or headship role that belongs to Christ and that the church does not have. Similarly, in marriage as God created it to be, there is a leadership role for the husband that the wife does not have. This relationship was there from the beginning of Creation, in the beautiful marriage between Adam and Eve in the Garden.

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31. There was a foreshadowing of these New Testament commands in several godly marriages found in the Old Testament and the honor given to women in passages such as Ruth, Esther, and Proverbs 31. But in the unfolding of God’s plan of redemption, He waited until the New Testament to give the full and explicit directions for the marriage relationship that we find in Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, and 1 Peter 3.

*10. The parallel with the Trinity:* The equality, differences, and unity between men and women reflect the equality, differences, and unity in the Trinity.

Though I list this here as the tenth argument why there were differences in roles between men and women from Creation, I will not explain it at this point because it constitutes “Key Issue #3” that I discuss further on.

*Conclusion:* Here then are ten arguments showing differences in the roles of men and women before the Fall. Some arguments are not as forceful as others, though all have some force. Some of them whisper male headship and some shout it clearly. But they form a cumulative case showing that Adam and Eve had distinct roles before the Fall, and this was God’s purpose in creating them.

## **B. But how does it work in practice?**

I would like to say something at this point about how male-female equality together with male headship work out in actual practice. The situation I know best is my own marriage, so I will speak about that briefly.

In our marriage, Margaret and I talk frequently and at length about many decisions. Sometimes these are large decisions (such as buying a house or a car), and sometimes they are small decisions (such as where we should go for a walk together). I often defer to her wishes, and she often defers to mine, because we love each other. In almost every case, each of us has some wisdom and insight that the other does not have, and we have learned to listen to each other and to place much trust in each other’s judgment. Usually we reach agreement on the decision. Very seldom will I do something that she does not think to be wise. She prays, she loves God, she is sensitive to the Lord’s leading and direction, and I greatly respect her and the wisdom God gives her.

But in every decision, whether large or small, and whether we have reached agreement or not, the responsibility to make the decision still rests with me. (I am speaking here of the decisions that involve the both of us, not the individual decisions we each make about our personal spheres of responsibility.) I do not agree with those who say that male headship only makes a difference once in ten years or so when a husband and wife can’t reach agreement. I think that male headship makes a difference in every decision that the couple makes every day of their married life. If there is genuine male headship, there is a quiet, subtle acknowledgment that the focus of the decision-making process is the husband, not the wife. And even though there will often be much discussion, and there should be much mutual respect and consideration of each other, yet ultimately the responsibility to make the decision rests with the husband. And so in our marriage, the responsibility to make the decision rests with me.

This is not because I am wiser or a more gifted leader. It is because I am the husband, and God has given me that responsibility. In the face of cultural pressures to the contrary, I will not forsake this male headship; I will not deny this male headship; I will not be embarrassed by it.



This is God-given. It is very good. It brings peace and joy to our marriage, and both Margaret and I are thankful for it.

Yet there are dangers of distortion. Putting this biblical pattern into practice is a challenge, because we can err in one direction or the other. There are errors of passivity, and there are errors of aggressiveness. This can be seen in the following chart:

	<b>Errors of passivity</b>	<b>Biblical ideal</b>	<b>Errors of aggressiveness</b>
<b>Husband</b>	Wimp	Loving, humble headship	Tyrant
<b>Wife</b>	Doormat	Joyful, intelligent submission	Usurper

The biblical ideal, in the center column, is loving, humble headship on the part of the husband, following Ephesians 5:23–33. The biblical ideal on the part of the wife is joyful, intelligent submission to and support of her husband’s leadership, in accordance with Ephesians 5:22–24 and 31–33.

On the right side of the chart, the errors of aggressiveness are those that had their beginning, as we saw, in Genesis 3:16. The husband can become selfish, harsh, and domineering and act like a “tyrant.” This is not biblical headship, but a tragic distortion of it. A wife can also demonstrate errors of aggressiveness when she resists her husband’s leadership, not supporting it but fighting against it and creating conflict every step of the way. She can become a “usurper,” something that is a tragic distortion of the biblical pattern of equality in the image of God.

On the left side of the chart are the opposite errors, the errors of passivity. A husband can abdicate his leadership and neglect his responsibilities. The children are not disciplined and he sits and watches TV and does nothing. The family is not going to church regularly and he is passive and does nothing. The family keeps going further in debt and he closes his eyes to it and does nothing. Some relative or friend is verbally harassing his wife and he does nothing. This also is a tragic distortion of the biblical pattern. He has become a “wimp.”

A wife can also commit errors of passivity. Rather than participating actively in family decisions, rather than contributing her wisdom and insight that is so much needed, her only response to every question is, “Yes, dear, whatever you say.” She knows her husband and her children are doing wrong and she says nothing. Or her husband becomes verbally or physically abusive, and she never objects to him, never seeks church discipline or civil intervention to bring about an end to the abuse. Or she never expresses her preferences about friendships or family vacations, or her opinions about people or events. She thinks what is required of her is to be “submissive” to her husband. But this also is a tragic distortion of biblical patterns. She has become a “doormat.”



Now we all have different backgrounds, personalities, and temperaments. We also have different areas of life in which sanctification is less complete. Some of us are more prone toward errors of aggressiveness, and others are more prone toward errors of passivity. We can even fall into errors of aggressiveness in our homes and errors of passivity when we visit our in-laws. Or it can be just the other way around. In order to maintain a healthy, biblical balance, we need to keep reading God's Word each day and continue to pray for God's help to obey His Word as best we can.

### **C. The man's responsibility to provide for and protect, and the woman's responsibility to care for the home and to nurture children**

There are other differences in roles in addition to headship and submission. Two other aspects of a husband's headship in marriage are the responsibility to *provide for* and to *protect* his wife and family. A corresponding responsibility for the wife is to have primary responsibility to care for *home* and *children*. Each can help the other, but there remains a primary responsibility that is not shared equally.

