
**A Review of Jim Henderson. *The Resignation of Eve: What if Adam's Rib Is No Longer Willing to Be the Church's Backbone?*
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We're often reminded that women make up more than half of those who attend church regularly. This is not surprising as women often outnumber men today in places like academia and other professional settings. So why doesn't the church reflect these numbers by advancing women in leadership positions? Even some of the more liberal Protestant denominations have fewer women than men filling the pulpits of larger congregations. Speaker, author, and producer Jim Henderson sees this as a big problem.¹

In his book *The Resignation of Eve: What if Adam's Rib Is No Longer Willing to Be the Church's Backbone?* Henderson concludes that many women are running the show in every aspect of church life but the most coveted—the pulpit. Viewing this disparity as a form of gender inequality, he sets out to present a variety of women who have been refused from leadership in the church and have thus “resigned” in one way or another. The book reports on the state of women within (and outside of) the church. It is divided into three sections based on the degree of resignation, and each section concludes with data, comments, and survey results from more women who are simply contributing their two cents to the topic.

Three Faces of Resignation

In chapter 1 Henderson sets out to define the “three faces of resignation”: resigning to, resigning from, and re-signed. He asserts that women, especially younger ones, are leaving the church in droves, either emotionally or physically, because they simply feel disillusioned with church and the lack of opportunity for ministry (7).

Each chapter introduces a new woman on

the spectrum of “resignation.” Women who are “resigned to” have put little thought into the gender debate and accept their conservative churches’ teachings. Women are called to submit, men are called to lead, end of debate (31). If they have thought about this role and disagree, the women in these chapters are willing to wait out change or accept this role without fight or discussion (112). Women who are “resigned from” and “re-signed” tell different stories, some of which are simply heartbreaking. From women who have left church and the faith, to women who have been abused and mistreated by other Christians, these stories cannot be ignored. This is perhaps the book's greatest strength. While we take issue with Henderson's conclusions, hearing of a woman who suffered abuse at the hands of her youth pastor and was then told to keep quiet about it is horrific (211–23). Hearing of a woman who spent years abused by her husband only to hear her pastor's wife say, “You should probably come to church more,” is maddening (51–52). Unfortunately, this happens far too often. Those of us on the complementarian side of the gender debate get a bad reputation when situations like this masquerade as our view.

Furthermore, almost none of the women interviewed from more conservative streams of the gender debate explained the biblical warrant for their positions. To make matters worse, the women who rejected conservative renderings of Scripture regarding women seemed to think that complementarians believe women are only good for taking care of children, cleaning, and cooking (though these are not bad things). From what they have heard, these women believe complementarians teach that thinking and serious study of Scrip-

ture is reserved for men only (216). Throughout the book, even Henderson presented submission as something that is commanded of all women to all men. These stereotypes have unfortunately been presented as complementarian for far too long.

Stories Over Scripture

At the same time, the book suffers from being driven by data, surveys, interviews, and stories rather than by Scripture. It is hard to argue against the experience of another, especially if you were not there. Even at the end of the chapters, when Henderson responds to the testimonies, he presents his perspective with authority but not with Scripture. Both sides of the debate need to stay focused on our ultimate authority as Christians. Henderson discovered that many pastors, if they even claim to believe in complementarianism, are not teaching it accurately or faithfully in their local churches. And he saw gaping holes in churches' doctrinal statements and everyday practices (125). We live in a post-Fall world, one where we do not embrace the truths of Scripture by default. Henderson says the problem in the church today is that pastors are refusing to allow women the ability to use their gifts in ministry. But the bigger problem is that complementarians have not done their job in faithfully teaching what it means to be male and female created in the image of God.

Henderson asks throughout the book, what would happen if women completely resigned themselves from the church? Would the church fall apart? Would the men shrink before their many new responsibilities? Would lost people never come to Christ? Henderson seems to think so, at least in part (238). Thankfully, God has promised us another way. Even if every woman left, Jesus will build his church. The good news is he does not need us—male or female. We need him.

Even though Henderson presents some heart-breaking, interesting, and sometimes compelling stories of women who have strong feelings toward the church, his proposal for change falls woefully short. Without a clear, biblical vision of the local church and God's design, there will be no healthy congregation to resign from.

ENDNOTES

¹This review originally appeared on the Gospel Coalition website at http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-reviews/review/the_resignation_of_eve. Reprinted with permission.