These responsibilities are mentioned in both the Danvers Statement and the Southern Baptist Convention/Campus Crusade for Christ statement. I will not discuss these in detail at this point, but simply note that these additional aspects of differing roles are established in Scripture. Biblical support for the husband having the primary responsibility to provide for his family and the wife having primary responsibility to care for the household and children is found in Genesis 2:15, along with 2:18–23; 3:16–19 (Eve is assumed to have the primary responsibility for child-bearing, but Adam for tilling the ground to raise food, and pain is introduced into both of their areas of responsibility); Proverbs 31:10–31, especially verses 15, 21, 27; Isaiah 4:1 (shame at the tragic undoing of the normal order); 1 Timothy 5:8 (the Greek text does not specify “any man,” but in the historical context that would have been the assumed referent except for unusual situations like a household with no father); 1 Timothy 5:10; 1 Timothy 5:3–16 (widows, not widowers, are to be supported by the church); Titus 2:5.

Biblical support for the idea that the man has the primary responsibility to protect his family is found in Deuteronomy 20:7–8 (men go forth to war, not women, here and in many Old Testament passages); 24:5; Joshua 1:14; Judges 4:8–10 (Barak does not get the glory because he insisted that a woman accompany him into battle); Nehemiah 4:13–14 (the people are to fight for their brothers, homes, wives, and children, but it does not say they are to fight for their husbands!); Jeremiah 50:37 (it is the disgrace of a nation when its warriors become women); Nahum 3:13 (“Behold, your troops are women in your midst” is a taunt of derision); Matthew 2:13–14 (Joseph is told to protect Mary and baby Jesus by taking them to Egypt); Ephesians 5:25 (a husband's love should extend even to a willingness to lay down his life for his wife, something many soldiers in battle have done throughout history to protect their families and homelands); 1 Peter 3:7 (a wife is a “weaker vessel,” and therefore the husband, as generally stronger, has a greater responsibility to use his strength to protect his wife).

In addition, there is the complete absence of evidence from the other side. Nowhere can we find Scripture encouraging women to be the primary means of support while their husbands care for the house and children. Nowhere can we find Scripture encouraging women to be the primary protectors of their husbands. Certainly women can help in these roles as time and circumstances allow (see Genesis 2:18–23), but they are not the ones primarily responsible for them.

Finally, there is the internal testimony from both men's and women's hearts. There is something in a man that says, "I don't want to be dependent on a woman to provide for me in the long term. I want to be the one responsible to provide for the family, the one my wife looks to and depends on for support." I have never met a man who does not feel some measure of shame at the idea of being supported by his wife in the long term.

I recognize that in many families there is a temporary reversal of roles due to involuntary unemployment or while the husband is getting further education, and in those circumstances these are entirely appropriate arrangements; yet the longer they go on, the more strain they put on a marriage. I also recognize that a husband's permanent disability, or the absence of a husband in the home, can create a necessity for the wife to be the primary provider, but families in which that happens often testify to the unusual stress it brings and that they wish it did not have to be so.

On the other hand, there is something in a woman that says, "I want my husband to provide for me, to give me the security of knowing that we will have enough to buy groceries and pay the bills. It feels right to me to look to him and depend on him for that responsibility." I have never met a woman who did not want her husband to provide that sense of security for her.<sup>32</sup>

### **KEY ISSUE #3: THE EQUALITY AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN REFLECT THE EQUALITY AND DIFFERENCES IN THE TRINITY**

This point is at the heart of the controversy, and it shows why much more is at stake than the meaning of one or two words or one or two verses in the Bible. Much more is at stake even than how we live in our marriages. Here we are talking about the nature of God Himself.

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul writes,

But I want you to understand that the *head* of every man is Christ, the *head* of a wife is her husband, and the *head* of Christ is God. (v. 3)

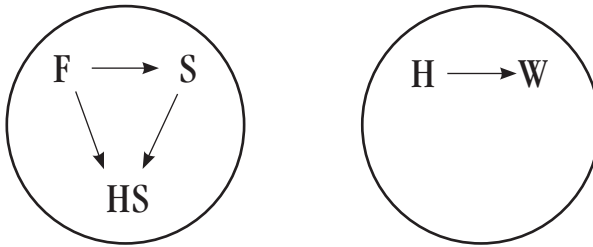
In this verse, "head" refers to one who is in a position of authority over the other, as this Greek word (*kephalē*) uniformly does whenever it is used in ancient literature to say that one

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32. For some further discussion, see Piper, "A Vision of Biblical Complementarity," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 31–59. See also Dorothy Patterson, "The High Calling of Wife and Mother in Biblical Perspective," 364–77, in the same volume.

person is “head of” another person or group.<sup>33</sup> So Paul is here referring to a relationship of authority between God the Father and God the Son, and he is making a parallel between that relationship in the Trinity and the relationship between the husband and wife in marriage. This is an important parallel because it shows that there can be equality and differences between persons at the same time. We can illustrate that in the following diagram, where the arrows indicate authority over the person to whom the arrow points:

DIAGRAM 1A



Just as the Father and Son are equal in deity and equal in all their attributes, but different in role, so husband and wife are equal in personhood and value, but they are different in the roles God has given them. Just as God the Son is eternally subject to the authority of God the Father, so God has planned that wives be subject to the authority of their husbands.

Scripture frequently speaks of the Father–Son relationship within the Trinity, a relationship in which the Father “gave” His only Son (John 3:16) and “sent” the Son into the world (John 3:17, 34; 4:34; 8:42; Galatians 4:4), a relationship in which the Father “predestined us” to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29; cf. 1 Peter 1:2) and “chose us” in the Son “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4). The Son is obedient to the commands of the Father (John 12:49), and says that He comes to do “the will of him who sent me” (John 4:34; 6:38).

These relationships are never reversed. Never does Scripture say that the Son sends the Father into the world, or that the Holy Spirit sends the Father or the Son into the world, or that the Father obeys the commands of the Son or of the Holy Spirit. Never does Scripture say that the Son predestined us to be conformed to the image of the Father. The role of planning, directing, sending, and commanding the Son belongs to the Father only.

And these relationships are eternal, for the Father predestined us in the Son “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4), requiring that the Father has eternally been Father, and the Son has eternally been Son. If the Father’s love is seen in that He “gave his only Son” (John 3:16), then the Father had to be Father and the Son had to be Son before He came into

33. See my extended discussion of the meaning of *kephalē* in Appendix 4, pp. 552–99.

the world. The Father did not give someone who was just another divine person in the Trinity, but He gave the one who was His only Son, one who eternally had been His Son.

It was also this way in the Creation of the world, where the Father initiated and commanded and created “through” the Son. The Son was the powerful Word of God who carried out the commands of the Father, for “all things were made through him” (John 1:3). The Son is the one “through whom” God created the world (Hebrews 1:2). All things were created by the Father working through the Son, for “there is one God, the Father, *from* whom are all things...and one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through* whom are all things” (1 Corinthians 8:6). Nowhere does Scripture reverse this and say that the Son created “through” the Father.

The Son sits at the Father’s right hand (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 1:3, 13; 1 Peter 3:22); the Father does not sit at the Son’s right hand. And for all eternity, the Son will be subject to the Father, for after the last enemy, death, is destroyed, “the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28).

We see from these passages then that *the idea of headship and submission within a personal relationship* did not begin with the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood in 1987. Nor did it begin with some writings of the apostle Paul in the first century. Nor did it begin with a few patriarchal men in a patriarchal society in the Old Testament. Nor did the idea of headship and submission begin with Adam and Eve’s fall into sin in Genesis 3. In fact, the idea of headship and submission did not even begin with the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 and 2.

No, the idea of headship and submission existed *before Creation*. It began in the relationship between the Father and Son in the Trinity. The Father has eternally had a leadership role, an authority to initiate and direct, that the Son does not have. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is subject to both the Father and Son and plays yet a different role in Creation and in the work of salvation.

When did the idea of headship and submission begin, then? *The idea of headship and submission never began!* It has *always existed* in the eternal nature of God Himself. And in this most basic of all authority relationships, authority is not based on gifts or ability (for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal in attributes and perfections). It is just there. Authority belongs to the Father, not because He is wiser or because He is a more skillful leader, but just because He is the Father.

Authority and submission between the Father and the Son, and between Father and Son and the Holy Spirit, is a fundamental difference (or probably *the* fundamental difference) between the persons of the Trinity. They don’t differ in any attributes, but only in how they relate to each other. And that relationship is one of leadership and authority on the one hand and voluntary, willing, joyful submission to that authority on the other hand.

We can learn from this relationship among the members of the Trinity that submission to a rightful authority is a noble virtue. It is a privilege. It is something good and desirable. It is the virtue that the eternal Son of God has demonstrated *forever*. It is His glory, the glory of the Son as He relates to His Father.

In modern society, we tend to think if you are a person who has authority over another, that's a good thing. If you are someone who has to submit to an authority, that's a bad thing. But that is the world's viewpoint, and it is not true. Submission to a rightful authority is a good and noble and wonderful thing, because it reflects the interpersonal relationships within God Himself.

We can say then that a relationship of authority and submission between equals, with mutual giving of honor, is the most fundamental and most glorious interpersonal relationship in the universe. Such a relationship allows there to be interpersonal differences without "better" or "worse," without "more important" and "less important."

And when we begin to dislike the very idea of authority and submission—not distortions and abuses, but *the very idea*—we are tampering with something very deep. We are beginning to dislike God Himself.

Now this truth about the Trinity creates a problem for egalitarians. They try to force people to choose between equality and authority. They say, "If you have male headship, then you can't be equal. Or if you are equal, then you can't have male headship." And our response is that you can have both: just look at the Trinity. Within the being of God, you have both equality and authority.

In reply to this, egalitarians should have said, "Okay, we agree on this much. In God you *can* have equality and differences at the same time." In fact, some egalitarians have said this very thing.<sup>34</sup> But some prominent egalitarians have taken a different direction, one that is very troubling. Both Gilbert Bilezikian and Stanley Grenz have now written that they think there is "mutual submission" within the Trinity. They say that the Father also submits to the Son.<sup>35</sup> This is their affirmation even though no passage of Scripture affirms such a relationship, and even though this has never been the orthodox teaching of the church throughout two thousand years. But so deep is their commitment to an egalitarian view of men and women within marriage, that they will modify the doctrine of the Trinity, and remake the Trinity in the image of egalitarian marriage, if it seems necessary to maintain their position.

34. See Craig Keener's affirmation of an eternal subordination of the Son to the Father in "Is Subordination Within the Trinity Really Heresy? A Study of John 5:18 in Context," *TrinJ* 20 NS (1999): 39–51.

35. For a fuller discussion of egalitarian tampering with the doctrine of the Trinity, see Ware, "Tampering with the Trinity: Does the Son Submit to His Father?" in Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (2002), 233–53. The primary statements by Bilezikian and Grenz are found in Bilezikian, "Hermeneutical Bungee-Jumping: Subordination in the Godhead," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 40/1 (March 1997): 57–68; and Grenz, "Theological Foundations for Male-Female Relationships," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 41/4 (December 1998): 615–30.

A survey of historical evidence showing affirmation of the eternal subordination of the Son to the authority of the Father is found in Stephen D. Kovach and Peter R. Schemm Jr., "A Defense of the Doctrine of the Eternal Subordination of the Son," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 42/3 (September 1999): 461–76. See also Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 248–52.

See also my discussion of egalitarian claim 10.3, "mutual submission in the Trinity," in chapter 10 (429–33; see also 405–29).

## KEY ISSUE #4: THE EQUALITY AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN ARE VERY GOOD

In today's hostile culture, we might be embarrassed to talk about God-given differences between men and women. We don't want to be attacked or laughed at by others. Perhaps we fear that someone will take offense if we talk clearly about God-given differences between men and women. (However, there is more acknowledgment of male/female differences in the general culture today than there was a few years ago. A number of secular books, such as John Gray's *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, have once again made it acceptable to talk about *at least some* differences between men and women, though the idea of the husband's authority and the wife's submission within marriage still seems to be taboo in the general culture.)<sup>36</sup>

The fundamental statement of the excellence of the way God made us as men and women is found in Genesis 1:31: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, *it was very good*." Just four verses after the Bible tells us that God made us "male and female," it tells us that God looked at everything He had made, *including Adam and Eve created in His image*, and His evaluation of what He saw was that it was "very good." The way God created us as men and women, equal in His image and different in roles, was very good. And if it is very good, then we can make some other observations about the created order.

This created order is *fair*. Our egalitarian friends argue that it's "not fair" for men to have a leadership role in the family simply because they are men. But if this difference is based on God's assignment of roles from the beginning, then it is fair. Does the Son say to the Father, "It's not fair for You to be in charge simply because You are the Father"? Does the Son say to the Father, "You've been in charge for fifteen billion years, and now it's My turn for the next fifteen billion"? No! Absolutely not! Rather, He fulfilled the psalm that said, "I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8; compare Hebrews 10:7). And of His relationship with the Father, He said, "I always do the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8:29). He said, "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38). The order of relationships within the Trinity is fair. And the order of relationships established by God for marriage is fair.

This created order is also *best for us*, because it comes from an all-wise Creator. This created order truly honors men and women. It does not lead to abuse, but guards against it, because both men and women are equal in value before God. It does not suppress women's gifts and wisdom and insight, as people sometimes have done in the past, but it encourages them.

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36. See Gray, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (1992), and several other books written by Gray on a similar theme; see also Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand* (1990). I am not, of course, endorsing everything in these books.

This created order is also a *mystery*. I have been married to one very wonderful woman for thirty-four years. I cannot understand her. Just when I think I understand her, she surprises me again. Marriage is a challenge! And it's also very fun. But in our relationships with each other as men and women, there will always be elements of surprise, always elements of mystery, always aspects of difference that we cannot fully understand but simply enjoy.

This created order is also *beautiful*. God took delight in it and thought it was “very good.” When it is functioning in the way that God intended, we will enjoy this relationship and delight in it, because there is a Godlike quality about it. And though some elements of society have been pushing in the opposite direction for several decades, there is much evidence from “natural law”—from our observation of the world and our inner sense of right and wrong—that different roles within marriage are *right*. This is what we meant when we said in the Danvers Statement, “Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God and should find an echo in every human heart” (Affirmation 2). God’s created order for marriage is beautiful because it is God’s way to bring amazing *unity* to people who are as *different* as men and women are.

The beauty of God’s created order for marriage finds expression in our sexuality within marriage. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). From the beginning, God designed our sexuality so that it reflects unity and differences and beauty all at the same time. As husband and wife, we are most attracted to the parts of each other that are the most different. Our deepest unity—including a physical and emotional and spiritual unity—comes at the point where we are most different. In our physical union as God intended it, there is no dehumanization of women and no emasculation of men, but there is equality and honor for both the husband and the wife. And there is our deepest human joy, and our deepest expression of unity.

This means that sexuality within marriage is precious to God. It is designed by Him to show *equality* and *difference* and *unity* all at the same time. It is a great mystery how this can be so, and it is also a great blessing and joy. Moreover, God has ordained that from that sexual union comes the most amazing, the most astounding event—the creation of a new human being in the image of God!

Within this most intimate of human relationships, we show equality and difference and unity and much Godlikeness all at once. Glory be to God!

## KEY ISSUE #5: THIS IS A MATTER OF OBEDIENCE TO THE BIBLE

Why did the Southern Baptist Convention in June 1998, for the first time since 1963, add to their statement of faith that men and women are equal in God’s image but different in their roles in marriage?<sup>37</sup> Why, shortly after that, did over one hundred Christian leaders sign a full-page ad

37. This is the text of the June 1998 addition to the Southern Baptist Convention’s statement, “The Baptist Faith and Message”: XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.



in *USA Today* saying, "Southern Baptists, you are right. We stand with you."<sup>38</sup> Why did Campus Crusade for Christ, after forty years of no change in their doctrinal policies, endorse a similar statement as the policy of their organization in 1999?<sup>39</sup>

I think these things indicate that many Christian leaders are beginning to say, "The egalitarian view just *cannot* be proven from Scripture."

Thirty years ago there were many questions about differences in interpretation, and both the egalitarian position and the complementarian position were found within evangelical groups. Over the last thirty years, we have seen extensive discussion and argument, and we have seen hundreds of articles and books published.

But now people are beginning to look at the situation differently. The egalitarian viewpoint, which was novel within evangelicalism twenty-five years ago, has had great opportunity to defend itself. The arguments are all out on the table, and the detailed word studies, the technical questions of grammar, and the extensive studies of background literature and history have been carried out. There are dozens and dozens of egalitarian books denying differences in male and female roles within marriage, but they now seem to be repeating the same arguments over and over. The egalitarians have not had any new breakthroughs, any new discoveries that lend substantial strength to their position.

So now many people in leadership are deciding that the egalitarian view is just not what the Bible teaches. And they are deciding that it will not be taught in their churches. Then they add to their statements of faith, and the controversy is essentially over, for that group at least, for the next ten or twenty years.

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Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26–28; 2:15–25; 3:1–20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26–28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1–8; 127–128; 139:13–16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15–20; 6:20–22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6, 15; 23:13–14; 24:3; 29:15, 17; 31:10–31; Ecclesiastes 4:9–12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14–16; Matthew 5:31–32; 18:2–5; 19:3–9; Mark 10:6–12; Romans 1:18–32; 1 Corinthians 7:1–16; Ephesians 5:21–33; 6:1–4; Colossians 3:18–21; 1 Timothy 5:8, 14; 2 Timothy 1:3–5; Titus 2:3–5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1–7.

In June 2000, the SBC added the following sentence to Article VI, "The Church": "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

38. *USA Today*, August 26, 1998.

39. See above, 28–29, for a discussion of the Campus Crusade policy statement.



James Dobson saw the wisdom of this. After Campus Crusade announced its policy in June 1999, in affirming and adding to the Southern Baptist statement, Dr. Dobson said on the front page of his September 1999 newsletter, “We applaud our friends at Campus Crusade for taking this courageous stance.” Then he quoted the statement in full and added,

It is our prayer that additional denominations and parachurch organizations will join with SBC in adopting this statement on marriage and the family. Now is the time for Christian people to identify themselves unreservedly with the truths of the Bible, whether popular or not.<sup>40</sup>

Our egalitarian friends were greatly troubled by Dr. Dobson’s statement. In the Spring 2000 issue of their newsletter, *Mutuality*, Kim Pettit objected that “endorsement of the SBC statement by an increasing number of Christian organizations means dissenters are excluded as this becomes a confessional issue.”<sup>41</sup>

I do not think that the SBC statement or others like it will mean that people who hold another view will be excluded from fellowship in the church. But I do think that people who hold an egalitarian view will be excluded from many teaching and governing positions. Because I think that the egalitarian view is both harmful and contrary to Scripture, I think this is an appropriate result, and I think it is the one that was intended by those who added this statement to the “Baptist Faith and Message” in 1998.

People in the middle of turning points in history do not always realize it. I believe that today we are right in the middle of a turning point in the history of the Church. Christian organizations right now are deciding these issues. They are making commitments and establishing those commitments in their policies. Some organizations are affirming biblical principles, as the Southern Baptists did. Others are establishing egalitarian principles as part of their policies, as Willow Creek Community Church has done.<sup>42</sup> There is a sifting, a sorting, a dividing going on within the evangelical world, and I believe that institutions that adopt an egalitarian position will drift further and further from faithfulness to the Bible on other issues as well.

What is “the way forward” for biblical manhood and womanhood? I believe the way forward is to add a clear statement to the governing document of your church, your denomination, or your parachurch organization.

Why should we do this? First, because it affects so much of life. As Christians, we can differ over the tribulation or the millennium and still live largely the same way. But differences over this issue affect people’s lives and result in “increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large,” to use the words of the Danvers Statement (Affirmation 10). Where biblical patterns are not followed, husbands and wives have no clear

40. *Family News from Dr. James Dobson*, September 1999, 1–2.

41. Kim Pettit, “Why I Disagree with Dobson and the SBC,” *Mutuality* (Spring 2000), 17.

42. See Grudem, “Willow Creek Enforces Egalitarianism,” in *CBMW News* 1, 3–6 (available at [www.cbmw.org](http://www.cbmw.org)).

guidance on how to act within their marriages, and there is increasing stress that brings harmful and even destructive consequences to families.

Second, egalitarians have run out of new exegetical arguments, and they simply are not winning the arguments on the basis of the biblical text (for details see chapters 3–12). Their books increasingly deal not with detailed analyses of biblical texts, but with broad generalizations about Scripture, then with arguments from experience or arguments from philosophical concepts like fairness, or from the supposed negative results of a complementarian position (such as spousal abuse, which we strongly oppose and condemn as well).<sup>43</sup> But it seems to me, and increasingly it seems to many others, that egalitarians have simply lost the key arguments on the meaning of the biblical text, and they have no more arguments to make.

A third reason why I think organizations should add a statement on biblical manhood and womanhood to their governing documents is that I believe this is a watershed issue. Many years ago Francis Schaeffer called the doctrine of biblical inerrancy a watershed issue because the position that people took on inerrancy determined where their teachings would lead in succeeding years. Schaeffer said that the first people who make a mistake on a watershed issue take only a very small step, and in all other areas of life they are godly and orthodox. This was the case with a number of scholars who denied inerrancy in principle but did not change their beliefs on much of anything else. However, the next generation of leaders and scholars who come after them take the error much further. They see the implications of the change, and they are consistent in working it out in other matters of doctrine and practice, and they fall into greater and greater deviation from the teachings of the Bible.



I believe it is the same with this issue today. This controversy is the key to deeper issues and deeper commitments that touch every part of life (a number of these will be discussed later in this book). Though many of our egalitarian friends today do not adopt the other implications of their view, their followers will, and the next generation of leaders will go much further in the denial of the truths of Scripture or in their failure to be subject to Scripture in other parts of life.

I said earlier that I believe one reason God allowed this controversy into the church at this time is so that we could correct wrongful male chauvinism in our churches and families. I think another reason God has allowed this controversy into the church is to test our hearts. Will we be faithful to Him and obey His Word or not? God often allows false teaching to spread among His people as a means of testing us, to see what our response will be.

In the Old Testament, God allowed false prophets to come among the people, but He had told them, “you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. *For the*

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43. I still regret, and still cannot understand, why the board of directors of CBE declined to issue a joint statement with the CBMW on the issue of abuse. CBMW adopted the statement in November 1994 and has continued to distribute it widely through its literature and on its website. The letter from CBE in which they declined to issue a statement jointly with us can be found in *CBMW News* 1:1 (August 1995), 3, and is available at [www.cbmw.org](http://www.cbmw.org).

	THE EFFEMINATE LEFT	
	<i>No Differences:</i> “all is one”	<i>Egalitarianism:</i> removing or denying many differences between men and women
God	God equals creation, God as mother, Sophia worship, New Age worship	mutual submission in the Trinity 
Man, Woman	emasculation of men, defeminization of women	no gender-based role differences in marriage
Marriage	same-sex marriages approved	mutual submission, often husband as wimp and wife as usurper
Children	children murdered, abortion supported by women who reject feminine roles	children raised with too little discipline, little respect for authority
Family Responsibilities	no family—just “society”	all responsibilities shared equally between husband and wife or divided according to gifts and interests
Sex	homosexuality, lesbianism;	men become unmasculine, unattractive to women; women become unfeminine, unattractive to men;
	violent opposition to God’s plan for sex as only between a man and woman	ambivalence toward sex
Natural Desires	temptation: unlimited same-sex activity	moving “contrary to nature” (Romans 1:26) 
Religion	feminized religion in churches; pantheism	no governing or teaching roles in church reserved for men
Authority	hatred of authority	suspicion of authority
Sports	no competition: “everybody wins”	anticompetition
Crime	no respect for authority, rampant crime, especially by frustrated, angry men	criminal seen as victim to be helped, not punished; punishment long delayed
Property	no private property: all possessions equalized	no one is allowed to be very rich; large-scale dependence on welfare state and government
Education	all-male schools prohibited by law; prohibitions against educating boys and girls separately	systematic pressure to make boys and girls do equally well in all subjects

**Please note:** This chart contains many generalizations and is only meant to show broad tendencies. Most people and many religious from adopting all aspects of non-biblical views. Therefore this chart certainly does not imply that every person or religious

	THE COMPLEMENTARIAN MIDDLE		THE VIOLENT RIGHT
	<i>Equality and Differences and Unity:</i> emphasizing both equality and differences between men and women	<i>Male Dominance:</i> overemphasizing the differences between men and women	<i>No Equality:</i> “might makes right”
	God as Trinity Father, Son, Holy Spirit are of equal value with different roles	Arianism: Son and Holy Spirit are not fully God	God as one person, not a Trinity, not three persons; harsh, unloving warrior-god (Allah)
	husband and wife have equal value but different roles	men are better than women; excessive competitiveness to show women are inferior	men as brutes; women as objects; dehumanization of women
	husband: loving, humble headship; wife: intelligent, joyful submission to husband	husband as harsh, selfish dictator; wife as doormat	polygamy, harems, female infanticide
	children loved, cared for, valued, raised with discipline and love	children raised with harsh discipline, little love or compassion	children murdered, abortion supported by men who reject masculine responsibility for family
	husband: responsible to lead, provide for, protect; wife: responsible to help husband by managing household and nurturing children	wives forbidden to have a job outside the home or to vote or own property	men have all power; women and children are to serve them
	monogamous, equally fulfilling intercourse as the deepest expression of a great “mystery”: equality and differences and unity!	pornography, lust, adultery	violence against women, rape
	positive delight in sex as a gift from God	excessive attention to sex	violent opposition to God’s plan for sex as only within marriage
	natural desires fulfilled; men and women have deep sense of acting as God made them to act	moving in exaggeration and distortion of nature →	temptation: unlimited, unequal sexual activity
	some governing and teaching roles in church restricted to men	all ministry done by men; women’s gifts squelched; Crusades	militant forms of Islam; religion advanced by violence
	authority exercised within boundaries	overuse of authority	abuse of authority
	competition with fairness and rules: winners honored, losers respected	excessive competition: losers humiliated	violent harm to opponents; gladiators fight to the death
	punishment is speedy, fair; aims at justice plus restoration of criminal	repressive government, little freedom, debtor’s prisons	excessive punishment, dehumanization of criminals (cut off hand of thief); little crime, but no freedom
	laws protect private property and care for poor; more work and skill earns more wealth; equal opportunity for all	women cannot own property	slavery; dehumanization of the poor and weak; all property in the hands of few
	boys and girls both educated, but different preferences, abilities, and sense of calling respected	boys given preferential treatment in schools	girls not allowed to be educated

systems hold mixed views and have inconsistencies in thinking. Moreover, conscience, social pressure, and the Bible often restrain people system within each column holds to everything in that column. This chart may be duplicated for teaching purposes without charge.

*LORD your God is testing you*, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 13:3). Now I am certainly not saying that egalitarians are the same as those who advocated the serving of other gods in the Old Testament, for egalitarians within evangelicalism do worship Jesus Christ as their Savior. But I am saying that there is a principle of God’s actions in history that we can see in Deuteronomy 13:3, and that is that God often allows various kinds of false teaching to exist in the church, probably in every generation, and by these false teachings God tests His people to see whether they will be faithful to His Word or not. In this generation, one of those tests is whether we will be faithful to God in the teaching of His Word on matters of manhood and womanhood.

A similar idea is found in 1 Corinthians 11:19: “For there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.” When divisions and controversies arise in the church, people who make the right choices about the division eventually become “recognized” or are made “evident” (NASB). Others make wrong choices and thereby disqualify themselves from leadership. Charles Hodge wrote about this verse, “By the prevalence of disorders and other evils in the church, God puts his people to the test. They are tried as gold in the furnace, and their genuineness is made to appear.”<sup>44</sup>

Today, by the controversy over manhood and womanhood, God is testing all of His people, all of His churches. The egalitarian alternative would be so easy to adopt in today’s culture, and it can appear on the surface to make so little difference. But will we remain faithful to the Word of God?

## **KEY ISSUE #6: THIS CONTROVERSY IS MUCH BIGGER THAN WE REALIZE, BECAUSE IT TOUCHES ALL OF LIFE**

The question of biblical manhood and womanhood is the focal point in a tremendous battle of worldviews. In that battle, biblical Christianity is being attacked simultaneously by two opponents representing the dominant ideas in the cultures of the world. The opponent on the “Effeminate Left” may be called “No Differences,” and its slogan is, “all is one.” The opponent on the “Violent Right,” may be called “No Equality,” and its slogan is, “might makes right.”<sup>45</sup>

The chart on pages 54–55 shows how a biblical view of men and women, the “Complementarian Middle,” stands in contrast to these opponents. For example, a biblical view of God includes equality and differences and unity. God is a Trinity where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have equal value and different roles, and they have absolute unity in the one being of God.

44. Hodge, *An Exposition of 1 and 2 Corinthians* (1972), 125.

45. The groundbreaking ideas of Peter Jones and Dan Heimbach, fellow members of the CBMW, provided the fundamental concepts that led to this material. I am grateful for their contributions, though the specific applications that follow are my own. See the chapters by Jones and Heimbach in Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*.

*The Effeminate Left Column:* On the far left, the differences in the persons of God are abolished and the differences between God and the Creation are abolished because “all is one.” God then is viewed as equal to the Creation, and people will worship the earth or parts of the earth as God (or as our “Mother”). Much New Age worship takes this form, as does much eastern religion, where the goal is to seek unity with the universe.

When we follow the theme that there are “No Differences” into the area of manhood and womanhood, the attempt to obliterate differences leads to the emasculation of men and the defeminization of women. Men become more like women and women become more like men, because “all is one.”

Within marriage, if there are no differences, then same sex “marriages” are approved. Women who reject feminine roles will support abortion. Since there are no distinct roles for a child’s father and mother, there’s no longer any need to have children raised by the family, but rather “society” can take care of raising children. Within the realm of sexuality, homosexuality and lesbianism are approved. The chart details how the idea that there should be “No Differences” but that “all is one” will also work out in feminized religion within churches, in hatred of authority (for if someone has more authority, then all is not one), in no competition in sports (for if we have “winners” and “losers” then all is not one), in no respect for authority in the civil realm (with an increase in rampant crime), with attempts to abolish private property and equalize possessions (for no one can be different, but all should be one), and with attempts to prohibit all-male schools or prohibit educating boys and girls separately. These are the tendencies that follow once we adopt the conviction that “all is one.” From this perspective, there are no differences between persons in the being of God, and there should be no differences between men and women either.

*The Egalitarianism Column:* The egalitarian viewpoint within evangelicalism tends toward this direction in many areas. It tends to remove or deny many differences between men and women. Egalitarians have begun to deny eternal personal distinctions among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to argue rather for “mutual submission” within the Trinity. They deny that there are any gender-based role differences in marriage.<sup>46</sup> Within marriage, an egalitarian view tends toward abolishing differences and advocates “mutual submission,” which often results in the husband acting as a wimp and the wife as a usurper. Because this perspective tends in the direction of a deep-seated opposition to most authority, the drive toward “sameness” often results in children

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46. There was an amusing, but very revealing, suggestion for a new title to the book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* in the CBE publication *Mutuality*: In an imaginary conversation in a bookstore, the writer suggested that a better title for a book about men and women would be, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus, But Some Men Are from Venus and Some Women Are from Mars, and All of God’s Children Have Both Mars and Venus Qualities Within Them So Why Not Just Say that Men and Women Are from the Earth, and Let’s Get About the Business of Developing the Unique God-given Mars/Venus Qualities That God Has Given All of Us for the Sake of the Kingdom* (Jim Banks, *Mutuality* [May 1998], 3). What was so revealing about this humorous suggestion was the way it showed that egalitarians seem compelled to oppose any differences between men and women other than those that are purely physical.

being raised with too little discipline and too little respect for authority. Within the family, there will be a tendency toward sharing all responsibilities equally between husband and wife, or toward dividing responsibilities according to gifts and interests, not according to roles as specified by Scripture. Within the realm of human sexuality, tendencies to deny the differences between men and women will often result in men becoming unmasculine and unattractive to women and women becoming unfeminine and unattractive to men. There will often be ambivalence toward sex.

The chart shows how within the realm of religion the egalitarian view supports the idea that no governing or teaching roles within the church should be reserved for men (for there should be “No Differences”). Within sports, this viewpoint that attempts to deny differences would tend to oppose competition and think of it as evil rather than good. With respect to crime, the criminal is seen as a victim to be helped and not punished, and punishment is long delayed. As far as private property is concerned, because there are tendencies to abolish differences, no one would be allowed to be very rich, and there would be large-scale dependence on the welfare state and on government. Within education, there would be systematic pressure to make boys and girls participate equally and do equally well in all subjects and all activities, attempting to forcibly eradicate any patterns of natural preferences and aptitudes for some kinds of activities by boys, and some kinds by girls. All of this tends to deny differences between men and women.

*The Violent Right Column:* But there are opposite errors as well. The opponent on the far right side of the chart is “No Equality,” and the dominant idea from this perspective is that there is no equality between persons who are different. Rather, the stronger person is more valuable, and the weaker person is devalued, for “might makes right.” In this view, God is not viewed as a Trinity but as one person who is all-powerful. Often God is viewed as a harsh, unloving warrior God, as in a common Islamic view of Allah. Since “might makes right” and the weaker person is considered inferior, the relationships between men and women are distorted as well. Men begin to act as brutes and they treat women as objects. This view results in a dehumanizing of women. Whereas the “No Differences” error on the far left results in the destruction of men, this “No Equality” error on the far right results in the destruction of women.

Within marriage, the idea that there is no equality in value between men and women will lead to polygamy and harems in which one man will have many wives. There is no concern to value women equally, for “might makes right,” and men are stronger. This view will also lead to female infanticide in which girls are put to death because people prefer to have boys. With regard to children, in this “No Equality” viewpoint, men who reject masculine responsibility to care for their families will support abortion and encourage the murder of unborn children. Within the family, if there is no equality in value before God, men will have all the power, and women and children will simply exist to serve them. Within the realm of sexuality, the “No Equality” error results in violence against women and rape.

The chart explains how this viewpoint also works out in religion, where religion is advanced by violence and force (as in militant forms of Islam). The view that there need be no equality of



value between persons results in the destruction of people who have less power or less authority, so authority is abused as a result. Within sports, this viewpoint leads to violent harm to opponents, and even to gladiators fighting to the death. (The increasing popularity of violent and harmful interpersonal combat programs on television is a manifestation of this tendency.) As for criminal justice, this viewpoint will lead to excessive punishment and dehumanization of criminals (such as cutting off the hand of a thief, or putting people to death for expressing different religious beliefs). There will often be little outward crime in the society, but there will be little freedom for people as well. As far as private property is concerned, there will be slavery and dehumanization of the poor and weak, while all property is held in the hands of a powerful few. In education, the “No Equality” viewpoint would result in girls not being allowed to obtain an education.

*The Male Dominance Column:* Whenever a “Male Dominance” view is expressed within the church or society, there are disturbing tendencies leading in the direction of “No Equality,” and advocating that “might makes right.” This viewpoint overemphasizes the differences between men and women and does not treat women as having equal value to men, nor does it treat those under authority as having equal value to those who have authority. With respect to a view of God, this view, that might be called the “domineering right,” would be parallel to Arianism (the view that the Son and Holy Spirit are not fully God in the sense that the Father is God, but are lesser beings that were created at one time). In relationships between men and women, this viewpoint would have an attitude that men are better than women and it would result in excessive competitiveness in which a man feels he always has to win in any sport or any argument, in order to show that women are inferior.

Within marriage, this “Male Dominance” error would result in a husband being harsh and selfish and acting as a dictator or a tyrant, and the wife acting as a doormat.

Because there is too great an emphasis on authority, this viewpoint would tend toward a system where children are raised with harsh discipline but with little love or compassion. As far as family responsibilities, wives would be forbidden to have jobs outside the home, or to vote, or to own property, for there is no thought of treating them as equal.

Within the realm of sexuality, a male dominance view would result in pornography and adultery and hearts filled with lust. There would be too much attention given to sex, with men focusing excessively on their own sexual desires. People may wonder why involvement with pornography often leads to violence against women, but this chart makes the connection clear: Pornography encourages men to look at women as objects for sexual gratification, not as persons equal in God’s sight; violence against women just takes that idea one step further as men begin to treat women as objects unworthy of dignity and respect.

The chart goes on to point out how “Male Dominance,” the view that overemphasizes differences between men and women, would work out in a religious system where all ministry is done by men, and women’s gifts are suppressed and squelched. This view would also lead to things like the Crusades, the mistaken military expeditions in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth

centuries to regain control of the Holy Land from the Muslims by force. Within sports, there would be excessive competition, and losers would be humiliated. Within crime, there would be a repressive government with little freedom, and things like debtors' prisons would dehumanize the poor. Within such a viewpoint, women would not be permitted to own property, and boys would be given preferential treatment in schools.

*The Complementarian Middle:* In contrast to these errors in both directions, the biblical picture is one that emphasizes "Equality and Differences and Unity" at the same time. In parallel to the equality and differences among the members of the Trinity, within a complementarian view, men and women are equal in value but have different roles. Within marriage, a husband manifests loving, humble headship, and a wife manifests intelligent, joyful submission to her husband's leadership. Children are cared for and valued, and raised with both discipline and love. Children respect the authority of their parents, but their parents respect the children as having equal value because they are persons created in the image of God. Within the family, the husband is primarily responsible to lead, provide for, and protect his family, and the wife is primarily responsible to help her husband by managing the household and nurturing the children. But both husband and wife often willingly help the other person with his or her area of primary responsibility.

In the realm of sexuality, a complementarian view yields monogamous, lifelong marriage, and equally fulfilling experiences of sex as the deepest expression of a great "mystery" created by God: We are equal, and we are different, and we are one! There is a delight in God's plan for sexual expression, but it is restrained by the bonds of lifelong marriage and lifelong faithfulness to one's marriage partner. Men and women will then have a deep sense of acting in the way that God created them to act in all these areas.

The lower rows of the chart explain how a complementarian viewpoint works out in religion, where some governing and teaching roles in the church are restricted to men, but women's gifts are also honored and used fully in the ministries of the church. In all areas of life, authority is exercised within boundaries so that the person under authority is treated with respect and dignity, and treated as someone who shares equally in the image of God. Within sports, there is an appreciation for competition with fairness and rules, and winners are honored while losers are respected. Equality. Differences. Unity.

As far as crime is concerned, punishment will be speedy and fair, and will aim at the satisfaction of justice as well as the restoration of the criminal. As far as private property, laws will protect private property but will also reflect care for the poor. People will be rewarded according to their work and skill, and there will be a desire to have equal opportunity for all in the economic realm. Within education, boys and girls will both be educated, but the different preferences and abilities and senses of calling that boys and girls may have should be respected and no quotas will be imposed to force an artificial equality in number of participants in every activity where that would not have resulted from allowing boys and girls to choose activities freely of their own accord. Equality. Differences. Unity.

I realize, of course, that any chart like this has generalizations. People who hold one viewpoint within a particular column on the chart may not hold all the viewpoints represented within that column. Nevertheless, the chart has significant value in showing that we continually face two opposing challenges in trying to uphold a biblical viewpoint of manhood and womanhood. People on the domineering right think of us as weak and yielding too much to the demands of feminism. People on the egalitarian left see us as harsh and overemphasizing the differences between men and women. We must steadfastly and patiently hold to the middle, with the help of God.

Now I think it is plain why I say that this controversy is much bigger than we realize. The struggle to uphold equality *and* differences *and* unity between men and women has implications for all areas of life.

Moreover, there are strong spiritual forces invisibly warring against us. I am not now focusing on the egalitarian left or the domineering right, but on the far left column and the far right column, the effeminate left and the violent right. We cannot look at those two columns for long without realizing that behind the attempt to abolish all differences and make everything “one,” and behind the attempt to destroy those who are weaker and make the stronger always “right,” there is a deep spiritual evil. At both extremes we see the hand of the enemy seeking to destroy God’s idea of sex, of marriage, and of manhood and womanhood. We see the hand of the enemy seeking to destroy everything that glorifies God and especially seeking to destroy the beauty of our sexual differences that wonderfully reflect God’s glory. We see the hand of the enemy who hates everything that God created as good, and hates everything that brings glory to God Himself.

So in the end, this controversy is really about God and how His character is reflected in the beauty and excellence of manhood and womanhood as He created it. Will we glorify God through manhood and womanhood lived according to His Word? Or will we deny His Word and give in to the pressures of modern culture? That is the choice we have to make.



# "WHAT DOES THE BIBLE **REALLY** TEACH ABOUT THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN?"

Bible scholar Wayne Grudem carefully draws on 27 years of biblical research as he responds to 118 arguments often levied against traditional gender roles. Grudem counters egalitarian and feminist critiques with clarity, compassion, and precision, showing God's equal value for men and women while celebrating the beauty in their differences.

"After the Bible, I cannot imagine a more useful book for finding reliable help in understanding God's will for manhood and womanhood in the church and the home."

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"In this magnificently clear and comprehensive work, Wayne Grudem calls the church of Jesus Christ back to the Scriptures. . . . Remarkably, almost every question a reader might have on this subject is answered here. This book is a treasure and a resource demonstrating that the complementarian view is biblical and beautiful."

**THOMAS R. SCHREINER**, Professor of New Testament, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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**J.I. PACKER**, Board of Governors' Professor of Theology, Regent College

**WAYNE GRUDEM** (PhD, University of Cambridge) is research professor of theology and biblical studies at Phoenix Seminary. He is the former president of the Evangelical Theological Society, a cofounder and past president of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, and has published over 20 books including *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* and *Business for the Glory of God*.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY