THE JOURNAL FOR BIBLICAL MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD

Editorial

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A Reminder That Children Are Gifts, Blessings, and Arrows

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Gender Studies in Review





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THE SELF-RELIANT CONSCIENCE OF EVANGELICAL STOICISM

Jason G. Duesing | Editor Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Provost and Associate Professor of Historical Theology Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Kansas City, Missouri

t the outbreak of World War II with the imminent threat of German attack felt by many Londoners, the British government sought to inspire and instruct their citizens in their plight of endurance. To avoid paralysis of daily activity or mass hysteria caused by an avalanche of anxiety, the leaders propagated a sloganeering campaign. Colorful posters were placed in well trafficked areas and reminded the faithful that "Your Courage, Your Cheerfulness, Your Resolution, Will Bring Us Victory." Perhaps the most popular slogan, however, was "Keep Calm and Carry On" as it resonated well with the stiff-upper-lip constitution of many Britons. The idea of self-reinforced statements to bolster courage and focus energy, especially in the face of danger, is noble and proven effective for wartime morale or even sporting arena triumph. However, for the Christian, the temptation to anchor one's daily faith to self-reinforcement tactics can prove dangerous.

Thus, as contemporary culture continues to morph and decline, is it time merely to practice our

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^{1. &}quot;So What is this 'Keep Calm and Carry On' Thing All About Then?" *Keep Calm and Carry On*, accessed October 28, 2015, http://www.keepcalmandcarryon.com/history/.

stiff-upper-lip and "Keep Calm and Carry On"? Should we circle the wagons of paranoia and fear to bolster strength to ride out a storm of moral change while saying nothing?

In his 1947 classic, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, Carl F. H. Henry called for "contemporary evangelicalism to reawaken to the relevance of its redemptive message to the global predicament." He believed that the truth was stronger than fiction and that evangelicals had a message for the world. He said, "The message for a decadent modern civilization must ring with the present tense. We must confront the world now with an ethics to make it tremble, and with a dynamic to give it hope." So, if in any sense, we have shirked from this kind of optimism, Henry would no doubt be disappointed.

The "Uneasy Conscience" of which Henry spoke was the tendency of 1940s fundamentalists to grow uneasy with how to interact with a changing culture and retreat instead of engage. The fundamentalists were not uneasy about the truths of the Bible but rather with how to apply them well to the modern situation. I think for the growing evangelical minority today, the same temptation is present and, not knowing how to withstand the cultural pressures, the easiest thing to do appears to be to worry and retreat. But as Henry said, this mentality leaves no voice "speaking today as Paul would, either at the United Nations sessions, or at labor-management disputes, or in strategic university classrooms whether in Japan or Germany or America." So there is a great need today for instructing evangelicals in how to engage the culture.

The idea of hunkering down in the face of shifting morality is something Martyn Lloyd-Jones likened to the Stoicism referenced in Acts 17. Lloyd-Jones, the medical doctor turned preacher explained that in ancient times,

The Stoic was a serious and thoughtful man, an honest one who believed in facing the facts of life. Having done so he had come to the conclusion that life is a difficult business and a hard task, and that there is only one way of going through with it and that is that you must exercise firm discipline upon yourself. Life, said the Stoic, will come and attack you, it will batter and beat you, and the great art of living, he said, is to remain standing on your feet. And the only way to do it is to brace back your shoulders, to set a firm upper lip, to go in for the philosophy of courage, and say, 'I am going to be a man!' You just decide that you are not going to give in, you are not going to be defeated; whatever may happen to you, you are still standing, you are going on and you will stick it to the end. The philosophy of grit, the philosophy of courage, the philosophy of the stiff upper lip.⁴

This kind of Stoicism that is high on morality, asceticism, and indifference, plays well in our day of mutual challenges to "Just grind it out" to such a degree that there is a version of it we might call Evangelical Stoicism. Here, we self-philosophize when we counsel to "Remind yourself at all times what you can control and what you can't." Evangelical Stoicism is philosophy of coping that says, "We cannot control the weather or the economy, but we can control our thoughts and actions." From dieting, to keeping up with technology, to pursuing academic studies, to dealing with trials, to enduring family gatherings or tensions, we easily drift into Stoicism whether we know it or not.

We are quick to medicate, conflict-avoid, exaggerate, miscommunicate, deflect, blame, and hide.

^{2.} Carl F. H. Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, [1947], 2003), 53-55.

^{3.} Ibid., 25.

^{4.} Martyn Lloyd Jones, I Am Not Ashamed: Advice to Timothy (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 15.

We minimize public embarrassment, overcompensate for errors, redouble our efforts, and study how better to manage our public profile. We are experts at "toughing it out." We read leadership and self-help books about how to succeed, how to press farther. We have gotten very good at being proficient, and we know how to get by. In the face of the decline of cultural morality or in the wake of the redefinition of marriage, we hunker down and huddle up. Yet, simple joy, faith, hope, or thankfulness are missing as we "Keep Calm and Carry On." This is not to say there isn't any value in perseverance or endurance. Indeed, in the Christian life, these are important stabilizers for living in the Spirit. But, often we live as if we are to do much on our own strength, and doing these things apart from the Spirit isn't the Gospel way. This is not what Christ meant for us when he said his burden was light (Matt 11:29–30).

How then are we to endure suffering that may come as a result of holding fast to biblical truth? How do you thrive in the workplace, in conversations with coworkers or at the family dinner table, or in the public square? What is more, how should Christians prepare to live and suffer for truth in a world where the standards of truth have changed? While now some may regularly endure hardship for the Gospel, few of us are facing regular persecution. But how do we prepare for that day should it come? For prison cells, tough callings, ridicule, persecution, or days worse than we can imagine?

Well, the Evangelical Stoicism on which we often stand will not do. As Lloyd-Jones said of Stoicism, "It may be very noble, I will grant you that, but it is noble paganism." In short, "Keep Calm and Carry On" is not the Gospel way. The better way is rooted in something far deeper and supernatural than what is found in our shallow pockets of grit and determination.

When thinking further about how the Christian should live in our world of rapid moral change, we are helped by Paul's second statement of advice to Timothy. After pleading with him, Paul now shares his conviction that serves as another foundation for his endurance and joy regardless of the circumstances. Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:12, "But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me." Here he begins verse 12 with a statement referring back to 1:8 when he says essentially to Timothy, "I told you not to be ashamed of the Gospel because I am not ashamed."

Even though he is in prison for faithfulness to the Gospel, he is not ashamed of the Gospel. He begins his explanation with the contrasting word, "But," and in just those three letters there lies an ocean filled with the fruit of the Spirit. In essence, Paul is saying, "Even though I suffer, even though I am in prison unjustly, even though many have abandoned me, even though this was not my plan But I am not ashamed."

In this one word there exists enough joy to fill a jail cell. This one word is broad enough and strong enough on which to build a house of faith and a life of trust. For with this word, Paul is showing how he is, in the words of 1 Peter 4:19, "entrusting his soul to a faithful Creator." No matter what change comes, or what standards of truth fall, Paul is not wringing his hands nor attempting to stir up his own internal strength. For as Paul states, "for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced."

Paul knows Jesus Christ (Phil 3:10). He believes in him and trusts him and this is the model for how the Christian should live. In times of testing and opposition, what you know is important, but even the Evangelical Stoic knows much. More than what is known is who is known. Do you know Jesus?

We meet him in his word and there we are reminded that he is good. He does not lie and he is

^{5.} Ibid., 33.

gracious to his children. In his word we find truth and strength to resist temptation and fight the evil one. Even when we feel like we are going to break in two, when we come to his word, we are reminded by him that "a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench" (Matt 12:20). That even if you "are so utterly burdened beyond strength and despair of life itself ... that is to make you rely not on yourself but on God who raises the dead" (2 Cor 1:8–9).

The core of Paul's conviction is that God is able. Here there is this further source of related strength that is diametrically opposite the Evangelical Stoicism and the philosophy of "toughing it out." For Paul knows what the Bible affirms over and over again, that we are not able. We are finite creatures, weighed down with the fragilities brought by sin, staring straight into the truth of Jesus' words in John 15:5 "Apart from me you can do *nothing*."

Likewise, the Bible affirms that God is able. For example, when Daniel's three friends refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's gods and were threatened by him with the furnace of fire, they said, "If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Dan 3:17– 18). The God of the Bible is the God who is able "to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think" (Eph 3:20).

Specifically, Paul is convinced that God is able "to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me." Here he is telling Timothy that the reason he can rejoice and endure is because he knows God is able to protect the most important thing, his eternal life. When Paul uses the words "guard" and "entrusted" he conveys the idea of protecting his deposit against robbery. We know from verse 9 that the deposit is namely the Gospel of grace given to Paul, that is, his salvation. Paul is certain that God is able to protect his salvation "until that Day," the day of Jesus' return. God secured all of this before time began, and thus will guard it until time ends. Thus, all other matters are temporary in comparison.

What if you could see into the future and know all the outcomes of your circumstances? Would it change your perspective on any present sufferings? Would it change how you endured if you knew how everything was going to turn out?

Paul has seen into the future, and has conviction that is sure. He is convinced God is able. Through the reading of God's word with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can have the same conviction of hope as Paul. Regardless of the changing moral landscape, the Christian should live with the perspective of rest and contentment in the fact that God is able.

While the specific steps forward in response to our culture might be varied or driven by context, overall the Christian has a choice to engage or retreat. The temptation to retreat either in silence or in indifference will come. Here Paul's counsel to Timothy not to be ashamed should ring loud and fan in to flame courage. But even for those who nobly stand, even here the temptation will come toward Evangelical Stoicism, with hand-wringing and digging in, seeking to endure in a "Keep Calm and Carry On" fashion. But, as we have seen, this too, is not the Gospel way. For even though the Evangelical Stoic may stand for Gospel truth, standing for any issue in state self-reliance is a form of Gospel abandonment.

In the last quarter of his life, Carl F. H. Henry observed that, "The evangelical movement looks stronger than in fact it is But no earthly movement holds the Lion of the Tribe of Judah by the tail. We may need for a season to be encaged in the Lion's den until we recover an apostolic awe of the Risen Christ, the invincible Head of a dependent body sustained by his supernatural power. Apart from life

in and by the Spirit we are all pseudo-evangelicals."6

Indeed, instead of "The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism" in Henry's day, we wrestle with "The Self-Reliant Conscience of Evangelical Stoicism." Yet, as Paul pleads and reminds, the way to live in a sea of social change is to remember that God is able.

In this hopeful spirit of cultural engagement, this issue of *JBMW* begins with five essays. First, Jonathan Akin, pastor of Fairview Church in Lebanon, Tennessee, seeks to answer "Is Proverbs 22:6 a Promise for Parents?" Rachel Jankovic, mother and writer in Moscow, Idaho, gives "A Reminder that Children are Gifts, Blessings, and Arrows." Greg Gibson, family ministries pastor at Foothills Church in Knoxville, Tennessee, gives counsel to "Let Boys Be Non-Medicated Boys." And Ben Montoya, a doctoral candidate in New Testament at McMaster Divinity College, offers a rebuttle to a recent allegation that complementarians are similar to ISIS in "Oranges to Hand-grenades." The final essay by our own Executive Director, Grant Castleberry, "Missing the Target" reflects on gender identity in a world without limits.

This issue also contains three in-depth studies. Andrew Naselli, assistant professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Bethlehem College & Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota, illuminates an overlooked reality in "When You Indulge in Pornography, You Participate in Sex Slavery." Next, Brandon Smith, adjunct professor at Criswell College and brand manager of the Holman Christian Standard Bible, deftly engages "William Webb's Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic." Last, Jim Brooks, doctoral candidate in biblical counseling at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, concludes this section with a timely look at "Satan's War on Marriage."

Following the essays and studies, this issue contains a sermon on Psalm 139:13-16, "Children are a Divine Blessing Not a Human Right: Biblical Clarity and Gospel Comfort for those Contemplating In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)," by Jason Meyer, pastor for preaching and vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The *Journal* concludes, finally, with several reviews by Derek Brown, Colin Smothers, Tim Challies, Cody McNutt, Scott Corbin, Trent Hunter, Kimberly Campbell, and Jonathon Woodyard.

For the sporting arena or wartime morale, the Stoicism of "Keep Calm and Carry On" may be a fitting remedy for winning. But for working through how to respond well to changing social standards around the world, we should be singing the P. P. Bliss hymn, "It is Well." Indeed, the "It is Well, He is Able" slogan might be more revolutionary for instructing Christians on how they should live in these days of cultural confusion. May this issue of *JBMW* contribute to that end.⁸

^{6.} Carl F. H. Henry, Confessions of a Theologian (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 390.

^{7.} P. P. Bliss, "It is Well with My Soul," in Ira David Sankey and P. P. Bliss, *Gospel Hynms*, No. 2 (Cincinnati: John Church, 1895), 412. See also Lloyd-Jones' use of this in *I Am Not Ashamed*, 20.

^{8.} The majority of this editorial is adapted from the author's forthcoming chapter, "How Should the Christian Live?" in Russell D. Moore and Andrew T. Walker, eds., *The Gospel and Same-Sex Marriage* (Nashville: B&H, 2016).

ESSAYS & PERSPECTIVES

IS PROVERBS 22:6 A PROMISE FOR PARENTS?

Jonathan Akin | Pastor Fairview Church Lebanon, Tennessee

s Proverbs 22:6 a promise?

Many Christian parents feel guilty when their children do not "turn out right." They ask questions like, "What did we do wrong? What else could we have done?" What is more problematic is that the guilt so many Christian parents feel finds its root in the Bible. After all, Proverbs 22:6 states, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

This verse has produced much shame in Christian parents because it seems to promise that if parents will raise their kids in the right way when they are young, then when they are grown they will continue to live the right way, and if you do not raise your children in the right way, then they will live the wrong kind of life. The logic seems clear and straightforward: if you have grown children who did not turn out right, then you must not have raised them right. So, added to the heartache of a child not walking with the Lord is the biblical condemnation of your parenting.

GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE PROMISE

Is that really what Proverbs 22:6 teaches? Some scholars try to scoot around the problem by contending that the Proverbs are not promises. But there is a different way to understand Proverbs 22:6 without undermining its promissory nature. Instead of being a promise that "if you do right then your kids will turn out right," it is a reverse promise—a warning—that if you do not correct your children when they are young, then they will run amuck, wanting their own way as an adult.

Almost every English translation of this verse adds a word to the text that is not in the Hebrew. The English says something along the lines of "train a child in the right way" or the "way he should go." In the Hebrew, there is no descriptor or qualifier; so English translations add the word "right" or

"should" to aid in interpretation. Literally the verse should be rendered, "Train a child in his way, and when he is old he will not depart from it." What does that mean? If you give a child his way when he is young, then when he is old he will insist on having his own way. This translation best fits with the flow of Proverbs that teaches children are foolish by nature and need to be corrected (cf. Prov. 20:9; 22:15; 29:15).

The clear warning of Proverbs—despite Disney's messaging—is that following your own heart, or your own "way," is the epitome of foolishness (Prov. 14:12; 28:26). That is why Proverbs says that the parent's role is to correct their children's natural foolishness, and so Proverbs 22:6 is a warning that parents must discipline their children's foolish character before it is set. The Genesis narrative also suggests that the body comes with needs. Adam would be hungry, so God gave him the fruit of the garden. These needs are an expression embedded within the created order that Adam is finite, dependent, and derived.

NO SPOILED CHILDREN

Proverbs 22:6 heavily critiques the buddy-parent philosophy. It warns that if you allow your child to be self-centered now, then he will certainly be later. You have to say "no" so that you do not turn your children into Veruca Salt—the spoiled child from Willy Wonka's factory who received everything she ever wanted. Lori Gottlieb's article in *The Atlantic* exposed a generation of parenting that cannot hold the line with their children:

A kid will say, "Can we get ice cream on the way home?" And the parent will say, "No, it's our day. Ice-cream day is Friday." Then the child will push and negotiate, and the parent, who probably things negotiating is 'honoring her child's opinion," will say, "Fine, we'll get ice cream today, but don't ask me tomorrow, because the answer is no!" The teacher laughed. "Every year, parents come to me and say, 'Why won't my child listen to me? Why won't she take no for an answer?' And I say, "Your child won't take no for an answer, because the answer is never no!"

OUR CHILDREN'S GREATEST NEED

Proverbs 22:6 ultimately demonstrates that our children's greatest need is the Good News about Jesus. Proverbs is clear that discipline is evangelism, "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol" (Prov. 23:13-14). If we do not correct our children, then they will not recognize their sin or that their sin will be held accountable.

Some Christian parents misunderstand grace as calling for a laissez faire attitude towards discipline, but that is deadly. Discipline shows our children that there are consequences and accountability for sinful actions, and it demonstrates that there is a standard of right and wrong—one that they have fallen short of and thus need a Savior. Discipline is not simply meting out punishment—however you choose to carry it out under biblical guidelines. Discipline is an opportunity for a gospel conversation

^{1.} Lori Gottlieb, "How to Land Your Kid in Therapy," *The Atlantic*, July/August 2011, accessed November 4, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/07/how-to-land-your-kid-in-therapy/308555/

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where you tell your child that your love for them—and God's love for them—is not conditioned on their behavior, where you confess that you are a sinner who has sinned in the exact same ways that they have, and where you acknowledge that you need God's saving grace in Christ as much as they do.

So, let us heed the warning and promise of Proverbs 22:6, so that in glory we can say with our Lord Jesus, "Here I am with the children you have given to me" (Heb. 2:13).

A REMINDER THAT CHILDREN ARE GIFTS, ARROWS, AND BLESSINGS

Rachel Jankovic | Mother, Writer, & Author of *Loving the Little Years* Moscow, Idaho

think it is safe to assume that most believers are familiar with the many Biblical passages that speak of children as gifts (see especially Psalms 127, 128).

They are considered a blessing, and inheritance, like arrows in the hand of a man who wants arrows, they are referred to as fruit, and as a reward. There are promises surrounding seeing your children's children—with the unspoken expectation that we just can't even wait to see this layer of blessing.

But still, when we come to addressing the actual work of the actual children in our own lives, we fall back on our more understood framework of the culture around us. They are a gift from God, sure, whatever.

But can we afford them?

They are a reward, yeah, but is it one we want? I'm not sure that I am patient enough for kids, so maybe I should aim for something with a lower bar. I'll get a cat! Maybe a gerbil. They are like arrows in the hand of a mighty man, but then again, we aren't super mighty and I'm not really into bow hunting. It seems like we should just not worry about that bit. If anything is clear it is that Scripture does not really jive with what we actually experience in our lives. It just calls them a blessing, and never even mentions the toddler or the teenage years.

THE BLESSING OF CHILDREN.

And so we find that rather than adjusting our own instincts and desires to correspond to the clear teaching of Scripture on this subject, we tend to let the Bible fade into the background of our own narrative of life—letting the ways of the world and the ways of our own flesh creep to the forefront and

shape our behavior. We leave those Bible verses as something someone might have cross stitched for the nursery, or something you might see on a plaque that you wouldn't buy. But we certainly don't look at our lives, at our children, and at our situation with the wisdom that simply believing these passages would bring.

We treat children like an expensive leisure activity. We think it is only responsible to decide before conceiving a child whether or not you can afford all of the time, money, stress, and responsibility of actually having a child. The world has taught us that this is all our decision. That our fertility is something that we can and should have a mastery of—making the choices that are best for ourselves at all times. But in the background of all of this is the hilarious assumption that we have a clear understanding of what is best for us. As though we are constantly in command of all of the information about our lives and are able to plan our futures with the utmost wisdom. As though we actually know how to discern what is best for us.

OH, THE JOY.

I am currently expecting our baby number seven—an absurd number to shocked onlookers, who consider the round belly to be a dot on the exclamation point—as though it is some kind of over-excited excess. Honestly, the number still surprises us. God just does exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.

Maybe in our family we feel the abundance more sharply than some—but we have had the opportunity to feel the true nature of the gift too. These children of ours aren't just a gift because they are cute, or say funny things. They aren't just the sum of their snuggles and their laughter. Though the joy from these things alone is deep, there is so much more going on.

Children are like the best ever investment program. Only God is making the decisions, and what He is investing is our life. Can you imagine a bigger gift than that? But it isn't the kind of gift that feels like a day at the spa. Because it isn't the kind of gift we would give ourselves. Our instinct is to say, "Good job! You earned some time off! That was hard! Put your feet up and kick back this weekend!" But when we look at what God does in our life, it seldom corresponds to this ideal.

HOURS WASTED, OR JOY ABUNDANT?

This gift of a child means no sleeping in on weekends for many years—until you can't anymore because you forgot how. It means coming face to face with your own temptations in a frequently ugly way. Did you have any idea you could be so selfish? So petty? So annoyed? So critical? What a gift! Because it turns us constantly away from ourselves—away from feeling self reliant and capable, and it throws us onto God. This is an uncomfortable gift indeed.

He sees these empty moments—these hours that you are letting go wasted in your life, and He fills them with an infant who needs tenderness. He replaces what could have been a quiet dinner for two with a table full of children and along with them a hundred opportunities for service, for teaching, for explaining the world. He took your vacant lot of a life and built on it cities, and civilizations. He has given you the gift of a future.

It isn't just the gift of the requirement to do and be more either. God doesn't leave us out there on our own like that—it is also the gift of the grace that we need to do it. As He pours on the requirement,

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He pours on the grace. His gift to us is throwing us at His mercy-keeping us reaching for His kindness, His steadfastness, His love in all the daily moments of our life.

It is like that old game of trust where you have to fall back in the hope that your partner catches you. We aren't supposed to look behind us and try to calculate if God can handle it when we fall. We are commanded to believe that He will. That He loves us and that this is good—because He is good. We should be looking forward—looking to the gifts that God is giving us, and trying to brace ourselves to catch them. We can know that the gift is big enough to knock us over—we can know that we can't possibly carry it on our own—and we can know that the One who is giving it to us will not let us fall. This is His gift—joy in our own insufficiency—and joy in His constant sufficiency.

LET BOYS BE NON-MEDICATED BOYS

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when they were kids.

"When I was a boy," they say with an antiquated shimmer in their eye, "we could roam the streets, climb the tallest of trees, and discover adventure with an undaunted courage that would rival the expeditions of Lewis and Clark." As a confession, I love it when I get a chance to talk with folks about "the good ol' days," and I have heard this type of reflection many times when talking to older men about their childhood. In fact, I remember feeling this way at times when I was a child. There seemed to be no limits to what we could do in our neighborhood—our arena. The only "rules" my parents gave us were to not leave the neighborhood and to not go into anyone's home. Other than that, there were no rules... so it seemed. The neighborhood was ours for the taking. It was our own

e've all heard it before—stories, that is, from people reminiscing about the "good ol' days"

I remember feeling at home when I was exploring the neighborhood, being outside, and unleashing my Mt. Everest amount of energy onto beaten-up driveway basketball courts and cul-de-sacs that were scarred with bicycle tire marks. It was home. It was familiar. It was a place I didn't get into trouble for my energy levels. Yes, it was kid world—as my mother-in-law calls it—but I could breathe, because there were no walls, no desks, and no quiet times where I had to sit still and conform to an expectation of a modern learning style.

Appalachian Trail to explore; our own urban landscape to inspect—every nook and cranny.

However, when the time came to sit at that desk during school hours, I felt far from home. Early on in my schooling, I learned quickly that I abhorred school. I earned heaps of trouble; I couldn't ever sit still; and I had atrocious grades. Like many boys with mountains of energy about them, it was considered a problem. Because of this, the answer for my learning disabilities and bad behavior

was Ritalin. I was on Ritalin for two full school years. I don't fault my parents, but it was terrible; it completely changed my personality. I went from vibrant and full of life to shy and awkward. I didn't talk to anyone while I was medicated. When the Ritalin eventually wore off, I found myself returning to my normal personality—after school—when it was time to return to the comfort zone of wandering my neighborhood.

My story is a common story for many boys. I talk with parents often about their intentions in medicating with Ritalin. I get it. They want their boys to succeed, have good grades, and not get in trouble, but there is a considerable complication with this manner of thinking. Sometimes, though, it might be needed. For instance, there are times when this sort of medication is medically necessary. I'm not a doctor, and I'll be the first to admit that I don't know all the ins and outs, but I do think that because we live in a fallen world, there are cases where it might be needed. Even the goodness of boyhood energy is broken by the fall. But in most cases, I think we are getting the diagnosis wrong. When we see problems with our boys like...

- Doesn't play well by themselves
- Doesn't sit still
- Fidgety
- Easily distracted
- Loud and talkative

...we often diagnosis those symptoms as a problem. As Albert Mohler has said, "We want to find a diagnosis in a problem, and we want to find a savior in a pill." To me, these problems seem more like God-given characteristics of what it means to actually be a boy—a non-medicated boy. I would suggest to you that the diagnosis of boyhood is not a problem to solve, but a tension to love, channel, and celebrate, as we teach boys how to take dominion over their energy.

Instead of medicating, here's what I would recommend instead:

LOVE IT

Love the energy in your child. God has uniquely created your child and gifted them in great ways (Ps. 139:13; Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 2:10). Don't become adverse towards them for their God-given nature of desiring to climb stuff and punch each other. Boys don't often want to sit Indian style in a circle and play quietly and relationally.

Buy dangerous trampolines for your backyard. Wrestle with your boys in the living room floor. Let them climb all over your back like Mt. Kilimanjaro. Use your conscience here, but give them permission to run around and explore the neighborhood—and kid world. Have dance parties in your kitchen. Buy them dirt bikes, not just normal bikes. Put them in Little League, Pee Wee Football, and put a basketball in their hands. And when you do this, you'll learn to love how God shaped them, instead of perceiving their energy as a problem to solve.

CHANNEL IT

Furthermore, teach boys to channel their energy. This will take time, yes, but when you give them a legion of outlets at their disposal, they will eventually begin to find a favorite one. When they do, channel them to their favorite outlet.

My outlet-of-choice as a child was the sport of basketball. I loved the game at an early age, and I learned quickly that I was okay at it. I spent hours and hours in my driveway playing basketball. So much, in fact, that my neighbors would come out at midnight and finally ask me to go inside. I played on the Varsity team as a freshman, and I played AAU with a traveling team sponsored by Nike. Several of my past high school and college teammates play in the NBA, or professionally overseas. I even coached high school basketball for a few years after seminary. Basketball allowed me to channel the mountains of energy I had through middle school and high school. Today, I have learned to channel this energy in different ways, and over the years, God has taught me that this is a gift to be used for his glory, not a curse to medicate.

CELEBRATE IT

And, finally, I would encourage you to celebrate the energy in boys. As we learn to love it ourselves, and then channel it in them, we also need to celebrate their energy with them. Boys do not need to feel like they are a disappointment or a problem because of their energy. I know that's easier said than done; there will be times when they need to actually sit still (e.g., the dinner table, Sunday morning worship, family devotions, etc.). In the event they do these sometimes-impossible acts, celebrate that with them, and discipline them when they don't. When boys are learning quietude, they are learning to exercise dominion over their life. It's not all outlets of energy and no self-control. We want them to learn self-control and times of stillness. The conquering spirit of young boys can be extended to learning to take dominion over their energy. This is a Genesis 1-2 concept. We, like Adam, are dominion-takers, and we should teach boys to take dominion over their quietude, and not just the playground.

As you do this, help them see that God created them to grow up to be men—leaders, providers, and protectors. When you celebrate with them what God is doing in them, you are having teachable moments about the God who created them. In turn, you are teaching them to celebrate the only One worth celebrating.

DON'T EVER STOP PARENTING THEM

I am not saying in this article that ADD or ADHD don't exist. I am saying we too often diagnose the awesome characteristics of boyhood as a problem, and then we medicate them as our solution—our functional savior. I want you to see that they aren't a problem to fear, or medicate. They are far from it. Boys are filled with testosterone. When God created Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden, the first thing Adam did was go out into the Garden, full of testosterone, and began to explore and name stuff. As parents, we shouldn't be afraid of this exploratory essence and energy in our boys. We should love it, channel it, parent it, and celebrate it.

I think we should let boys be boys, and non-medicated ones at that. Therefore, parents, if at all possible, don't medicate your boys. Help them thrive in a culture of lectures, walls, circles, niceness, and quiet rooms. Give them permission to be boys. Constantly pray for their salvation. Give them grace when

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they fail. Discipline them, too. But, most importantly, don't ever stop parenting them. Don't give up. Don't give into a culture that so easily defines a solution in a pill. It will be hard. You will be tempted to go that route. Teachers and counselors might even suggest it. But trust, and lean into, the promises of God in Christ alone—who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in *the likeness of men*. And being found in *human form*, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

When we stay close to that truth, we can channel everything... and help our boys—in Christ—conquer just about anything.

ORANGES TO HAND-GRENADES: COMPARING TGC TO ISIS DEMONSTRATES A FUNDAMENTAL MISUNDERSTANDING OF BOTH POSITIONS

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hroughout my education, teachers employed analogies; they did so to help us understand difficult concepts by way of comparison. But they also required them of us to gauge our comprehension of subjects. The latter is relevant for this article because if someone does not understand a certain topic *well*, then their use of analogies will uncover their misinformation and bias.

For example, when evangelical theologians explain the Trinity, they advise against using analogies because they all break down at key theological points—usually demonstrating that the analogy in some way denies one of the key tenets of the doctrine. A similar example would be comparing oranges with hand-grenades. Although they can both fit into a person's hand, can both be thrown, one nourishes while the other kills. It is a poor analogy. A better comparison would be oranges to apples. Both are edible fruits. Unfortunately, poor analogies abound.

In a recent blog article, Tyler M. Tully posted the blog "Who Said It? The Gospel Coalition or ISIS on Gender Roles." Although Tully claims *not* to compare apples to oranges, I hope to demonstrate that his comparison reveals his lack of understanding of the complementarian position just as much as comparing oranges to hand-grenades. The purpose of this article, then, is to respond to his blog. Although a response might come in the form of a blog from another website, a fuller published essay is given here because Tully's argument is indicative of a larger problem of some people's understanding of complementarianism. I hope that this article facilitates clearer understanding of what complementarianism is, and what it is not, and an encouragement to clarify the conversation between both parties.

^{1.} Tyler M. Tully, "Who Said It? The Gospel Coalition or ISIS on Gender Roles," *MennoNerds*, February 11, 2015, accessed October 29, 2015, http://mennonerds.com/who-said-it-the-gospel-coalition-isis-and-gender-roles.

TULLY'S ARGUMENT

Tully introduces his blog by referring to the President Obama's speech at the National Prayer Breakfast where he identified violence in the history of Christianity (e.g., the Crusades, Inquisition, slavery, Jim Crow, etc.).² Obama's point was that violence is not unique to any religion. As a survey of American history easily demonstrates, presidents usually make for bad theologians. Obama presents an unfortunate, yet popular, misunderstanding of the history of Christianity because he claims that *Christians* did these things, *not* those professing to be Christians. That distinction matters because sinful humanity can misuse anything for sinful purposes. Marriage, vocation, the Bible, and the church are just a few examples.

Tully rightly recognizes this point when he writes in this same article: "I condemn 'Christian' military groups for not being Christian." The reason why Tully introduces his article with this reference is because he believes that complementarianism is the *same* kind of violence that was seen in the Crusades. This view is shocking in light of how complementarians themselves explain their own position. Tully, however, neglects to support this connection with any argumentation. Rather, he hyperlinks another one of his blog articles. He fails to support his point there either. Merely stating and repeating a point does not argue or make the point true.

Tully explains his understanding of complementarianism as follows. He begins by citing the definitions of complementarianism from The Gospel Coalition including citations from Mary Kassian, Tim Keller, and John Piper. Tully correctly cites Kassian as writing:

Complementarians believe that males were designed to shine the spotlight on Christ's relationship to the church (and the LORD God's relationship to Christ) in a way that females cannot, and that females were designed to shine the spotlight on the church's relationship to Christ (and Christ's relationship to the LORD God) in a way that males cannot.⁶

Several points merit further explanation. First, Tully's choice of a *blog* article on The Gospel Coalition website—though an accurate representation—is surprising because complementarians have published many scholarly books and articles explaining and defending their position.⁷ One would expect someone to go to the best resources possible for understanding a position rather than considering a blog primarily. To be clear, Kassian is one of complementarity's finest advocates. But Tully perhaps should have referenced a fuller presentation of the position to ensure he understands it properly. Although this point may sound nit-picky, it is not because this choice is indicative of a larger problem in

Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at National Prayer Breakfast," The White House, February 5, 2015, accessed May 2, 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/05/remarks-president-national-prayer-breakfast.

^{3.} Tully, "Who Said It? The Gospel Coalition or ISIS on Gender Roles."

^{4.} Ibid.

^{5.} Tully, "The War on Women in Eden," *MennoNerds*, October 1, 2014, accessed October 29, 2015, http://mennonerds.com/the-war-on-women-began-in-eden.

^{6.} Tyler M. Tully, "Who Said It? The Gospel Coalition or ISIS on Gender Roles," citing Mary Kassian, "Complementarianism for Dummies," *The Gospel Coalition*, September 4, 2012, accessed October 29, 2015, http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/complementarianism-for-dummies.

^{7.} John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem, Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991); Wayne A. Grudem, Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood, Foundations for the Family Series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002); Andreas J. Köstenberger, God's Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014).

Tully's presentation of complementarianism.

Reflecting on what Tully chose *not* to cite also matters for understanding Kassian's presentation properly. She continues from where Tully ended his citation:

Who we are as male and female is ultimately not about us. It's about testifying to the story of Jesus. We do not get to dictate what manhood and womanhood are all about. Our Creator does. That's the basis of complementarianism. If you hear someone tell you that complementarity means you have to get married, have dozens of babies, be a stay-at-home housewife, clean toilets, completely forego a career, chuck your brain, tolerate abuse, watch *Leave It to Beaver* reruns, bury your gifts, deny your personality, and bobble-head nod "yes" to everything men say, don't believe her. That's a straw (wo)man misrepresentation. It's not complementarianism. I should know. I'm a complementarian. And I helped coin the term.⁸

The rest of Kassian's explanation matters because she explains the important basis of complementarianism: God, our Creator, gave us our genders and, as such, dictates what both manhood and womanhood are all about. Similarly, her explanation matters because she also clears up popular misconceptions about complementarianism. Interestingly, although complementarians have published an abundance of literature explaining their views, even directly addressing misconceptions, many of these misconceptions surface in recent discussions of this issue. Tully's omission of this explanation, however, is troubling in light of his further explanation that reveals his misunderstanding of the position.

Describing R. Albert Mohler Jr.'s position on complementarianism, Tully writes:

For Gospel Coalition complementarians like Al Mohler, a "feminization of the church" has occurred because Christian men have failed to embrace their God-given gender roles leading to an increase of women pastors in the pulpit. It is the practice of equality that bothers him, not the theory that women are indeed equal. You see, for Mohler, women are equal to men in that both genders are in need of Salvation [sic.] from sin. But in practice, women can only demonstrate the Image of God in how they are submissive to God's pre-ordained male order.

Tully's misunderstanding of complementarianism surfaces again. First, Tully incorrectly explains Mohler's position. He explained the "feminization of the church" resulted from the liberal Protestants siding with "modern egalitarian feminism," not because men have failed to embrace their God-given gender roles. Although the latter may very well be true in some parts of the world, and a point that Mohler may even agree with, that point was not Mohler's point in that article.

Second, Tully critiques Mohler's explanation of equality by equivocating the definition of equality. Tully states that Mohler has a problem with the practice of equality when, in fact, Mohler wrote no such thing. He writes:

^{8.} Kassian, "Complementarianism for Dummies."

^{9.} Wayne A. Grudem, Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004).

^{10.} R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Biblical Pattern of Male Leadership Limits Pastorate to Men," *AlbertMohler.com*, July 15, 2004, accessed October 29, 2015, http://www.albertmohler.com/biblical-pattern-of-male-leadership-limits-pastorate-to-men.

The Bible clearly reveals that both men and women are created in the image of God, stand *equal* in terms of human dignity, *equal* in sinfulness, and are *equally* in need of a Savior. Men and women alike can find redemption through the same gospel—the gospel of salvation through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, who died for our sins. This is the real meaning of Galatians 3:28, where the context is the common ground of our salvation.¹¹

Mohler believes in equality. Tully's critique of Mohler, however, assumes a different *definition* of equality. Mohler, like other complementarians, hold a different definition of equality than egalitarians do and, thus, a different view of how equality is practiced. Tully, however, does not consider this point when accusing Mohler of having a problem with the practice of equality. This point matters because equivocation is a logical fallacy in Tully's explanation. This same fallacy surfaces in another more significant way in his comparisons between TGC and ISIS.

COMPARING QUOTATIONS

Tully prefaces his comparisons as follows: "I do not wish to compare apples to oranges, but rather to show how eerily similar the rhetoric is between ISIS and TGC on gender roles." Tully also explains that "in no way do I think that The Gospel Coalition (or complementarians in general) are the same as ISIS." Tully, then, provides seven quotations for the reader to determine who wrote them; three come from the ISIS manifesto on women and four from complementarians—as Tully indicates in his blog post. Given their repetitive nature, I will refrain from commenting on all of them individually.

The first quote comes from the ISIS manifestation on women.¹⁴ It reads: "The problem today is that women are not fulfilling their fundamental roles, the role that is consistent with their deepest nature, for an important reason, that women are not presented with a true picture of man and, because of the rise in the number of emasculated men who do not shoulder the responsibility allocated to them." The rest of the quotation continues: "towards their *ummah*, religion or people, and not even towards their houses or their sons, who are being supported by their wives." This manifesto claims that "woman was created to populate the Earth just as man was." They continue, and Tully's sixth quote: "But, as God wanted it to be, she was made from Adam and for Adam. Beyond this, her creator ruled that there was no responsibility greater for her than that of being a wife to her husband."

The seventh quote comes from Owen Strachan. Tully cites only: "To be a women is to support, to nurture, and to strengthen men in order that they would flourish and fulfill their God-given role as leaders." Strachan continues to explain: "Men may well veer into sin from their own weakness. But

^{11.} Ibid., emphasis added.

^{12.} Tully, "Who Said It? The Gospel Coalition or ISIS on Gender Roles."

^{13.} Ibid.

^{14.} Al-Khanssaa Brigade, Women of the Islamic State, trans., Charlie Winter (www.quilliamfoundation.org: The Quailliam Foundation, 2015).

^{15.} Ibid., 17.

^{16.} Ibid.

^{17.} Ibid.

^{18.} Ibid.

^{19.} Owen Strachan, "The Genesis of Gender and Ecclesial Womanhood," *9Marks*, July 1, 2010, accessed October 29, 2015, http://9marks.org/article/genesis-gender-and-ecclesial-womanhood.

they gain a considerable buttress when supported by godly women in the church. Women enable men to flourish and to lead others to do the same."²⁰

On the surface, Tully's right; these quotes sound "eerily similar." However, although these quotes sound similar, the fact that Tully cites them in a parallel fashion represents a clear misunderstanding of at least one of these positions for at least two reasons. First, Tully's presentation of these citations is problematic because he does not distinguish between the theology proper of these citations. That is, when ISIS refers to "God," they mean Allah, not the Triune God of the Bible. This difference matters significantly—to the point that the comparison loses any real theologically significant meaning. In fact, this kind of citation of these sources commits equivocation again because Tully uses the same word twice with different meanings. Yes, the original writers use the "God" in their English translation, but the Arabic from which their document was translated would have used Allah, an unmistakable reference. Tully would likely agree with this point, but the fact that he did not distinguish this point on his blog is problematic because the God of the Bible is the true God where as Allah is not.

Second, this kind of citation is problematic because it demonstrates a lack of understanding of why Strachan would write something like that. As Kassian wrote, the reason why complementarians make this kind of claim is because they believe that the Triune God of the Bible defines manhood, womanhood, and equality. If Tully wants to interact more seriously with complementarianism, then he should interact with this position at this level, not by making bad comparisons because something sounds similar. Homophones are words or phrases that sound similar; an example would be "euthanasia" versus "Youth in Asia." The former is assisted suicide whereas the latter refers to a group of people in a specific location. Although they may sound "eerily similar," they form no meaningful comparison because they refer to two entirely different things. Although these quotes sound similar, their meaning also forms no meaningful comparison.

CONCLUSION: A PLEA FOR UNDERSTANDING

First, as a complementarian writing in response to at least one egalitarian, please, take the appropriate time to understand complementarianism, at the very least for avoiding bad comparisons. Jesus calls Christians to love their neighbors as themselves. If egalitarians want their complementarian neighbors to invest enough time to understand their egalitarian position well, then please do the same for us. Please stop making bad comparisons; surely egalitarians would not want complementarians to do the same to them. Mortimer J. Adler is famous for writing a book titled *How to Read a Book*; in this book, he writes: "Do not say you agree, disagree, or suspend judgment, until you can say 'I understand." The same point is true for theological positions—before someone explains how and why they disagree, they need to demonstrate understanding. Tully did not do this.

Second, when trying to understand complementarianism, please go to the best published books and articles, not merely quotes in blogs. Egalitarians would likely expect the same for complementarians who wish to understand their egalitarian position. Yes, there is certainly room for continued theological discussion for refining arguments, but if that is going to happen, let's stop comparing oranges to hand-grenades.

^{20.} Ibid.

^{21.} Mortimer Jerome Adler and Charles Lincoln Van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, Rev. and updated ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 164.

MISSING THE TARGET

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n August Target became the next corporate power,¹ after Amazon,² to rid themselves of all gender designations and labels for children's toys and bedding. In the corporate rush to not be the company behind the ever-moving gender eight ball, all it seems to take is a few social-media punches from disgruntled, progressive customers, and companies are swift to jump on the winding, zigzag gender line.

The problem is, the line keeps moving and twisting, and in this case, disappearing. Not that it will matter to most boys and girls. Boys will still want to play with Legos and sleep on Superman sheets, and girls will still want Barbie dolls and a Sofia pillow-case. But in a world where the very concept of gender is being neutralized, and in a society where parents themselves are trying to outrun their own gender identities, dragging their children onto their own dark labyrinths (look no further than Bruce Jenner at the ESPY's),³ this only adds to the problem. Rather than reinforcing maleness and femaleness, this confuses it. Instead of helping guide children towards embracing who they actually are, this blurs reality.

^{1.} Jennifer Calfas, "Target to Remove Gender-Based Labeling," *USA Today*, August 9, 2015, accessed November 4, 2015, http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2015/08/09/target-remove-gender-based-labeling/31375863/.

^{2.} Alejandro Alba, "Amazon Becomes Gender Neutral, Removes 'Boys' and 'Girls' Labels in Toy Department," *New York Daily News*, May 7, 2015, accessed November 4, 2015, http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/amazon-gender-neutral-removes-boys-girls-labels-article-1.2214550.

^{3.} Emily Shapiro, "See Caitlin Jenner Preach Acceptance in Emotion ESPYs Award Speech," *ABC News*, July 15, 2015, accessed November 4, 2015, http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/caitlyn-jenner-preaches-acceptance-emotional-espys-award-speech/story?id=32479971.

GENDER HAS MEANING

There is a jar-headish catch-phrase used in the Marine Corps that says, "Words mean things." As silly as it sounds, it is early true. Lives depend, especially in combat, on speaking accurately and truthfully.

The principle holds true regarding gender. Gender means things. Despite the culture's belief that we can outrun our gender—and the God of the universe who created it—we are ultimately destined to be as God has intended: male and female.

Sex is an integral part of being an image bearer of God; we are fundamentally at our very core either male or female (Gen 1:27). Furthermore, our sexuality is not merely the product of our parents' reproductive systems. It is so much more than that. Every person's sexuality was planned and designed before the foundation of the world by a God who loves each person, as he made him or her to be, male or female.

SO WHAT'S THE POINT OF GENDER?

Progressives will say that gender-designated toys only serve to reinforce gender stereotypes. By that they are largely referring to the gender-designated roles lying just beneath the surface of both G.I. Joe and Barbie.

The Bible teaches that men are wired by God to protect and to pursue, so it is not surprising that they naturally like toys that by-and-large involve fighting, building, and racing. Women, on the other hand, are wired by God to nurture and to be pursued, so it is also not surprising that they largely enjoy playing with American Girl Dolls, Barbies, and Disney princess dresses.

Toy companies, of course, aren't basing their marketing strategy on the Bible, but they do understand to a large degree God's natural wiring of boys and girls, and they shape the production of their toys accordingly.

GENDER IDENTITY IN A WORLD WITHOUT LIMITS

The problem with gender roles for the secular mind, and in this case, gender-designated signs for the toy aisles at Target, is that they confine. Anything that remotely suggests any type of "boundary" must go, because it limits the progressive nature of humanity—that we can forge our own path in the universe.

However, in the end, the secular ideology is a losing game because it does not work. It is untrue. There are fixed realities in the universe, and they do not change, even if our postmodern minds refuse to acknowledge them. And that's a good thing!

After all God's good design, which includes our gender, is not meant to restrict, but to enable us to flourish. Ultimately, God has created boys and girls for more than toys. He's created them for a purpose far greater than Mattel or American Girl Doll. He's created every boy and girl for himself, to display his image and glory in the world. And he has created them as male and female.

And no Target sign can change that.

STUDIES

WHEN YOU INDULGE IN PORNOGRAPHY, YOU PARTICIPATE IN SEX SLAVERY¹

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ornography is to sex slavery what gasoline is to the engines of motor vehicles. Gas fuels engines. Pornography fuels sex slavery.

Sex slavery and pornography are not two disconnected issues. They are organically connected in the international market for sex.

WHAT IS SEX SLAVERY?

Most adults and teenagers know what *pornography* is. It is printed or virtual material that explicitly describes or displays sexual body parts or activity in order to stimulate erotic feelings.

But what exactly is *sex slavery*? A *slave* is a person who is the property of another person, and that owner forces the slave to obey them. A sex slave is a person who is the property of another person, and that owner forces the slave to obey them by performing sex acts, usually for money. Sex slavery is sex trafficking, which includes acquiring, transporting, and exploiting sex slaves.²

^{1.} Thanks to friends who examined a draft of this essay and shared helpful feedback, especially Justin Holcomb, Becky McDonald, Laila Mickelwait, Jenni Naselli, Sarah Williams, and the twenty graduate students in my spring 2015 Biblical Ethics course at Bethlehem College & Seminary.

^{2.} The "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children," which the United Nations General Assembly adopted in 2000, defines sex trafficking with more nuance (http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/index.html). The following quotation occurs on pages 42–43 of the full text of the Convention and its Protocols (http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf):

⁽a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse

Most prostituted women are sex slaves.³ Often a pimp physically and psychologically abuses prostituted women to coerce them to continue committing commercial sex acts. Sometimes people abduct children and adolescent women and force them into prostitution. Most women who enter prostitution have already been sexually abused. Prostituted women are often girls or adolescent women who are insecure and become emotionally traumatized and view themselves as worthless.⁴

When I was teaching on sex slavery recently in a course on Biblical Ethics, Michel, one of my students, shared a personal story with the class. (I'm sharing it here with his permission.) Michel is from Colombia, and he grew up in Miami. God saved Michel in 2005, and Michel stopped hanging out with some of his high school friends who regularly partied with alcohol and marijuana. Alex (not his real name) was one of those friends, and he moved back to Colombia and began making a lot of money. Alex hired some of Michel's other old friends to work for him. Michel didn't know how Alex was making so much money. Then in 2006 one of Michel's friends who was working for Alex died in a car accident. A few days after his funeral, Alex contacted Michel and asked Michel if he would like to start working for him and replace his friend who had just died. Alex promised Michel, "You will earn a lot of money and have fun." Michel asked what the job was. Alex replied, "It is a very simple job. You would just have to go to the airport when I call you and pick up girls that are traveling to Miami. When you pick them up, you can do whatever you want with them for the first day. Then I will give you the address where you have to take them, and some men will be waiting for them. After a few days, you just pick them up and take them to the airport again. That's it." (Michel, of course, refused.)

HOW DOES PORNOGRAPHY FUEL SEX SLAVERY?

Pornography fuels the demand for prostitution and thus for sex slavery. I haven't heard anyone argue this more clearly and compellingly than David Platt does in chapter 5 of *Counter Culture*.⁵

of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

- (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;
- (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article:
 - (d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.
- 3. See Melissa Farley et al., "Prostitution in Five Countries: Violence and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," Feminism & Psychology 8, no. 4 (1998): 405–26. They conclude, "Across countries, 73 percent reported physical assault in prostitution, 62 percent reported having been raped since entering prostitution, 67 percent met criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD. On average, 92 percent stated that they wanted to leave prostitution" (405).
- 4. For one former prostituted woman's story, see Annie Lobert, Fallen out of the Sex Industry and into the Arms of the Savior (Brentwood, TN: Worthy, 2015). For more about sex trafficking, see (1) https://exoduscry.com/resources/, including the sobering documentary Nefarious: Merchant of Souls, directed, produced, written, and narrated by Benjamin Nolot, president and founder of Exodus Cry, (2) https://warinternational.org/, (3) Jacob's Story, a 14-minute mini-documentary by Unearthed, http://unearthedpictures.org/updates/post/jacobs-story, and (4) two short articles by Justin Holcomb: "Facing Up to Sex Trafficking," 9Marks Journal: Biblical Thinking for Building Healthy Churches (July–August 2012): 37–41; "Human Trafficking: Recommended Reading," January 11, 2012, http://justinholcomb.com/2012/01/11/human-trafficking-recommended-reading/.
- 5. David Platt, "A War on Women: The Gospel and Sex Slavery," in Counter Culture: A Compassionate Call to Counter Culture in a World of Poverty, Same-Sex Marriage, Racism, Sex Slavery, Immigration, Persecution, Abortion, Orphans, and

Platt tells the story of a nine-year-old girl in northern Nepal named Maliha. A charming slave trader deceived Maliha's poverty-stricken single mother when he promised to help provide for their family by helping Maliha get a well-paying job in the city at the bottom of the Himalayan mountains. He promised to send the money she earned back to the mother and to bring Maliha back to visit her family at least once each year. The mother reluctantly agreed, but the man did not keep his word. Maliha's new job was to sit outside a restaurant in the city, where customers would see this beautiful girl.

A man would grab her by the hand, and she would quietly follow him into one of the booths. There, he would eat and drink and then either take Maliha upstairs to her room or stay right there in the booth and force her to do whatever he told her to do. After he was finished, she would go out and wait for another man, and then another man. Sometimes, on a busy night, fifteen or twenty different customers would have their way with Maliha however they desired.

This was Maliha's life, and there was no way out. The man who first smiled at her back in her village months before had gone back to find other girls, and Maliha now worked for other men. They told her that if she tried to stop working at the restaurant, they would go back to the village and bring her little sister there to take her place. They assured her that her work was providing for her family back home. Little did she know that her mom never received another rupee. Meanwhile, for all her mom, little brother, and little sister knew, Maliha had completely forgotten about them when she got to the big city.

Even if Maliha could have escaped, where would she go? She had no clue where she was and no idea how to get home. She knew no one but the men who owned her. She had nothing to her name. The only thing she had was her shame....

Platt next tells a story of a sixteen-year-old girl named Hannah. She lived in Birmingham, Alabama. Her boyfriend started treating her like a queen and convinced her to flee with him to Los Angeles so that she could be a model. Then he pressured her to pose nude for photo shoots. Then he pressured her to have sex with truckers. "Within a matter of months, Hannah's promising boyfriend had become her pimp."

Platt then shows how pornography connects to sex trafficking:

Research continually demonstrates a clear link between sex trafficking and the production of pornography. Federal legislation has acknowledged this, participants in the production of pornography have confirmed this, and while exact figures are hard to pin down, one anti-trafficking center reports that at least a third of victims trafficked for sex are used in the production of pornography. Another study on the relationship between prostitution, pornography, and trafficking found that one half of nearly nine hundred prostitutes in nine different countries reported pornography being made of them while in prostitution. When we hear such research, we mustn't miss the con-

Pornography (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2015), 105-27, 255-57.

^{6.} Ibid., 112.

^{7.} Ibid., 115.

^{8.} Platt is referring to a 2007 study: In "interviews with 854 women in prostitution in 9 countries [Canada, Colombia, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, United States, and Zambia] women and men in prostitution made it

nection. Men and women who indulge in pornography are creating the demand for more prostitutes, and in turn they are fueling the sex-trafficking industry.

Yet the cycle is even more vicious than that. For the more people watch pornography, the more they desire sexual fulfillment through prostitution. Such desire drives men (and women) to engage in physical prostitution or even virtual prostitution as "every home computer [becomes] a potential red light district." Pornography thus feeds prostitution, again increasing the demand for sex trafficking.

Do we realize what we're doing? Every time a man or woman views pornography online, we are contributing to a cycle of sex slavery from the privacy of our own computers. ...

No matter how many red Xs we write on our hands to end slavery, as long as these same hands are clicking on pornographic websites and scrolling through sexual pictures and videos, we are frauds to the core.⁹

Platt is not the only one making this connection. For example, one of the more academic arguments is in a journal that Johns Hopkins University produces. The article is titled "The Slave and the Porn Star: Sexual Trafficking and Pornography," and it "argues that there are a number of links between pornography and sex trafficking and that curbing pornography can reduce sex trafficking." 11

The growing evidence is horrific. More and more women who escape the bondage of sex slavery—which often includes being forced to pose nude for photographs and to endure sex acts for films, all while pretending to enjoy it—are testifying that pornography fuels sex slavery. Not only are many of the women in pornographic pictures and films themselves sex slaves, but pimps regularly use pornography to instruct children and young women how to perform for customers.

You can't indulge in pornography without being part of that culture, without fueling prostitution and sex slavery. ¹⁴ Pornography is part of the law of supply and demand for prostitution and sex slavery.

clear that pornography is integral to prostitution. In 9 countries, almost half (49 percent) told us that pornography was made of them while they were in prostitution" (Melissa Farley, "'Renting an Organ for Ten Minutes': What Tricks Tell Us about Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking," in *Pornography: Driving the Demand in International Sex Trafficking*, ed. David E. Guinn and Julie DiCaro [Los Angeles: Captive Daughters Media, 2007], 145).

^{9.} Platt, Counter Culture, 120-22.

^{10.} Robert W. Peters, Laura J. Lederer, and Shane Kelly, "The Slave and the Porn Star: Sexual Trafficking and Pornography," The Protection Project Journal of Human Rights and Civil Society 5 (2012): 1–21, available at http://rescuefreedom.org/parallax/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/slave-and-the-porn-star.pdf.
11. Ibid., 1.

^{12.} E.g., see http://stoptraffickingdemand.com/. See also Jefferson Bethke's short video *Porn: Human Trafficking at Your Finger Tips* and other resources at http://rescuefreedom.org/get-involved/refusetoclick/. One organization puts it this way (http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/pdfs/renaissancemaletenthings4fin.pdf): "Don't consume pornography. Pornography manipulates male sexuality, popularizes unhealthy attitudes towards sex and sexuality, and eroticizes violence against women. Pornography leads men and boys to believe that certain sexual acts are normal, when in fact sexual acts that are non-consensual, offensive and coupled with violent intent result in the pain, suffering, and humiliation of women and children. In addition, a disproportionate amount of mainstream pornography sexualizes younger women with such titles as 'teens,' 'barely 18,' 'cheerleaders,' etc. Targeting younger women socializes men to develop appetites for younger and younger women and creates a 'pedophile-like culture' among men. Victims of human trafficking have also been forced into pornography. Men can stop the voyeurism of sex and sex acts that fuel human trafficking by refusing to consume pornography and encourage others to do the same."

^{13.} Peters, Lederer, and Kelly, "The Slave and the Porn Star," 9n47.

^{14.} On the connection between sex slavery and profit motives, see Niklas Jakobsson and Andreas Kotsadam, "The Law and Economics of International Sex Slavery: Prostitution Laws and Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation," *European Journal of*

It fuels the demand for sex slavery. Justin Holcomb explains how:

The primary way porn fuels the sex trade is by building the demand. The sex trade consists of supply and demand. The supply consists of women and children who are either forced into exploitation at home or lured away from their homes with promises of jobs, travel, and a better life. The average age of girls who enter into street prostitution is between 12 and 14 years old, and even younger in some developing countries. Traffickers coerce women and children to enter the commercial sex industry through a variety of recruitment techniques in strip clubs, street-based prostitution, and escort services. Thousands of children and women are victimized in this way every year.

The trafficking industry would not exist without demand. According to researcher Andrea Bertone, the demand consists of men who feed a "patriarchal world system" that preys on women and children.¹⁵

Plant this deeply and firmly in your conscience: *since pornography fuels sex slavery, indulging in pornography to any degree is participating in sex slavery.* This is the case even if the porn star you lustfully look at is profiting financially from that pornography. The point is that any and all pornography is part of the worldwide system that fuels prostitution and thus fuels sex slavery.

Indulging in pornography has both direct and indirect effects: (1) Indulging in pornography contributes to sex slavery *directly* by increasing the demand for pornography and thus increasing the demand for human trafficking for the sake of producing pornography. (2) Indulging in pornography contributes to sex slavery *indirectly* even when a person does not visit prostitutes himself. By contributing to the demand for pornography, he is helping grow the scope and scale of an industry that is responsible for increasing the demand of others to use prostitutes, and thus he is contributing to the increasing supply of prostitutes. So even a man who does not personally transition from indulging in pornography to prostitutes is still fueling the industry through which others will.¹⁶

HOW SHOULD MEN FEEL ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY?

What does it mean to be a man? It's hard to improve how John Piper defines mature masculinity: "At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect

Law and Economics 35 (2013): 87-107.

^{15.} Justin Holcomb, "Isn't Porn Harmless," May 5, 2012, http://justinholcomb.com/2012/03/05/isnt-porn-harmless/. Holcomb is referring to this article: Andrea Marie Bertone, "Sexual Trafficking in Women: International Political Economy and the Politics of Sex," *Gender Issues* 18, no. 1 (1999): 4–22.

^{16.} Thanks to Leo Novakovskiy for helping me shape this paragraph. Ben Reaoch puts it this way ("What Christians Do about Modern-Day Slavery," *Desiring God*, February 16, 2013, http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-christians-do-about-modern-day-slavery.):

Then there are the forces of supply and demand, and the way that pornography creates more and more demand for the commercial sex industry. Pornography is like the gateway drug. People get addicted, and then they want something more. Pornography fuels prostitution (heightening the demand for prostitutes), and a higher demand for prostitutes means more lucrative opportunities for pimps, which means more women and children exploited by them for these purposes. So if you're looking at porn, even if you're not paying for it, you're showing the advertisers and producers of pornography and all those involved in the sex business that demand is high, which then motivates them to shame and exploit even more people.

Think about that the next time you're tempted to click on that website. Your momentary "pleasure" is contributing to the absolute devastation of women and girls and boys around the world.

women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships." Men *protect* women. A man honors a woman when he protects her. "Women and children are put into the lifeboats first, not because the men are necessarily better swimmers, but because of a deep sense of honorable fitness. It belongs to masculinity to accept danger to protect women. ... A mature man senses instinctively that as a man he is called to take the lead in guarding the woman he is with." ¹⁸

I do not struggle with whether I should be violently aggressive toward women or children. I am not tempted to punch them or throw them or do any kind of harm to them. Every instinct in me tells me to protect them. This is a value that my parents instilled in me, that my church leaders instilled in me, that God through the Bible has instilled in me, and that most fundamentally God instilled in me as a man. Harming a woman or child is unconscionable. And looking at pornography belongs in that same category because pornography harms women. Why is it that men do not think about pornography from the vantage point of manhood?

My target audience is men—young men, middle-aged men, older men, all of you. ¹⁹ Can you hear the story about the nine-year-old Maliha and not feel both pity for Maliha and righteous anger towards those who oppress her? There are millions of stories that are variations on Maliha's life as a sex slave. When you hear how adults are enslaving girls and young women—raping them, masturbating in their bodies—does that not make you feel sick to your stomach? Do you not feel outraged against people who victimize children and young women? *That* is exactly how you should feel about pornography. Pornography should be as vomit-inducing to you as an evil man raping a nine-year-old girl. Pornography should be as revolting and disgusting to you as a group of evil men gang-raping a helpless woman. "If you saw a woman being gang raped in a back alley, would you stop and masturbate?" That's essentially what men are doing when they indulge in pornography.

This is not the only reason or even the most compelling that a person should not indulge in pornography. You might think that indulging in pornography alone on your computer doesn't hurt anybody, but it hurts both you and others. Tim Chester lists twelve reasons to give up pornography:²¹

- 1. Porn wrecks your view of sex.
- 2. Porn wrecks your view of women.
- 3. Porn wrecks women's view of themselves.

^{17.} John Piper, "A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined according to the Bible," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 36.

^{18.} Ibid., 43-44.

^{19.} My original audience for this research was seminarians. I normally teach New Testament and theology, but I also get to teach a graduate-level class called Biblical Ethics. The issues we address throughout the course include lying, abortion, euthanasia, death penalty, contraception, homosexuality, same-sex attraction, divorce and remarriage, genetic engineering, ethnicity, war, the secular state, the environment, and sex slavery and pornography. I feel compelled to address pornography and sex slavery because in this course I am training men in my seminary who are planning to spend their lives ministering God's word as church leaders. That means that they will likely be spending a significant portion of their time shepherding people who are enslaved to pornography. So they need to analyze this particular sin with serpentine shrewdness. But even more personally, I assume that Satan and his demons see a bright red bulls-eye on these men. They have already grown up in a culture where pornography is ubiquitous, and it isn't going to get easier. Many of them have scars from fighting the sin of pornography, and all of us—"us" includes seminary professors and pastors, too—must vigilantly fight this sin and never let up our guard. So I am always intensely interested in thinking through how to mortify lusts that want to indulge in pornography. My main argument in this essay is one more weapon to fight this sin.

^{20.} Toby J. Sumpter, "The Porn War," Having Two Legs, April 30, 2013, http://www.tobyjsumpter.com/the-porn-war/.

^{21.} Tim Chester, "Looking beyond the Frame," in *Closing the Window: Steps to Living Porn Free* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 15–35, 148–49.

- 4. The porn industry abuses women.
- 5. Porn is a sin against your wife. ... If you're not yet married, *porn is a sin against your future wife*.
- 6. Porn wrecks families.
- 7. Porn is enslaving.
- 8. Porn erodes your character.
- 9. Porn wastes your time, energy, and money.
- 10. Porn weakens your relationship with God.
- 11. Porn weakens your service.
- 12. God's wrath is against people who use porn.

Perhaps the most compelling is that last one: the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God.²² But others have written more comprehensively on this subject, and I don't intend to retread that ground here.²³ My focus here is what Chester lists as reason #4: "The porn industry abuses women." It abuses women and children in many ways,²⁴ and my focus here is that it abuses women and children by fueling prostitution and sex slavery. Real men should never indulge in pornography because that makes them complicit in sex slavery. This is about honor. This is about protecting vulnerable women and children. This is about being a man. This is about manhood.

I recently read the Wingfeather Saga to my daughter Kara. It's a four-book adventure series by Andrew Peterson, and the main characters are three siblings: Janner is the oldest, and he has a younger brother and sister, Tink and Leeli. A motif that runs through the series is that Janner is responsible to *protect* his siblings. At key points in the story he sacrifices himself for the good of his siblings (and others) in response to a refrain that rings in his head: *protect, protect!* It's beautiful. It's budding manhood. That's what God designed men to do for women and children. Protect, protect! That's a God-given manly instinct. Cowards suppress it. Fools ignore it. Honorable men follow it.²⁵

When you indulge in pornography, you participate in sex slavery. Pornography should make men feel not pleasure but disgust and outrage. If you are an honorable man, you will protect women and children by not indulging in pornography. Protect, protect, protect!

^{22.} See especially John Piper, "Faith in Future Grace vs. Lust," in Future Grace (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1995), 329–38.

^{23.} The two overall most helpful resources I'm aware of are Piper's article "Future Grace vs. Lust" (see previous note) and Heath Lambert, Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013). Other helpful resources include Randy Alcorn, The Purity Principle (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003); Alcorn, Sexual Temptation: Establishing Guardrails and Winning the Battle, 3rd ed. (Sandy, OR: Eternal Perspectives Ministry, 2011); Joshua Harris, Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is): Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003); David Powlison, "Breaking Pornography Addiction," October 15, 2009, http://www.ccef.org/breaking-pornography-addiction-part-1; John Freeman, Hide or Seek: When Men Get Real with God about Sex (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2014). See also C. S. Lewis, "Sexual Morality," in Mere Christianity (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 94–103.

^{24.} For other ways, see Mary Eberstadt and Mary Anne Layden, *The Social Costs of Pornography: A Statement of Findings and Recommendations* (Princeton: The Witherspoon Institute, 2010), 23–36. See also Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb, *Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

^{25.} The gospel of Jesus the Messiah is stronger than the pull towards pornography. God can change any kind of sinful heart so that a man no longer loves his lust but abhors it, no longer hates God but loves him. God can rescue men from indulging in pornography, making them truly masculine men who protect women and children and do not abuse them. We could say so much more here (cf. the resources in note 23 above), but I am footnoting this comment because my argument in this essay is more of a natural-law argument than a Bible-argument or gospel-centered argument. I am arguing, "Does not nature itself teach you ...?!"

WILLIAM WEBB'S REDEMPTIVE-MOVEMENT HERMENEUTIC: SOME CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCERNS

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ow does one apply the Bible to today's life in a way that is fair to the text? This is a crucial question for Christians today. Bible readers must answer questions about cultural language and setting, literary forms such as poetry and allegory, and ultimately how these are tethered together in a way that matters for faith and practice. These questions are difficult to answer, particularly due to the futility of the human condition. Yet, this does not mean that Christians should not make a diligent attempt to answer them.

William J. Webb, formerly a New Testament professor at Heritage Seminary who is now teaching as an adjunct professor at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto, has spent much of his career attempting to address these very concerns. In exploring this topic, he has authored several books including *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals* and *Corporal Punishment in the Bible*. He is also currently writing a book on war texts in the Bible with InterVarsity Press.

These works are all tied to what he calls the *redemptive-movement model* (RMM) of hermeneutics, which will be discussed in this paper. First, the RMM will be summarized. Second, test cases offered by Webb for the application of the RMM will be briefly considered. Finally, the RMM will be evaluated and critiqued. The paper intends to show that the RMM, though helpful to the broader discussion on hermeneutics, is not a sustainable model for today's Christian.

THE REDEMPTIVE-MOVEMENT MODEL

Webb's primary thrust is that Christians employ a "static understanding" of the Bible. In other words, they read the Bible "only within [its] immediate literary context" which "creates an isolated or non-movement understanding of the Bible's ethic" and "neglects to understand its words within their larger

ancient social context." For Webb, the Bible is not simply a frozen-in-time roadmap; it is a dynamic text that moves and is meant to move beyond its own immediate historical context and original application.

Webb is concerned that by restricting the Bible to its context, readers are: 1) forcing themselves into an unnecessarily safe and certain reading of its content, and 2) limiting their potential experience of God's ultimate ethic as a result.² In Webb's opinion, Christian readers are convinced that a "contemporary ethic with the concrete specificity of the biblical text" has "the approval of God and thus the safety they are looking for." In turn, the reader is able to paint a fully-formed picture of biblical ethics that soothes his need for a fixed explanation of troublesome or confusing texts. Webb instead argues that "Scripture seems to gives [sic] us an ethic that needs in some ways to be developed and worked out over time." For Webb, the RMM provides "a solution to the ethical dilemmas and hermeneutical inconsistencies" and to "ease [his] troubled soul as a Christian struggling with difficult texts in the Bible." His application of this principle within the RMM is seen in several test cases.

TEST CASES FOR THE RMM

Slavery

Citing Exodus 21:20–21 (to paraphrase, "A slave owner may beat his slave but not *to death*") as an example, Webb argues that God's progressive ethic, tantamount to the RMM, is in full view. In the ancient Near East (ANE), there was nothing forbidding a slave owner from beating his slave to death. But this text illustrates a slight movement away from the ANE norm, presenting a picture of God moving the culture in "incremental steps toward a better treatment of human beings." Though the ANE was riddled with poor treatment of slaves, God offered a better alternative though it was seemingly a small step forward. Further, not only did God demand that their lives be spared; he commanded freedom for and harboring of dishonored slaves. For Webb, this understanding is a useful apologetic against those who reject the Christian faith based on ostensibly harsh texts such as these. 8

Women

In dealing with women in ANE contexts, Webb shows several ways in which the Bible reveals a "redemptive spirit." For example, men could sell their daughters to any man they wished, most often to be used as slaves or concubines. However, Exodus 21:7–11 "limited the sale of concubines within the Isra-

^{1.} William J. Webb, "A Redemptive-Movement Model," in *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 215

^{2.} Ibid., 216-17.

^{3.} Ibid., 217.

^{4.} Ibid.

^{5.} William J. Webb, Corporal Punishment in the Bible: A Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic for Troubling Texts (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 57.

^{6.} Ibid., 224.

^{7.} William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 74–76.

^{8.} Webb, Corporal Punishment in the Bible, 63.

elite nation" and afforded them rights not customarily afforded to daughters. Additionally, the biblical text allows for abnormal opportunities in cases of family inheritance and divorce, and calls for better treatment in marriage—even in cases of adultery. For Webb, this is a clear depiction of God pushing the boundaries of the prevailing patriarchy of the day. He notes that the New Testament affirms the RMM in places such as Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 11:11–12, which advance additional social implications for the equality of women.

Homosexuality

Webb explains that the biblical text moves away from the homosexual practices of the ANE culture in three major ways. First, it challenged the portrait of ancient gods. Ancient gods were not known for their chastity, but Yahweh's people imitated him in sexual restraint. Second, these ancient gods were worshiped in part through homosexual and other inappropriate acts. Deuteronomy 23:18 shows an explicit ban from such behavior. Finally, foreign nations were often significantly tolerant of homosexual practices, but there was a no-tolerance policy within the covenant community. Webb also posits that there was no softening of this stance in the New Testament community and, therefore, this practice is not moving toward Judeo-Christian acceptance.¹²

Spanking Children

ANE law codes allow for extreme violence toward children in disciplinary situations, including removal of body parts. Webb reveals his distaste for the Bible's similar approval of leaving marks on children with rods and whips. He commends the sentiment of several prominent "no marks or bruises" and "two-smacks-max" advocates such as Albert Mohler, Andreas Kostenberger, and Focus on the Family, but is ultimately unimpressed with their conclusions. Rather, Webb suggests that Christians ought to abandon spankings altogether and instead seek alternative methods of discipline. The ANE was a "mutilation-obsessed world" and Scripture is clearly "headed toward more constructive (less destructive) means of punishment" in such texts as Deuteronomy 25:11–12, but alternative-only methods show dignity to children and present a better "witness for Jesus in an unbelieving world." While some are trapped in a concrete biblical understanding of child discipline, Webb reminds readers that "God cares deeply about the discipline of children, but surely he would not scold us" for using other non-violent methods. The contractive of the property of the surely he would not scold us to using other non-violent methods.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

As noted at the beginning of this paper, Webb's RMM is a helpful addition to the hermeneutical conversation. His primary interest is to pull readers away from a fixed reading of the Bible that only

^{9.} Webb, Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals, 76-77.

^{10.} Ibid., 78-80.

^{11.} Ibid., 86-87.

^{12.} Ibid., 81–82.

^{13.} Webb, Corporal Punishment in the Bible, 44-54.

^{14.} Ibid., 132-35.

^{15.} Webb, "A Redemptive-Movement Model," 237.

accounts for cultural settings. The danger in being overly-static is superimposing all biblical texts into today's context. One must realize that there are various literary genres at play in Scripture.

Thomas Schreiner, while intensely critical of the RMM, compliments Webb in that he "rightly reminds us that hermeneutical issues are fundamental in assessing the normative status of commands and practices in the scriptures." For example, one must be able to read texts that include sinful actions Solomon's multiple concubines without thinking that concubines are permissible. One should also pay close attention to Jesus's culturally-driven parables and not assume that only a farmer or rich young ruler could benefit from their teaching. The Bible is not lifeless and stationary. Divine accommodation may explain some tough texts, particularly in the Old Testament. Unfortunately, the direction in which Webb takes these apprehensions is risky at best and dangerous at worst.

SOME CONCERNS

Several concerns come to mind when facing the implications of the RMM. First, perhaps the most obvious question for Webb is, why would God not give his people the ultimate ethic from the beginning? Webb replies that "God brings his people along in ways that were feasible adaptations." This accommodation allows people to step away from cultural norms but in ways that they (and their surrounding context) can handle. This sentiment has merit at the surface (after all, it would be rather kind of God to help his people along slowly), yet it does not bear the weight of Scripture's testimony.

In Scripture, God is not pleased to allow sin to continue. Consider a few examples: God removes Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden for their initial disobedience; he wipes out nearly the entire human race in the Flood narrative due to its overwhelming wickedness; he destroys Sodom and Gomorrah due to its ungodliness; he kills Uzzah for disobeying him in what appeared to be a harmless mistake, and he does the same to Ananias and Sapphira for lying about their tithes. Romans 1 plainly explains that God is storing up wrath against ungodliness and unrighteousness. This is does not appear to be a God ready to compromise with sinful mortals.

Using texts such as Matthew 19:1–12, in which Jesus builds upon Moses's divorce regulations in Deuteronomy 24:1–4, Webb explains that the Bible shows a "multi-level ethic" that proposes an alternative to divorce (an alternative which enhances devotion to kingdom service) as well as an additional qualification to divorce. One might use this to defend Webb, clarifying that he is not always dealing directly with sinful actions but also with the practical outworking of kingdom living. One could also retort that because God allows sin and imperfect discipleship to exist at all shows that he is longsuffering toward an imperfect ethic. These are both true so far as they go. Indeed, Jesus and the New Testament writers frequently advance Old Testament ethics in varieties of ways. And one should note that Jesus has not yet returned to make all things new (Rev. 21:5). This reveals that God offers undoubted grace toward fallen people. However, Jesus tells believers in Matthew 5:48 to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." It is difficult to make the claim that Jesus is on the one hand teaching slightly deficient improvements, while on the other hand telling his followers, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father" (John 14:9). He still announces and commands an ultimate ethic in the here and now.

^{16.} Thomas R. Schreiner, "William J. Webb's *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*: A Review Article, SBJT 6, no. 1 (2002): 47. 17. Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals*, 255.

^{18.} Ibid., 41–43.

Second, the trajectory of the RMM is unreliable and undefinable. If one resolves to apply this hermeneutic, he will quickly notice that there is no express end to the application. Webb admits that appropriating the RMM is "hard work" that requires grappling with "complex issues," but that Christians should "champion [Scripture's] redemptive spirit in new and fresh ways that logically and theologically extend its movement meaning into today's context." What is the logical and theological extent of Scripture if read through the RMM lens? This is at last left unclear. Thus, if one were to adopt the RMM and work through these complex issues, there would be no terminal use of the method. Though subjectivity plays a key role in any hermeneutical method, beginning from the position that objectivity is not attainable is discouraging at best. Christians should ask along with Daniel Doriani, "How much movement should we expect?" There is no definitive answer.

Further, the RMM lacks satisfactory application within the Bible itself. For instance, how does the RMM explain deliberate monogamy in the Garden, tolerable polygamy in the Old Testament, described monogamy in the New Testament, and the pronounced end of marriage in the eschaton? Regarding women, Mark Strauss argues that Galatians 3:28 ("Paul's most egalitarian statement") is likely written earlier than 1 Timothy 2:11–15 ("his most restrictive statement"), thus reversing the order in which Webb sees the women issue heading, hence derailing the RMM's course.²¹ Applying the RMM to either situation is untenable because it displays a variance that does not follow the linear route Webb wishes to travel. He provides many texts that fit well within the scope of RMM, but even two cursory examples—such as the textual development of marriage and the roles of women in the covenant community—can expose glaring defects. As Walter Kaiser notes regarding the child punishment texts, one must deal with progressive revelation and how texts fit together without "flattening out the Bible so that it says the same thing on the same topics everywhere."²²

Finally, Webb's use of source materials is questionable in two significant ways. Scripture is his primary source, and he promotes a closed canon as authoritative throughout his writings. Nevertheless, as Wayne Grudem rightly explains, the RMM does not in the end hold Scripture as the final authority, because "it nullifies in principle the moral authority of the entire NT and replaces it with the moral authority of a 'better ethic.'"²³ Elsewhere, Grudem takes Webb to task by asserting that he cannot affirm biblical authority while claiming that "some events of Genesis 1–3 are not historically accurate."²⁴ While responding to the same critique from Schreiner, Webb states that the New Testament is the final revelation of God, but that there is a "yet-further realization of the redemptive movement which goes beyond the whole of Scripture, including the concrete, frozen-in-time particulars of the NT."²⁵ However, this claim is still ambiguous. It is difficult to reconcile the assertion that Scripture is the final authority for the Christian faith, while searching for a subjective application of an evolved ethic not contained within Scripture.

Webb also relies heavily on ANE and other historical sources as credibility to the assertions of the

^{19.} Webb, "A Redemptive-Movement Model," 247-48.

Daniel M. Doriani, "A Response," in Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology, ed. Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 260.

^{21.} Mark L. Strauss, "A Reflection," in Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology, 289.

^{22.} Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "A Response," in Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology, 251.

^{23.} Wayne Grudem, "Review Article: Should We Move Beyond the New Testament to a Better Ethic? An Analysis of William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*, JETS 47 (2004): 346.

^{24.} Wayne Grudem, Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism? (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 36.

^{25.} William J. Webb, "The Limits of a Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic: A Focused Response to T. R. Schreiner," EQ 75, no. 4 (2003): 329.

RMM. Kevin Vanhoozer, while correctly noting that ANE sources can be helpful, is justifiably concerned that "there is an upward trajectory that begins in, yet continues beyond the specific discourse of the Bible, such that no specific statement in the Bible articulates its end point." These outside documents give insight into the world around the Bible and its writers, but cannot play an equal or even near-equal role to the biblical text. At some point, the canon is either the final authority or it is not. The concerns of Grudem, Schreiner, and Vanhoozer accurately reveal the RMM to be a dangerous extrabiblical hermeneutic that pays lip service to biblical authority without trusting Scripture to give Christians all they need for faith and practice.

CONCLUSION

In the end, one must admit that Webb has made a valiant effort in his attempt at helping Christians understand a Bible written far removed from their context. His arguments throughout his most prominent published works are often logical within the texts and situations he employs. His work is not in vain; many prominent theologians—such as those mentioned in this paper—have read and considered the RMM at length. While many disagree, not many would say that Webb is an irrelevant scholar.

That said, the RMM hinders instead of enhancing the modern Christian's attempt at applying the Bible to their context. While the method seems to have merit on the surface, its subjectivity leaves the reader stuck in the quandary of figuring out how a text might apply beyond the canon. In the case of slavery, one does not know if it should be abolished today or if there is a more amenable option for masters and slaves to work together. In the case of women, there is no way to tell if women should or should not have, for example, leadership positions in the church. Have all distinctions been abolished? We cannot know. In the case of homosexuals, it is promising that Webb does not find affirmation within the framework of the RMM. Still, the American culture is acquiescing to homosexuality, so is it the case that God's better ethic is taking form? In the case of spanking children, the RMM seems to lead to a total lack of discipline at some point in the future. Should we move beyond even the non-violent forms of punishment that Webb proposes? Are Webb's proposals not still promoting emotional abuse? What if God is progressing us away from discipline altogether? The questions are legion.

In the end, the Christian cannot rely on the RMM to answer the tough texts of the Bible. When working to explain slavery in the Bible, employing a hermeneutic that stitches together multiple extra-biblical ethical interpretation is not the answer. Webb argues again and again that the RMM is not a simple way to read the Bible, but is worth the arduous work. It is more likely that it is arduous, and that it fundamentally cannot deliver on its promises.

^{26.} Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "A Response," in *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 266-67.

SATAN'S WAR ON MARRIAGE

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upreme Court decisions to legalize same-sex unions are the latest salvo in Satan's long battle against the institution of marriage. Satan is "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4) who blinds and deceives the whole world (2 Cor 4:4; Rev 12:9). He is the head of a vast, powerful, organized, and malicious army arrayed against Christ and the human race. Christ's redemptive work on the cross and his resurrection decisively defeated Satan and his domain (Eph 1:19–20; Col 2:15) yet those united with Christ are still engaged in spiritual warfare.

Satan hates marriage. He hates *Christian* marriages in particular for believers dramatizing Christ and the church powerfully display the gospel in their marriage (Eph 5:32–33). Satan thus aims to destroy *Christian* marriages because such opposition hinders the witness of Christ to the world. To counter Satan's attack we must understand God's design for marriage, Satan's strategy against it, and how to stand firm in our marriages. In this article I will argue these points by showing how Satan fractured the first marriage. Next, I will survey the biblical evidence of Satan's explicit attacks against marriage. And last, I will lay out the divine resources given to Christian marriages to stand firm against the schemes of the devil (Eph 6:10–20).

As Andreas Köstenberger has observed, most marriage books fail to consider spiritual warfare. He writes, "Regularly, the focus [in marriage books] is on fulfilling one's partner's needs in marriage, improving one's communication skills, or resolving marital conflict. From reading any of these books, one would never know that spiritual warfare is a vital issue in marriage and the family. Yet, in fact, spiritual warfare is an all-encompassing reality." What follows will begin to fill this lacuna and help

^{1.} Andreas J. Köstenberger, God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation, 2nd ed (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 157.

Christians fight for their marriages.

SATAN'S WAR ON THE FIRST MARRIAGE

The trinitarian design to create humanity "in his own image" (Gen 1:27) as male and female revealed a significant purpose of marriage. The meaning of the "image of God" (*imago dei*) has been variously explained in terms of intellectual ability, moral decision-making, the ability to make willful choices, moral purity, or ruling as God's representative vice-regents. David Clines' research uncovered that ancient kings believed they alone were created in the image of their gods to be the representative rulers of the gods.² God's first words to humanity were in terms of rulership (v. 28). The divine mandate to the first couple was not simply to produce babies but a directive to subdue the earth by spreading God's glory over the earth through their godly progeny.³ The divine mandate for marriage has not changed. Christian marriages are to produce godly offspring who will spread the gospel of Christ and God's glorious presence throughout the earth.⁴

The creation account gives evidence of the ontological equality of men and women as both were created in the *imago dei*. The first chapters of Genesis also reveal God's normative expectations for marriage: (1) Marriage is a heterosexual, (2) monogamous, (3) sexual, (4) and patricentric relationship. Patricentrism, though esoteric, is a helpful description of a family where the husband serves as the leading, protecting, and providing center of the marriage and family.⁵ Marriage is also (5) permanent relationship. The phrase used by Adam to describe Eve ("bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh") was used elsewhere in the OT to convey permanent blood/family relationships that could not be broken (Gen 29:14; Judg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:12, 13; 1 Chr 11:1. Last, marriage is (6) one flesh, covenantal relationship that creates a "corporate personality" through the sexual union of two unified spouses.⁶ As the creation account closed, the portrait of marriage is that it was and is a good institution blessed by God. Adam and Eve are poised to carry out the divine mandate to reproduce and extend the kingdom of God so that it will eventually fill the earth.

Tragically, this ideal was overturned before the first child was ever born. In Genesis 3, Satan enters the Garden of God to oppose his creator and deceive the pinnacle of creation. Scripture describes Satan as "crafty" (Gen 3:1), a subtle foe who is full of "malevolent brilliance." His devious wooing of Eve and Adam's subsequent rebellion brought discord to the cosmic order and to the marital union. Eve became the matriarch as she usurped Adam's patricentric authority. Adam broke the covenant with God (Hos 6:7; cf. Rom 5:12–21) and fractured his marriage when he, respectively, disobeyed God and blamed Eve (and God) for his rebellion (Gen 3:12). Marriage would now be characterized by disharmony as two sinner's fight for the domination of the relationship (v. 16). Rather than spreading the garden over

^{2.} David J.A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," Tyndale Bulletin 19 (1968), 85.

^{3.} T. Desmond Alexander, From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2009), 20–31.

^{4.} On the Great Commission focus of marriage, see Christopher Ash, *Married for God: Making Your Marriage the Best It Can Be* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity, 2007).

^{5.} Daniel I. Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 33–102.

^{6.} Sang-Won Son, "Implications of Paul's 'One Flesh' Concept for His Understanding of the Nature of Man," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11, no. 1 (2001): 119.

^{7.} R. Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Dictionary of the OT* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), s.v. "ārûm," by Ronald B. Allen.

the earth, they were cast out of it and cursed (v. 24).

This exile from Eden secured the reign of death among humanity. Life, children, and marriage would continue but would be characterized by enmity between Eve's progeny and Satan's offspring (the evil spiritual entities, v. 15). Still, in the midst of God's judgment, there is also hope.

God promised this conflict would end when his messiah would crush Satan's head and forever rendered him powerless (v. 15). The rest of the Bible tells this account and leads us to the person and work of Jesus Christ. On the other side of the Christ's death and resurrection, we know he has already defeated Satan through his cross (Col 2:15). Yet, Satan and his demonic forces are not yet totally subdued so that Satan still "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8). Though he rages against all humanity, he targets marriages as a survey of biblical history demonstrates.

A BIBLICAL SURVEY OF SATAN'S WAR ON MARRIAGE

The consequences of sin on marriage have been seen in every generation since the fall. Lamech shattered monogamy (Gen 4:19). In time, heterosexuality was abandoned for homosexuality (18:16–19:28). The one flesh, permanent nature of marriage was ripped apart with divorce (Deut 24:1–4), and the natural boundaries were erased with perverted, unnatural sexual liaisons (Exod 22:19). Since space prevents us from considering every deviation from marriage in the Bible, this section will focus on biblical examples of marriage that have clearly been influenced by Satan's lies and stand in opposition to God's glory.

Unnatural Marriages (Gen 6:1-4)

The first post-Fall sin recorded in Scripture with explicit satanic influence was within the context of marriage. Genesis 6:1-4 is a difficult passage that has generated numerous interpretations. The identity of the "daughters of man" is fairly straight-forward as a description of human females who were "attractive" (v. 2). The crux of the exegetical quandary is the identity of the "sons of God" who intermarry with the "the daughters of man" and produced "Nephilim" ("giants," v. 4) as offspring. These "sons of God" have been identified as apostates from the godly line of Seth who intermarried with the depraved line of Cain, polygamous despotic rulers from Cain's genealogy, demon possessed men from Cain's line, or evil angelic beings who intermarried with human women. All these interpretive positions have their strengths and difficulties but the angelic view best fits the text as explained by Willem Van Gemeren: "the variants of the 'human marriage' view have thus far not proved to be satisfactory. The linguistic, semantic, and literary considerations adduced to establish each one of these variants fail in one aspect or another to be compellingly attractive."

God established a natural boundary of marriage as heterosexual human-human. These unnatural marriages from Satan's realm, apparently entered into willfully and voluntarily by human women, breached and rejected God's natural order. Ronald Hendel recounts the devastating effects of this

^{8.} In addition to original study, information for this passage was gleaned from Ronald S. Hendel, "Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 1 (March 1987): 13–26; Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 43–54; and Willem A. VanGemeren, "The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4 (An Example of Evangelical Demythologization?)," *West-minster Theological Journal* 43, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 320–348.

^{9.} VanGemeren, "The Sons of God in Genesis 6," 343.

satanic ploy: "The sexual mingling of the Sons of God and the daughters of men creates an imbalance and a confusion in the cosmic order. The birth of the demigods threatens the fabric of the cosmos." These angelic/human liaisons brought societal havoc in their wake (v. 5). Sinful humanity, rather than spreading God's glory and holiness, advanced satanic wickedness over the earth.

Interreligious Marriages

Satan and his demonic realm are the driving force of all false religions (Deut 32:16; Ps 106:37; 1 Cor 10:20). God forbid the people of Israel to marry outside the faith lest their hearts be turned away from Yahweh to demonic idols (Exod 34:11–16; Deut 7:3–4). Several examples from Israel's history proved that marriage to idolatrous pagans brought spiritual ruin to the individual and/or the nation: Israel with the daughters of Moab (Numbers 25); Solomon and his pagan wives (1 Kings 11); and the exiles who intermarried with pagans (Ezra 9–10; Neh 13:23–31).

Christians are commanded, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Cor 6:14) which "prohibits believers from joining in any activity that forms a covenantlike bond with pagans and their idols (either through literal-physical or metonymical idolatry) and seriously violates the believer's existing covenant with God." While not exclusively about marriage, the prohibition in this passage would certainly include marriage. The imagery for this injunction was likely drawn from Deuteronomy 22:10 ("You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together"), which exhibited the fundamental incompatibility of a Christian willfully entering into a marriage relationship with someone outside of Christ. The covenantal, one flesh nature of marriage is incongruous between members of the different spiritual realms. Satan tempts Christians to marry unbelievers for his nefarious purposes to compromise the gospel, discredit the integrity of the faith, weaken the Church, and contribute to hindering the advancement of the glory of God in the earth.

Unholy Marriages (Acts 5:1-11)

The first mention of Satan after Pentecost was also within the context of marriage. Ananias and Sapphira failed to resist satanic temptation but gave him opportunity to exert his influence within their marriage. This husband and wife conspired together to deceive the church. Syndney Page notes that the integrity of the gospel was at stake with this sin: "It is appropriate that Satan should be mentioned as the instigator of the first serious failing within the early Christian community. This suggests that from the very beginning Satan sought to hinder the spread of the gospel by causing believers to stumble." Peter, unlike Adam, stood against Satan which resulted in the further progress of the gospel (Acts 5:22–26). The result was a broken marriage but a purified church.

Celibate Marriages (1 Cor 7:1-5)

Regular sexual intercourse between husband and wife is good, natural, and expected. Paul instructed this church that men and women should remain chaste prior to marriage (also 1 Thess 4:3) but some in the Corinthian church demanded celibacy for all men, regardless of marital status. Some, as a result,

^{10.} Hendel, "Of Demigods and the Deluge," 23.

^{11.} William J. Webb, "Unequally Yoked Together with Unbelievers," Bibliotheca Sacra 149 (1992): 179.

^{12.} Page, Powers of Evil, 133.

practiced marital celibacy as an application of a false asceticism.

Very clearly Paul instructed that a husband and his wife are to have regular, normal sexual intercourse. Neither spouse has unilateral authority to cease sexual activity (vv. 3-4). Paul commanded: "Do not deprive one another" (v. 5). The verb *apostereō* was used to describe withholding that which was due to a person (Exod 21:10; Mal 3:5; Jas 5:4) and defrauding or stealing from another (Mark 10:19; 1 Cor 6:7, 8). Sexual intercourse is the due a husband and wife owe one another.

And what is the reason for this instruction? "So that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (v. 5). Satan knows how to exploit sexuality. Christians who have celibate or near celibate marriages are inviting Satan into their marriage. A safeguard against Satan's temptations is for spouses to engage in regular, joyful sex. Otherwise, satanic sexual temptation looms which, if successful, damages the marriage, gives the enemies of Christ an opportunity to blaspheme (2 Sam 12:14), and sullies the gospel of Jesus Christ so that the spread of God's glory over the earth is hindered.

Forbidden marriages (1 Tim 4:1-3)

Paul warned pastor Timothy that some departed from the faith because they had listened "to deceitful spirits and the teaching of demons" (v. 1). These satanic teachings did not attack the cardinal doctrines of the faith like denying the Trinity, or the deity of Christ, or salvation by grace alone. Rather, these satanically-inspired false teachers attacked the institution of marriage by forbidding it.

Evidently, some were teaching that singleness was an essential element of salvation. The false teachers in Corinth allowed marriage but not sex, the false teachers in Ephesus denied the goodness of marriage altogether and forbid it. No Christian marriages means no display of the gospel in the world.

Christian Marriages Under Satanic Attack (Eph 5:22-33)

In summary, all of God's declarations and normative expectations about marriage found in Genesis 1-2 have been attacked by Satan as indicated in the chart below.

GOD'S NORMATIVE EXPECTATIONS FOR MARRIAGE	SATAN'S ATTACK ON MARRIAGE
ontologically equality	spouse as property
good	forbidden
sexual	celibate
human/human	spectrophilia; bestiality
heterosexual	homosexual
monogamous	polygamy; polyamory
patricentric	egalitarian; matricentric
permanent	divorce; annullment
one flesh	adultery; open marriages
covenantal	interreligious; unholy; contractual

Christian marriages are not immune from any of these satanic attacks and may fall into any one of these grievous sins.

Paul's quote of Genesis 1:24 in Ephesian 5:31 reinforces the one flesh relationship between husband and wife as an unbreakable, unified, corporate personality but also carries the one flesh idea to greater depths. "Mystery" in Ephesians consistently refers to the unfolding of God's once hidden plans in Christ (1:9; 3:3, 4, 6, 9; 6:19). The profound mystery is that from the beginning "when God designed the original marriage he already had Christ and the church in mind." Christian marriage "reproduces in miniature the beauty shared between the Bridegroom and his Bride. And through it all, the mystery of the gospel is unveiled." ¹⁴

The Ephesian marriage passage was preceded by the sober warning not to give Satan an opportunity to exert his influence (4:27). Significantly, the Ephesian household codes (5:22–6:9), not individual Christ-followers or the Church, is the conceptual segue into the Ephesian spiritual warfare passage (6:10-20). Christian marriage is "the context in which the battle order is to be set up, in which the troops are mustered, and where or from where the battle is fought."¹⁵

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES WAGING WAR AGAINST SATAN (EPH 6:10-20)

No other NT book focuses more on the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan than Ephesians. The spiritual warfare passage is arguably the culminating zenith of the book. The defeated-but-not-yet-subdued Satan and his forces are powerful foes arrayed against Christian marriages. But God has not left his people defenseless. When we apply the spiritual armor to our marriages, we find ample defenses to withstand the devil's attacks.

The opening verse commands: "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" (v. 10) which is achieved when husbands and wives "put on the whole armor of God" (v. 11), the divinely-forged spiritual weapons God provides for his people in Christ. The purpose and goal of taking up the divine armor is for Christian marriages to "be able to stand against the schemes of the devil" (v. 11). The plural "schemes" (also 4:4) suggests marriages may expect a variety of satanic temptations and attacks. Satan's war against Christian marriages is intimate. We are in a wrestling match with Satan (v. 12). "Wrestle" refers to both close contact wrestling and conflict in general. Satan's wrestling match with Christian families attempts to pit wife against husband and children against parents. The nature of the battle is spiritually intense so Paul repeats his urgent call: "Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day" (v. 13). "The armor of God," a metonymy for Christ himself, provides Christian marriages with everything necessary to resist and stand firm against Satan.

The Belt of Truth

Satan is resisted when spouses "stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth" (Eph 6:14). The verb "fastened" was used to describe ensuing battle or hard work (Pss 65:6; 18:32, 39; Luke 12:35, 37;

^{13.} George Knight, III, "Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church: Ephesians 5:21–33 and Colossians 3:18–19" in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 176.

^{14.} Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 434.

^{15.} Thomas R. Neufeld, "Put on the Armour of God": The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians, Journal for the Study of the New Testament 140 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 108.

^{16.} Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), s.v. "palé," by H. Reeves.

17:8). Charles Hodge shows the need for gospel truth in the life of a marriage:

Let not any one imagine that he is prepared to withstand the assaults of the powers of darkness, if his mind is stored with his own theories, or with the speculations of other men. Nothing but the truth of God, clearly understood and clearly embraced, will enable him to keep his feet for a moment, before these celestial potentates. Reason, tradition, speculative conviction, dead orthodoxy, are a [belt] of spider-webs. They give way at the onset. Truth alone, as abiding in the mind in the form of divine knowledge, can give strength or confidence even in the ordinary conflicts of the Christian life, much more in any really 'evil day.'"¹⁷

Putting on the belt of truth means to believe and embrace the truths of Scripture.

The belt of gospel truth is worn when Christian spouses have an open, honest, truthful relationship. Sometimes the truth will be painful to tell or difficult to receive. Truth telling is necessary, however, to have a one flesh union where husband and wife may stand naked and unashamed before each other. The alternative is to harbor lies and give opportunity to "the father of lies" (John 8:44) to exert his influence in the marriage. Truth-tellers are solid, dependable, trustworthy, commendable, and their marriages will "endure forever" (Prov 12:19).

The Breastplate of Righteousness

The second protection against satanic influence in marriage is to "put on the breastplate of righteousness" (Eph 6:14). Christ's imputed righteousness is at the heart of the gospel so that both spouses know that they do not have "a righteousness of [their] own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Phil 3:8–9). The righteousness of Christ clothes the sinner so that spouses are confident in their standing before God.

Putting on the breastplate of righteous necessarily requires putting on righteous living. Christ's righteousness creates a new self that is "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24). Because of this new righteous self, Christian spouses grow in living worthy of the gospel—maturing in Christ, speaking the truth, controlling anger, working hard, being pure in speech, forgiving one another, living lives of love and purity, where righteousness impels wives to submit to husbands and husbands to love their wives. Satan takes advantage of the hypocritical, unrighteous marriage but a marriage that wears the breastplate of righteousness resists Satan and is strong in the Lord.

The Shoes of the Readiness of the Gospel

Paul describes the third piece of God's armor as "shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace" (v. 15). Believing and receiving the gospel brings the Christian marriage into conflict with Satan's kingdom and the same gospel serves as the foundation which prepares the couple to resist the devil and stand firm in spiritual warfare. The shoes of the gospel are put on when the biblical gospel serves as the foundation of the marriage. The gospel gives the marriage firm footing before God so that Satan's insidious charges are rejected. The gospel is the ground and impetus for mutual

^{17.} Charles Hodge, Ephesians, The Geneva Series of Commentaries (Carlisle: Banner Of Truth, 1991), 282-83.

forgiveness (4:32), the husband's sacrificial love, and the wife's godly submission.

In light of the gospel of peace, Christian spouses are exhorted to be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:3). Satan is a murderer (John 8:28) and his desire in his war against Christian marriages is to create chaos, dissention, hatred, adultery, and divorce. He hates Christian marriages and he actively opposes it to hinder the spread of the gospel. Disputes and disagreements are a part of every Christian marriage but the godly husband guards his marriage from allowing anger to fester giving Satan an opportunity (Eph 4:26). Satan takes full advantage of false gospels and marital discord but the marriage that puts on the shoes of the gospel will resist the demonic realm and be strong in the Lord.

The Shield of Faith

Christian marriages are exhorted to take up the fourth piece of the divine armor: "In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one" (v. 16). "Faith" is both objective and subjective. Objective faith refers to the doctrines and theology that make up the Christian faith. Marital unity is maintained by embracing the "one faith" (4:5). Putting on the shield of faith means to clothe the marriage with biblical theology so that the great truths of the Christian faith are known, believed, understood, embraced, and applied in the marriage. Christian marriages are not to be "carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes" (Eph 4:14). Satan ravages Christian marriages through false teaching. Couples resist demonic forces when they hold fast to the faith.

Taking up the shield of faith also means to have a subjective Christ-directed faith. Every marriage will face times of trial, difficulty, disappointment, and sorrow. Satan will exploit these situations and attempt to persuade the spouses to doubt or mistrust Christ's care and kindness. The shield of faith gives the husband and wife an adamantine resolve to trust the Savior, no matter what woes may come into the life of the marriage. Faith resists Satan, makes him flee (Jas 4:7), and makes the marriage strong in the Lord.

The Helmet of Salvation

Christian spouses are encouraged to "take the helmet of salvation" (Eph 6:17). The gospel is the factual message, salvation occurs when the gospel is received and believed. The helmet of salvation resists Satan's schemes and fiery darts by reminding the Christian couple of four eternal truths. First, salvation means that sin is not the master of the marriage. The salvation Christ secured for Christian spouses set them free from the tyranny of sin so that sinful impulses no longer need be obeyed (Rom 6:8–14). Second, salvation encourages Christian marriages to remember that true satisfaction is found only in Christ. Creation is to be enjoyed but the pursuit of anything created for ultimate satisfaction is vanity (Ecc 1:17; 2:17) and becomes fodder for satanic influence. William Gurnall held that "nothing but a steadfast well-grounded hope of salvation can buy off the creature's worldly hopes." 18

Third, salvation gives hope: "But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thess 5:18). "Hope" in Scripture refers to confident assurance and trust. Christian marriages, like all marriages in a fallen world,

^{18.} William Gurnall, The Christian in Complete Armour, vol. 2 (Carlisle: Banner Of Truth, 1995), 137.

will suffer sickness, financial woes, disobedient children coupled with the added pressures of living in a culture bold in its hatred of Christ and his people. The hope of salvation allows the Christian marriage to rise above the specter of despair and glorify Christ (Hab 3:17–19). Fourth, salvation points the Christian couple to the glorious future awaiting them in Christ. The helmet of salvation is a vital piece of the Christian armor until Christ replaces it with a crown. Christian spouses who remind one another of the weighty implications of salvation when Satan tempts are made strong in the Lord.

The Sword of the Word

The last piece of divine armor is the need for Christian marriages to take up "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (6:17). Jesus gives the greatest example of taking up the sword of the Spirit as Satan tempted him (Matt 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13). Satan tempted Jesus but Jesus refused to argue with Satan, reason with him, or consider what he said. Jesus, the perfectly holy Son of God, resisted Satan by wielding Scripture (Matt 4:4, 7, 10) so that "the devil left him" (v. 11) which he will always do when the sword is unsheathed.

A Word-saturated marriage is of vital importance to combat Satan's schemes as Hodge underscores:

In opposition to all error, to all false philosophy, to all false principles of morals, to all the sophistries of vice, to all the suggestions of the devil, the sole, simple, and sufficient answer is the Word of God. This puts to flight all the powers of darkness. The Christian finds this to be true in his individual experience. It dissipates his doubts; it drives away his fears; it delivers him from the powers of Satan. It is also the experience of the church collective. All her triumphs over sin and error have been effected by the Word of God. So long as she uses this and relies on it alone, she goes on conquering; but when anything else, be it reason, science, tradition, or the commandments of men, is allowed to take its place or to share its office, then the church, or the Christian, is at the mercy of the adversary." 19

The faithful husband and wife ought to unfurl the Word of God in all circumstances of marital life. The marriage that wields the sword of the Lord will resist satanic overtures and will be strong in the Lord.

Prayer

Finally, the armor of the Lord is made active through prayer. Paul began Ephesians with a prayer (1:15–23), continues his prayer as he transitions from doctrine to application (3:14–21), and ends with a call to pray (6:18–20). Found in all three prayers is the request to know and understand the power Christ gives to his people (1:19; 3:16; 6:20).

The divine armor is appropriated through prayer. Since spiritual warfare is all-inclusive, the word "all" is prominent in the ending call for prayer. The Christian couple is to pray "at all times, in the Spirit" which suggests they "will be in constant prayer in preparation for the battle as well as in the engagement itself." Christian couples pray "in the Spirit" when their requests match the desires of

^{19.} Hodge, Ephesians, 287.

^{20.} A. Skevington Wood, Ephesians, in vol. 11 of The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and

the Spirit, such as putting on the divine armor. Christian couples ought to pray "with all prayer and supplication" which show the vital importance of prayer.

The never ending satanic war against marriage ought to impel Christian couples to "keep alert with all perseverance" in prayer. "Keep alert" means to never be lulled into complacency but to keep diligent watch for chinks in the armor. Prayer for "all the saints" reminds the Christian couple that they are not alone in their fight but are part of the larger church community. As the couple prays for themselves in their war against Satan, so they remind themselves to pray for other marriages to resist Satan and remain strong in the Lord.

In conclusion, Christian marriages are engaged in spiritual warfare. God, however, has provided his own mighty panoply so that Christian marriages may resist satanic onslaughts. The gospel with all its multifaceted beauties is to be lived out in marriage, the most intimate of human relationships, in order to be a witness of the gospel and, thus, glorify Christ in the world.

Richard P. Polcyn (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 89.

FROM THE SACRED DESK

CHILDREN ARE A DIVINE GIFT NOT A HUMAN RIGHT: BIBLICAL CLARITY AND GOSPEL COMFORT FOR THOSE CONTEMPLATING IN VITRO FERTILIZATION (IVF)

Jason Meyer | Pastor for Preaching and Vision Bethlehem Baptist Church Minneapolis, Minnesota

> For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

—Psalm 139:13–16

hen it comes to the topics of abortion, adoption, and reproductive technology, we are like little children who need to learn from our Father as to why we should love life. Children need help with this kind of thing.

Consider the value of a Tootsie Roll compared to a perfectly cut ten-carat diamond. A toddler would take the Tootsie Roll not the shiny rock. You would have to explain the value of the shiny rock to the toddler. You could put it in financial terms. A flawless, perfectly cut diamond is said to be worth

about \$500,000. But to a toddler that amount of money is still not a good standard of comparison.

Would you rather have a yummy-to-your-tummy Tootsie Roll or a lot of paper bills? You need to convert the paper bills into currency that a toddler understands. A dollar will buy you about 36 Tootsie Rolls. If you had that perfectly cut shiny rock, which is equal to a stack of bills amounting to \$500,000, you could have a pile of 18 million Tootsie Rolls. (Of course, you would probably want to save some of that money for toothpaste and dentist bills).

But how much would 57 million babies be worth? This is the number aborted since Roe v. Wade made abortion safe, legal, and far from rare.

Just like parents have to teach children what has true worth, our heavenly Father has to teach us. God alone can teach us because he alone is the gold standard. God is infinitely valuable, which means we measure worth in relation to God. Animals have value because God made them. Care of creation is important because everything God made has value. Humanity also has value by virtue of being made by God, but we have greater value because we are made in the image or likeness of God, not the image of monkeys.

As John Piper has said, "What would it mean if you created seven billion statues of yourself and put them all over the world? It would mean you would want people to notice you." God did that—he made mankind to mirror himself.

Sanctity of Life is about God. Sanctity of Life makes God supreme. Why? Psalm 139 makes the link very clearly. The psalmist declares that God is to be worshipfully praised because we are wonderfully made. He unpacks this main point in two ways: the reasons we are wonderfully made and our response of worshipful praise.

REASONS WE ARE WONDERFULLY MADE (V. 13, 15, 16)

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb... My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

We could unpack each phrase, but in this sermon, I want to give you a sharp focus. The psalmist marvels at two twin realities: God alone creates and God alone sees the life that is hidden to everyone else. First, God created life in a special way. Look at all the words for created: *formed* (v. 13), *knitted* (v. 13), *made* (v. 15), and *intricately woven* (v. 15). Did you notice how tender those words are? They each reflect the delicate care with which God makes every child.

Second, God alone sees what he makes in the womb. Notice this theme: formed "inward parts" (v. 13), knitted "in my mother's womb" (v. 13), my frame was "not hidden from you" (v. 15), made "in secret" (v. 15), "your eyes saw my unformed substance" (v. 16).

This point is verified by the context of Psalm 139. Did you see the "for" of verse 13? What is the psalmist trying to show? Verses 7–12 confront us with the fact that we cannot hide from God. We cannot always see him and what he is doing, but he always sees us. Verses 11–12 say it this way:

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," even the darkness is not dark to you;

the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

A cover of darkness can conceal things from other people, but not from God. Darkness is not dark to God. He sees everything clearly—everything is as clear as day to him. Now verses 13–16 give us an example of that seeing. God sees what he is doing in the womb when no one else could.

In addition, only God can look ahead and see all the days he created for this life (v. 16). He knew these days and wrote a full life story for us before the turning of the first page. The beginning of life is part of a bigger picture. God the Creator is God the author. He has written a story for everyone in his book. He wrote a story with a certain number of days formed or created for us. The beginning of life is part of God's overall plan for all of our life.

That means that we don't have value based on contributions we make to others. We have value based on being created by God. We don't look at people with disabilities and say that they are not part of God's plan or God's good design. They are! They have worth because they are created by a good God and are part of God's sovereign plan for the church. Their presence fulfills a special purpose. They help us see rightly. They have outward disabilities that show us our inner, hidden, spiritual disabilities. Physical disabilities are more obvious at first glance than our spiritual disabilities, but ours are just as real.

Do our spiritual disabilities mean that we have no value? Hitler put people with disabilities in concentration camps that became death camps because he wanted to be God and to re-create the world according to his own sense of what had worth.

The abortion industry is not a respecter of children when they say that any unborn child can be killed—and they go even further in saying that children with disabilities *should* be killed. We speak up with severe mercy in saying a forceful "*No!*" to that type of killing.

Having a disability should not be a death sentence if you believe in the sovereign goodness of God. We love to say at Bethlehem that *all* children are gifts—no matter how they come. They are a gift when they come with all their fingers and toes, and they are a gift when they come with infantile seizures, cerebral palsy, or chromosomal irregularities.

The supremacy of God is at stake in all of these discussions because God creates wonderful things to elicit worshipful praise.

RESPONSE OF WORSHIPFUL PRAISE (V. 14)

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

How should we respond to the fact that God formed our inward parts and knitted us together in our mother's womb? The psalmist instructs us in how to respond: We are to praise. "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (v. 14).

Do you think of yourself as fearfully and wonderfully made? If not, you are calling God a liar because he says you are. Don't downplay the wonder that you were made by God. A painting made by Leonardo Da Vinci is priceless. How much more God's work of art. Just as Da Vinci's skillful hands can be see in his finished works, so can God's creative power be seen in every human life. We rob God

of praise if we deny that he is the artistic creator.

God's works are wonderful because he is wonderful. If his works are wonderful, then we are forced to look at ourselves in a certain way. God does not make trash to discard. That is a truth to treasure in the lives that society wants to trash. We ascribe praise and worth to God when we worship him. We say, "Wonderful are your works—my soul knows it very well." Sanctity of Life Sunday is about saying that we want our church and our nation to know very well that God's works are wonderful.¹

TWO DITCHES: CHILDREN ARE A GIFT, NOT A CHOICE OR A RIGHT

How shall we apply the supremacy of God to the topic of the sanctity of life? Where do we find a collision between what our text says and what our culture says?

This passage helps us see two ditches on either side of the truth of Psalm 139. The psalmist teaches us that human life is a gift from God. *Children are a gift*. It is part of God's glory that he alone makes life in the hiddenness of the womb. The mother's womb is supposed to be a hidden place of protection, not a secret place for slaughter. The hiddenness of the womb and the vulnerability of the tiny children make them an easier target because it is easier to keep the killing a secret.

Pro-choice is a term that falls prey to what is called non-consequentialist thinking: broken thinking doesn't connect choices and consequences. Pro-choice sounds better when separated from the outcome, but in the end pro-choice tries to preserve the right to choose death.

Brethren, if any of you are considering getting an abortion, don't do it. As our sister said it so well: "Pregnancy lasts for 9 months. Abortion will haunt you forever." There is help and support and love here for you at this church.

Our church has consistently spoken against this cultural lie in our sanctity of life emphasis. Children are a gift from God, not a choice. If someone has an unwanted fertility problem of a pregnancy, some see abortion as a solution. We don't view children as a problem to get rid of.

But for all that we have done to combat the ditch on the left, we have not spoken out against the ditch on the right: *children are a gift, not a right*.

When children are seen as a choice, abortion becomes the solution to an unwanted fertility, but when children are seen as a right, some see in vitro fertilization (IVF) as the solution for unwanted infertility. I believe abortion is a ditch on the left and IVF is a ditch on the right. Even though the latter purportedly gives life, the practices and procedures surrounding this ditch are fraught with peril and the loss of life.

And for this reason, this is the hardest sermon I have ever had to preach. Infertility is one of the most painful paths one can walk. I know that there are some here who struggle with the inability to conceive a child. Every time someone, even a close friend, celebrates a pregnancy, you feel a gnawing "No" that eats away at you because that is a gift you have not received. You struggle with conflicting feelings—joy for your friends but also temptations toward jealousy and resentment in the same swirl

^{1.} I would commend to every pastor the practice of preaching a Sanctity of Human Life sermon every year. At Bethlehem Baptist Church, our practice is to have a sermon on ethnic harmony for Martin Luther King Jr. day. The next weekend is a sermon on Sanctity of Life (the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision). By pairing these two sermons together every January, we send a unified message. Owning a person because of the color of their skin (slavery) is today unthinkable, but it was once acceptable. We long for the day when killing a baby in the womb is as unthinkable as slavery. We will look back on abortion and the slaughter of innocent lives someday and say the same thing we say about slavery today, "what were we thinking? Why did we as a society ever allow that to happen?"

of emotions.

Let me talk to you for a moment. I know you are here. I know some aspects of your story, and I feel parts of your pain. My wife and I never faced infertility, but we had friends who allowed us to walk very closely with them through their infertility. The emotional ups and downs along the way are undeniably devastating! It is hard not to doubt the goodness of God, and that makes you feel even worse because now you struggle with feeling guilt about your doubt.

How shall we respond?

Immediately, let me say: it's not wrong to take fertility medication that provides a greater chance for conception. We have friends that were able to conceive that way. I spoke to one fertility doctor who said that there are also surgical options, but fewer people try these options today because what is pushed by doctors and medical clinics are dozens of roads leading to IVF.²

IVF stands for in vitro fertilization. IVF is a reproductive technology developed to conceive children outside of the womb. Eggs are harvested from a woman, sperm is taken from the man, and they are joined together outside the womb. After children are conceived, they are implanted inside the womb. At first glance, it looks like a great solution to the problem of infertility, but there are serious ethical issues that many do not understand until they are forced to make emotionally-taxing, ethically-difficult, pressure-packed decisions about life and death.

I will talk about these decisions with respect to the overall issue of loss of life.

First, there is a tremendous loss of life long before anyone even does IVF. Thousands of children were sacrificed and killed just to develop the technology and get it to the place where IVF began to be advertised.³

Second, there continues to be loss of life as the industry continues to kill children to improve the technology today.⁴

Third, more loss of life happens in the process of thawing the babies. This requires some explanation. Creating children outside the womb and then implanting them in a mother's womb has a high failure rate, so they conceive multiple children (say 10 children), which are often called "embryos." These are implanted in cycles of two or three at a time, and the others are frozen in preparation for the next cycle. They will give the woman hormonal treatment to prepare the woman's body to receive the embryos in the hope that they will survive and make it full term. If the first cycle of two or three do not result in a pregnancy, then they will thaw the next few. Some will not survive the thawing process.

Fourth, there is further loss of life as the babies are implanted because the percentage of children that make it to live birth is not high.

Fifth, success brings its own set of life and death decisions. If IVF leads to the success of a live birth, then the parents have to decide what to do with the rest of their frozen children. People are told that they can discard them or donate them or save them for later. Here the death toll climbs even higher as parents are told that they can either discard (i.e., murder) or donate (i.e., abandon) their children.

^{2.} See Joe Carter's helpful explanation, "38 Ways to Make a Baby," *First Things*, September 28, 2011, accessed October 15, 2015, http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2011/09/38-ways-to-make-a-baby.

^{3.} See especially Megan Best, Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: Ethics and the Beginning of Human Life (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 397.

^{4.} Megan Best explains this dynamic. "Those working in the field have always wanted to improve outcomes for their infertile patients, so they have continued in search for improvements in treatment, thus requiring more embryos on which to test new techniques and develop new procedures" (ibid.).

Here we have to be aware of the battle between faithful naming and deceitful naming. The word *discard* is a clever way of clouding the fact that the children are being murdered. You discard or throw away trash, not children. You also donate property, not people.

There are three ways to have the children murdered: active, passive, or donation to research. The active way to have the children murdered is just to tell the clinic to thaw them and discard them immediately. A more passive way is to just stop paying the storage fees, which effectively forces the clinic to destroy the embryos in a backdoor way. This is equivalent to the ancient practice of exposure. The parents give the children over to a hostile environment.

In the Roman world, they did not have the ability in the womb to determine if the child would be a boy or a girl. So, if the baby born was a girl and they wanted a boy, they could abandon her outside the city gates where the dogs would come and eat her. This was called "exposure." Today, exposure continues. It is more "civilized," but just as deadly.

The third way is to donate the embryos to research, which is where they will be dismembered and killed. In this third scenario, imagine a parent handing their children over for experimentation and dismemberment.

It is a commendable calling for Christians to rescue these frozen children, but that does not mean that we would commend IVF parents for abandoning their children. There are over 500,000 frozen children right now in United States fertility clinics. Relinquishing one's rights over these children was certainly better than directly killing them, but it is different than other adoption situations.

If young teenage girl who gets pregnant and the father abandons her and she is not able to financially care for the child, we would commend that mother for developing an adoption plan. With IVF the circumstances are different. A young teenage girl was probably not planning the pregnancy, but IVF parents by definition did plan those conceptions—and they have money because they have to be able to afford the tens of thousands of dollars it takes to go through the cycles of treatment, which are not covered by insurance. These parents *would* be able to care for their children—it is simply a matter of priority.

BIOMEDICAL ETHICS AND BIBLICAL JUSTICE

As your pastor, I have thought and prayed long and hard about this issue. I have come to the conclusion that I cannot commend IVF to you for the following reasons. I know that there are ways to minimize loss of life in IVF (such as only conceiving and implanting one embryo at a time). But here is what I can't get over: the IVF industry has, is, and will continue to kill innocent children to develop IVF techniques. These children are not capable of committing any capital crime that would warrant the death penalty imposed on them.

Even if the parents have all their children implanted, I cannot ignore the widespread massacre of children that it took to develop the technology and that continues to happen everyday as they are sacrificed to improve the technology. It makes it difficult to avoid complicity or cooperation with evil when we participate in something that required so much child killing. I have a hard time avoiding the conclusion that IVF uses and sacrifices unborn children for our own advantage. How can that be the mind of Christ? We don't use and kill children for our own advantage.

I am speaking up now for several reasons.

First, I am speaking up for the sake of those who may face this decision in the future. You have to know the facts ahead of time before you get down the road of trying to decide in emotionally charged moments. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

To put myself in your shoes, I would want someone to tell me the truth now instead of later. Can you imagine someone learning what happened to their excess embryos, only to then learn that I or any of you refused to tell them what we knew before it was too late? This person would tell us, "You could have spared me from so much pain and grief, and you didn't because you were afraid what others might think?"

Second, I am speaking up because I believe some of you will hear this and rescue those who are being taken away to death (Prov 24:11). Christians should prayerfully consider living out the redemption story of embryo adoption for the sake of rescuing these frozen children. I have learned much along the way from Bethlehem members Paul and Susan Lim. Paul is a surgeon, and Susan is a pediatrician. I learned a great deal about the ethics of IVF from a paper that Paul wrote on the subject. But they do more than criticize IVF—they have decided to be part of a redemption story through embryo adoption.⁵

Brethren, I love you with the heart of a shepherd who wants you to feel cared for and not condemned. I made a vow to God that I would never turn this into a bully pulpit. This issue has never been talked about from this pulpit before, and I would die inside if any of you thought my aim was to shame you if you have ever used IVF.

There are probably children in our midst right now because some parents used IVF. Am I saying that they are not gifts of God? I would never say that in a million years. I am saying we should always praise God as the giver of life.

But what do you do after acknowledging the gift of life? We must see the bigger picture and face the rest of the story. I want to encourage you to mourn the loss of life. We must mourn the death of innocent children. They don't have an attention-grabbing, eloquent voice like Martin Luther King, Jr. We have to speak for the silent voices that never even got a chance to speak.

We cannot let murder—of any kind or in any place—happen in the shroud of secrecy. We are not shaming anyone who has ever used IVF because I believe those that have done it in the past have never even considered all of the ethical implications. If the church has not been clear, then we have failed you and left you vulnerable in that decision-making process.

I have had people say that we shouldn't talk about IVF because some people will have done it and it will make them feel bad. That argument simply can't dictate our decisions because if that argument holds, then we won't talk about anything.

COMFORT FROM THE CROSS OF CHRIST

I couldn't preach this sermon without the gospel. The gospel can bring the fresh fragrance of hope to the most heart-wrenching pain. There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). Please distinguish between conviction and condemnation at this point. Both conviction and condemnation come from being convinced that we are guilty. There is no one who can look down from a lofty place of mor-

^{5.} You can read about the Lims' story in World Magazine: "Great Risk, Great Reward," World, August 26, 2013, accessed October 15, 2015, http://www.worldmag.com/2013/08/great_risk_great_reward.

al superiority. Before the judgment seat of God, we all fall silent and confess that he could judge us. But we say more—we say that he should judge us. He would be just to do so because we deserve judgment.

But what happens after being convinced of our guilt? Satan wants you to stay there. Satan wants to keep you locked away in a prison of shame, secrecy, and silence so that you will not seek forgiveness and so that innocent children can continue to be killed in the secret shadows of darkness.

How different is God's conviction! God brings conviction to your heart so that you will come out from a shadowy prison of shame and brings you to the cross. Why? To make you feel worse? To beat you up? No—so that you will see he was beaten in your place so that you can be made whole and can find complete healing in him.

The cross of Christ is the key that unlocks your guilty, imprisoned heart. That is why we preach! We preach Christ crucified. The cross is held up as supreme in sanctity of life.

The wonderful cross leads to worshipful praise. What makes mercy and forgiveness and the blood of Christ such over-the-top, outlandish good news is that we are not entitled to it. No sense of entitlement here whatsoever. It is a gift, not a right. In fact, the Bible says receiving the gift is the only thing that gives you the right to be called a child of God. The Gospel of John says it so clearly: "To as many as receive him he gives them the right to be children of God" (John 1:12).

Glory in this gift. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Sometimes people will receive a gift and say, "Thank you, you didn't have to do that you know."

My favorite response is this: "I know, and I hope that makes the love behind it ring louder and truer in your heart." "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Never did anyone deserve so little and get so much! The new birth is a gift of God and it creates forever worshippers whose worship continues beyond the grave. Jesus died to swallow up death for us forever. Listen to Isaiah 25:8–9:

He will swallow up death forever;

and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces,

and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,

for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day,

"Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.

This is the Lord; we have waited for him;

let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Eternal life is the only answer for the problem of death and condemnation. May the fresh fragrance of hope fill this place as we celebrate the character of God and the gift of the salvation.

GENDER STUDIES IN REVIEW

A Review of Wesley Hill. Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian.

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2015. 160 pp. \$14.99.

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t is impossible to quantify the worth of a good friend. Intimate, meaningful friendships are among God's greatest gifts, and Christians in particular have a calling to both enjoy and steward such gifts. But how might a Christian who wrestles with same-sex attraction find close friendships in the church? Does his or her sexual orientation produce an obstacle to intimacy with members of the same-sex? These are the questions over which Wesley Hill, assistant professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, gives extensive reflection in his latest work, *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian*.

CONTEMPORARY MYTHS AND THE CURRENT STATE OF FRIENDSHIP

But before delving into the problem of friendship for celibate Christians beset with same-sex attraction, Hill asks a more basic question in chapter 1: Has not friendship been eclipsed in our late-modern society and in the church? Hill observes three widely accepted myths that have shaped our contemporary understanding of and approach to same-sex friendship. The myth that "sex wholly explains the depth our most profound relationships" (10) has fostered—especially among men—the fear that romantic love may seep into their same-sex friendships. The myth that one's "ultimate significance" (11) is found in marriage and family has furthered the idea that friendships are subservient to the more important relationship with one's spouse.

The contemporary myth that freedom—understood primarily as independence from committed relationships—is what allows a person to find genuine happiness has struck "at the very root of friendship" (14). Once someone embraces the myth of freedom, sacrifice—an indispensible ingredient for friendship—is ruled out by definition. Given the pervasive and devastating effect these myths have had

on the place of friendship within our contemporary Western context, Hill is "convinced that all of us could benefit from a recovery of friendship as a genuine love in its own right" (22). Hill's reflections on the three "myths" currently eroding friendship are apt, and I'm sure few would contend with his desire to retrieve a more robust vision of friendship within the church.

A RECOVERY OF FRIENDSHIP

In chapter 2 Hill steps back in time to find historical precedents for a version of friendship that is more profound than most of us late-moderns are used to. There was a time in the medieval era, for example, when same-sex friendships were publicly recognized by the church and sealed with recitation of vows. These relationships were not romantic, but they were intimate, committed, and expected to endure. Reflecting on the fact that such rituals no longer have a place in modern society, one of Hill's college students wondered if their disappearance was a good thing given the danger of such relationships becoming "ingrown, obsessive, and unhealthy" (40). But Hill sees another, more serious danger stemming from the neglect of friendship; namely, "the burden, not to mention the attendant temptations, of isolation and solitude crated by the absence of human closeness" (40).

For the sake of all Christians, then, regardless of sexual orientation, age, or marital status, Hill hopes for a return to "vowed spiritual siblinghood" within the church (41). Again, like his assessment of the contemporary state of friendship, Hill's general insight and vision here are commendable. I will return to his idea of vowed friendship in a moment.

Part 1 closes with chapter 3 in which Hill turns to the Scripture to show how the gospel transforms friendship. Christ draws men and women into a spiritual family in which temporary physical familial ties serve as a parable of and yield to the eternal bonds spiritual siblinghood. Christianity call for the "abandonment of friendship" but its "revolution and redemption" (61).

Part 2 is called "Living Friendship" and consists of chapters 4–6. In these chapters Hill reflects on how a recovery of friendship might be expressed in the church. Here he begins to narrow his focus slightly on the question of how "celibate gay Christians" can participate in the restoration of true friendship among believers. In chapter 5, "Friendship is a Call to Suffer," Hill includes a personal story of a relationship he lost after one of his best friends got married. In this story the reader is brought face-to-face with the grief that someone like Hill experiences when they lose close friends. If marriage isn't an option for someone with same-sex attraction, then the loss of close same-sex relationships portends, at least in the moment of loss, a lifetime of loneliness.

Hill concludes his book with "some patterns that more committed, more sibling-like friendships may take" (106). Christians should first admit their need for friendship (106–107) and focus on strengthening the relational bonds we already have, preferably in the church. These friendships will, in turn, transform the community (109–113) and become the context within which Christians can practice hospitality to strangers (112–115). Finally, counter to the modern tendency to bounce from community to community, those who desire the cultivation of true friendship should be willing to remain, either physically or emotionally, with their friends, making the necessary sacrifices in order to express their commitment to friendship.

THE PHRASE "GAY CHRISTIAN"

As I've already noted, much of Hill's work in *Spiritual Friendship* is commendable. The appraisal of the current state of friendship, his desire for the church to return to a vision of deeper and more committed friendships, and his reflections on how Christians struggling with same-sex attraction may find satisfying relationships within the body of Christ will help the church reassess our approach to friendship and how well (or poorly) we are serving the single men and women of our church, especially those who struggle with same-sex attraction. Given these commendable qualities, there are a few weaknesses in Hill's book that undermine his aim to promote a biblical vision of friendship.

First, there is Hill's use of the phrase "gay Christian." Despite the critiques he received for his use of the phrase in his previous book, *Washed and Waiting*, Hill retained this expression throughout *Spiritual Friendship* to refer to those who have trusted Christ and struggle with same-sex attraction. While he states in *Washed and Waiting* that he does not intend by this phrase to suggest that one's identity is ultimately determined by his or her sexual orientation, it is difficult to see how this can be so: Doesn't the very structure of the expression suggest that being gay governs one's identity as a Christian rather than vice-versa? Hill claims elsewhere that the use of the word "gay" does not, in the common parlance, necessarily refer to someone who *indulges* homosexual desire, but only to one who *has* homosexual desires. Actually, it appears to me that when people outside the church use the word "gay" in reference to someone with homosexual desires, they are including both the desires and the sexual fulfillment of those desires. Could it be that Hill is redefining the word "gay" in light of his Christian commitments and then claiming that his redefinition is the common one?

Furthermore, in *Spiritual Friendship* when Hill refers to gay and lesbian Christians who "choose celibacy" (98) he implies—unintentionally, perhaps—that one can remain a Christian *without* choosing celibacy. In this case, the phrase "gay Christian" is worlds apart from "celibate gay Christian," with the former qualifying as a genuine contradiction in terms. But others have already dealt thoroughly with Hill's use of this phrase, so I will quickly move on to my next point of concern.¹

VOWED FRIENDSHIPS: A THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE

Second, like Hill's college student mentioned above, I hesitate, for different reasons, about the idea of vowed friendships. Hill argues that he and many other Christians need "something more" than relationships that consist mainly of "a weekly night out or a circle of people with whom to go on vacation" (42). He continues,

We need people who know what time our plane lands, who will worry about us when we don't show up at the time we said we would. We need people who we can call and tell about the funny thing that happened in the hallway after class. We need the assurance that, come hell or high water, a few people will stay with us, loving us in spite of our faults and caring for us when we are down. More than that, we need people for whom we can care (42-43).

Hill believes that "recovering the historic Christian practice of vowed friendships can help with all these needs" (43). Yet, given the legitimate desires expressed in the above paragraph to love and be

^{1.} On the use of the term "gay Christian," see Owen Strachan, "Should the Church Speak of 'Gay Christians'?" *JBMW* 19.1 (Spring 2014): 4–7.

loved by others, we have to ask if, historical examples notwithstanding, it could be that God never intended friendship to receive public recognition in the same way that marriage does? In other words, although friendship, like marriage, requires commitment, sacrifice, and genuine concern for another, it seems that for the sake of both institutions, friendship cannot carry the same theological weight as marriage in terms of public ceremony and recognition.²

This is not a claim that married persons are superior to unmarried persons or that friendship is unimportant and dispensable. Rather, I am arguing that theologically, marriage is given a place of prominence in Scripture because it points to a greater and final spiritual reality. Yes, we are and will remain brothers and sisters within the family of God in his kingdom, but corporately we are Christ's bride and our status as bride and bride-groom will be publically acknowledged with a wedding celebration (see Rev 19:9). Christians, regardless of marital status, are directed by Scripture to exalt and revere marriage, not for its own sake, but for that to which it ultimately points us. While precious and expressed profoundly in our relationship with Christ (see John 15:13–15), friendship does not reside in the same theological category as marriage. Each are kept distinct, and for important eschatological reasons.

With regard to public rites, it seems that the recognition Hill desires for friendship has already been put in place in the church by Christ himself. But this celebration is not the identification of exclusive commitment between two people (something reserved only for marriage); it is the acknowledgement of a covenant between all of Christ's people in a particular local setting. Specifically, it is the Lord's Table observed among a community of believers, not public vows between a same-sex couple, that endows friendship with rich significance. In Christ we are brothers and sisters and our sibling bonds are held fast by the Spirit. As we take the bread and the cup these bonds to Christ and to each other are reaffirmed and strengthened, for we are reminded that we all are partakers of grace and the free gift salvation through the death of God's Son.

Hill is right to lament that our contemporary practice of friendship often fails to express itself in light of the realities pictured in the Lord's Table, but the answer is not in establishing a separate

^{2.} While Hill only refers to the story of David and Jonathan to offer a model of intimate male friendships, it's possible that one could turn to the covenant between these two men in order to muster biblical evidence for formal vowed friendships. To my mind, however, this episode does not give us warrant for establishing the practice of vowed friendships within the Christian church for two primary reasons. First, the covenant was a private commitment between David and Jonathan; there was no formal recognition their commitment to one another by the community. Second, David and Jonathan's relationship is unique and must be read in light of the redemptive-historical timeline—i.e., through their friendship, Jonathan effectively relinquishes his kingship to the true heir.

While this story can tell us something about same-sex relationships, there is good reason why we do not find direct reference back to this episode by Jesus or the New Testament authors as a template around which same-sex friends should forge their relationships. Covenants, up to this point in the biblical narrative, were predominantly between God and his people. David and Jonathan's covenant, then, should probably be read in light of these covenants so that King David serves as a type of Christ (the true King), and Jonathan, in his response to David, shows us how God's people should respond to the true King. If this is a legitimate interpretation of this story of David and Jonathan, it is interesting to note that, given the status afforded marriage throughout Scripture, that David and Jonathan's covenant was private. A public recognition of an exclusive covenant of friendship between two men would confuse the distinctive significance of marriage in Israel, and ultimately undermine its greater theological implications as well.

category of vowed friendships and ceremonies that resemble marriage; the solution will be found in drawing Christians—married and single—to understand in deeper and deeper ways the covenant that *already* exists between them because of Christ and their commitment to the local expression of his Church. By forging our spiritual siblinghood through his death, the giving of his Spirit, and the establishment of the Lord's Table, Christ has already given us everything we need to nurture intimate, satisfying, healthy same-sex (and other sex) friendships within the church. Our first step in retrieving a biblical vision of friendship will be to make better use of existing, God-ordained resources, not go searching for something else.

A THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE AND FRIENDSHIP: WHY IT MATTERS

The reason why this theological understanding of marriage is vital for a recovery of friendship is because how we conduct ourselves in our relationships involves more (though never less) than our outward sexual conduct. While the church must be ready to exalt the obedience of those who remain celibate despite their homosexual desires, we must also ask what how a maturing Christian man or woman who struggles with same-sex attraction should increasingly view their relationships with members of the same-sex. Should a celibate Christian who experiences same-sex attraction, like Henry Nouwen, want "more" from a relationship than his male friend—who didn't experience homosexual desires—could give (94)? What is this "more" that Nouwen sought, and should he have sought it? Should it be sought today? Are vowed friendships the place where these desires for "more" should be fulfilled?

These are, in my judgment, important questions for they require us to consider how Christian maturity in the area of friendship and same-sex desire will express itself both outwardly *and* inwardly. Even given the historical precedent of vowed friendships, I don't believe we have biblical warrant for such practices, nor should we give the impression that longings for same-sex intimacy, though celibate, should find satisfaction in relationships that, apart from sexual expression, resemble marriage.

CONCLUSION: MORE WORK TO BE DONE

When I read in *Washed and Waiting*, I smiled with admiration at Hill's commitment to celibacy despite his own same-sex desires. Now, reading his second book on this subject, I grieve with him as he expressed the pain of loneliness and unfulfilled longing for intimacy. With his latest work, Hill has given us a deeper awareness of the ache with which many single Christians—especially those who wrestle with homosexual desire—often live. I join with him in a call to the church to recover a biblical vision of friendship for the sake of all Christians, and I am moved to consider how I might improve my own relationships and my vision of friendship for the good of Christ's people.

Unfortunately, *Spiritual Friendship* resolves the longing for friendship in place unwarranted by Scripture. Writers who take inspiration from Hill and seek to craft a vision of Christian friendship will need to give closer attention to how marriage and friendship relate *theologically* while also helping us answer the question of how spiritual maturity expresses itself inwardly and outwardly among Christians who struggle with same-sex attraction. More work can be done and should be done for the sake friendship, marriage, and the glory of God.

A Review of Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Marriage, Sex, and the Very Meaning of Right and Wrong.

Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015. 256 pp. \$24.99.

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n the midst of the deafening, gale-force winds of the spirit of the age, someone has stood up, cleared his throat, and said, "We cannot be silent."

We Cannot Be Silent, the title of Dr. Albert Mohler's newest book, represents decades worth of academic and cultural engagement by one of the leading lights of our time on the topic of the sexual revolution and its consequences. While all the world seems bent on appearing the sexual revolutionaries, Mohler, in Churchillian fashion, has fired a shot across the bow and issued a call-to-arms to the church.

SOUNDING THE ALARM

Mohler begins his book by likening the effects of the sexual revolution to the effects of a devastating hurricane. In many ways, we are living in the aftermath of a massive moral and cultural storm that has hit in three waves: the sexual revolution beginning in the 50s and 60s, the subsequent gay rights revolution, and the ongoing transgender revolution.

With same-sex marriage now legal in all 50 states, churches and Christian communities are still trying to sort out how to respond properly with the gospel. And in the mean time, the hurricane siren is blaring, warning of the impending destruction coming in the wake of the ongoing transgender revolution.

"[T]he transgender revolution, even more than the movement for gay liberation, undermines the most basic structures of society" and undercuts "any understanding of human identity based in the Christian tradition, the trajectory of Western civilization, and the worldview that has shaped today's world" (69). According to Mohler, "the transgender revolution represents one of the most difficult

pastoral challenges this generation of Christians will face" (69).

If this sounds apocalyptic to you, it is because Mohler intends it to. Our situation is indeed dire, and we need to heed the alarm.

IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

How did we get here?

Ideas have consequences, said philosopher Richard Weaver, and Mohler shows us just how consequential they can be. Supreme Court appointments matter. Books can change the world. Mohler understands these currents and undercurrents at work in the world and demonstrates his singular ability to confront them.

Mohler showcases his omni-competence when he sets each wave of the sexual revolution in its legal, moral, cultural, societal, and religious context. For instance, in his second chapter, Mohler identifies four 20th-century advances as the culprits that led to the eclipse of marriage in Western Civilization—birth control and contraception, divorce, advanced reproductive technologies, and cohabitation—citing along the way the political commentators, cultural elites, court cases, and influential books that have shaped the world where those realities are commonplace. Mohler's vast literary knowledge is on full display in the endnotes, where J. Gresham Machen, *The New York Times*, and Flannery O'Connor appear side-by-side. The bibliography alone deserves its own Amazon Wish List.

A river is formed from many tributaries. Mohler has traced the sexual revolution upstream and provided us with an aerial map of the landscape. One particularly noteworthy tributary is the evangelical church's silence in past generations on cultural shifts like no-fault divorce. Mohler does not want that to be the epitaph of our generation.

The ongoing sexual revolution is a war with many fronts. But Mohler demonstrates what it looks like to push back—not by dismissing opposing ideas outright as non-threats, but by seeking to understand their presuppositions, strategies (see especially Mohler's chronicle of the gay rights strategy on pg. 36ff), and worldviews. And then he engages them head-on.

We need to know how we got here. And then we need to chart a way out.

BUT THERE IS HOPE

After rehearsing the rise of each wave of the sexual revolution, Mohler turns his attention to another revolutionary force—the Word of God. And here, planting his flag, he finds hope. After giving a thorough biblical-theological overview of sex and marriage, Mohler issues this clarion call: "Christians must look each other in the eye and remind one another of what is now required of us—to speak the truth, to live the truth, and to bear witness to the truth whether we are invited to the White House or treated as exiles. The rest is in God's hands" (151).

But should Christians attend a same-sex wedding? Are people born gay? If a transgender person gets saved, should they undergo surgery to change back to their birth gender? Mohler knows that these questions are where the rubber meets the road, which is why he devotes an entire chapter (chapter 10) to answering these and dozens of other pressing questions. His answers are pastoral, practical, and Christ-centered; and they demonstrate that there is indeed hope in the gospel.

WE CANNOT BE SILENT

LGBTQQ2IA. Transgenderism. PGP's. In the face of these and other confusing concepts, we might be tempted to remain silent. But God is not silent. He has spoken, and therefore we cannot be silent. Mohler has given the church an example of what it looks like not to be silent. We Cannot Be Silent belongs on the shelf of every Christian who wants to give voice to their conviction that, while the revolutionaries may have won some battles, Jesus Christ is still Lord over the cosmos—including over human sexuality and marriage—and he will ultimately be victorious.

Let's not be silent.

A Review of William Paul Young.

Eve: A Novel.

New York: Howard, 2015. 320 pp. \$16.00.

Tim Challies | Author, Blogger, Pastor Toronto, Ontario

n the positive side, I think [William] Paul Young has become a markedly better writer since *The Shack*. On the negative side, he continues to use his writing to undermine and redefine Christian theology. By my reckoning, that's a net loss. Where *The Shack* was meant to revolutionize our understanding of God, his new novel *Eve* is meant to revolutionize and rescue our understanding of the relationship between men and women. And it is no less troubling.¹

Now, obviously *Eve* is fiction, which means it can be tricky to determine exactly what the author actually means to teach through his story. There is a lot in the novel that is complex and symbolic and that awaits the author's authoritative interpretation. But what is clear is that Young's novel is a retelling of the creation narrative through which he means to right a great wrong.

The story begins when a shipping container washes ashore on an island that exists somewhere between our world and the next. John the Collector finds a young woman named Lilly trapped inside. She is beaten, bruised, broken, and only barely alive. With the help of others—Scholars and Healers—he helps her to recover, to remember who she is, and to understand her importance in history. Lilly, it turns out, is a Witness, one who has the privilege of watching past events unfold so they can be properly understood and interpreted in the present time. Her privilege is to witness creation and the fall into sin, and in that way to provide an account that corrects all our false understandings.

What she witnesses varies significantly from the account we are accustomed to hearing. A sampling of the differences includes:

She sees that the world began with a big bang and that this involved the passing of billions

^{1.} This review was originally published at Challies.com. "Eve," accessed October 23, 2015, http://www.challies.com/book-reviews/eve.

of years ("I can't believe all I saw happened in six days." ... "What you witnessed, especially the Days of Creation, likely took billions of years."). (Note: In the book's acknowledgements section Young thanks Hugh Ross and Reasons to Believe for helping him "craft the days of creation in a way respectful to both the text and to science," suggesting he may hold to the day-age view and, perhaps, the existence of an historical Adam.)

- She sees Jesus create Adam as an infant from the dust of the ground, and sees God personally nurse Adam from his breasts ("Here in my arms and nursing at my breast is the highest expression of my creation." "Mythology is responsible for many odd ideas. ... Did your Storytellers think that Adam was created as a young man with no capacity, a brute ready to be programmed?").
- She sees that Adam falls into sin before Eve was even created, and that the naming of the animals is an infuriating kind of penance for Adam ("Spinning away, the young man raised his fists and screamed fury into the sky, one word. It reverberated and echoed back as time and place and beast stood still. 'Alone!'").
- She sees that Eve is not taken out of Adam as much as she grows within Adam and is birthed from him ("Adam's belly grew, expanding with a pregnancy. ... In nine months God fashioned the feminine side of Adam's humanity, the female who slept within...").
- She sees that Adam and Satan (in the guise of a snake) conspire together to take advantage of
 Eve's naïveté, so that Eve is an innocent party in her own downfall ("She had been betrayed
 and now was being blamed by Adam for what he had conceived in his own heart.").
- She sees that God is triune and genderless and, therefore, best referred to with gender-neutral, third-person pronouns ("God turned Their face to the woman and gently spoke with words of sorrow...").

In short, she sees a whole new and "corrected" view of humanity's origins and depravity. Through this character, Young means to show that the story of humanity's fall into sin has been co-opted and perverted by men in order to gain power over women. Eve's role in offering Adam the forbidden fruit is a fable men use to dominate and control women.

"But it's all just a story," you say. True, but in this case, Young insists that his story, and the truth it contains, is the result of decades of thought and research. He insists that the truth embedded in this story has the power to free us from faulty interpretations of the Bible that have long corrupted human relationships. In an interview with *Publishers Weekly* he says, "Ultimately, the inspiration for *Eve* is the Scriptures themselves. The more I studied and pondered and conversed, the more I was driven back to Genesis and the iconic saga of Beginnings, and it was there I began to find answers to the big, system-shaking questions I was asking. Eve is my attempt to express some of what I discovered." In that way he plays a character within his own work—the character(s) he calls the Scholar.

Now, it's not like the book is all bad. In fact, there are points where it is downright moving. Young's descriptions of God's joy over his creation, and especially his joy in the creation of man, is powerful and stirring. Man's response to God's love is equally sweet. Young's compassion in describing the agonizing abuse endured by Lilly can only come out of the heart of an author who has himself suffered. And the story, while perhaps too complicated at times, is well-written and well-told.

And yet it is, in the final assessment, a troubling, faulty, and even dangerous story. There is much

I could say here, but for the sake of brevity, let me target the book's big point.

Whatever else Young means to accomplish in his work, it is clear that he means to undermine the traditional accounts of creation and human depravity. As he reinterprets those two doctrines, he then reinterprets the relationship between the sexes, teaching that any pattern of authority or submission is necessarily a product of sin. Even Adam naming Eve is, in Young's retelling, a display of his longing for power and dominance over woman. Young goes so far in his desire to show the sinful dominance of man that he eventually elevates woman over man, femininity over masculinity, as if one is the antidote to the other. "[Women] is Adonai's invitation to embrace frailty and softness, to be whole and unashamed, to return fully from his turning." In this way man's solution for sin is not only the promised offspring of the woman, but woman herself.

Ironically, Young's insistence on complete egalitarianism is inconsistent with his own story. His Witnesses, Scholars, and Collectors are all equals, yet each with his (or her) own *role*. Young's world and his story only work when each of his characters freely and joyfully plays his or her role. In the same way God, in his creative work, assigned separate roles to men and women. In God's world no role is better or greater or higher than another, but each is critical to the story he is telling.

God tells us that God created men to take positions of leadership within the church and family, and for women to joyfully submit themselves to this leadership. In this way God provides a much fuller display of who he is and what he is like. His image is shown not in uniformity but in complementarity. After all, the relationships within the Trinity display this very same pattern of leadership and submission. What is ultimately at stake here is not the relationship of man to woman, but our understanding of God as he displays himself in our relationships.

Behind Young's retelling of this portion of the Bible is the question of the Bible's authority. The only way he can teach what he teaches is by radically altering the biblical narrative. So has the Bible been wrong all along? Is the Bible only a figurative count and *Eve* a faithful interpretation? Were the authors such a product of their time, place, and culture that they biased their work with chauvinist ideas? As the dust settles, what exactly is true anyway? Read *Eve* and you won't have much certainty.

In that same interview with *Publishers Weekly* Young says, "There are also some who will read it and won't 'see' her, sometimes because the timing isn't right and their life's journey has not granted the gifts inherent in suffering, or because their assumptions are too overwhelming and powerful to allow them to hear." More condescending words have rarely been uttered. He seems unwilling to consider that perhaps it's not that our assumptions are too overwhelming, but that God's Word is too clear.

A Review of Denny Burk & Heath Lambert. Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says about Sexual Orientation and Change. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015. 83 pp. \$9.99.

Cody H. McNutt | Senior Pastor First Baptist Church Covington, Georgia

enny Burk and Heath Lambert are no strangers to the ongoing cultural dialogue regarding sexuality. As professors, pastors, and published authors they have proven their knowledge and compassion when dealing with this thorny subject. In 2013, each published a book on issues related to sexuality. Lambert penned *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace* and Burk released *What is the Meaning of Sex?* Colleagues at Boyce College and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the two have now partnered to write a helpful and concise volume about sexual orientation titled *Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says about Sexual Orientation and Change*.

SUMMARY

The book is divided into two parts: the first dealing with the ethics of sexual desire; the second with how those experiencing same-sex attraction can experience transformation by the power of the gospel.

More specifically, chapter one attempts to define orientation and argue that it is not morally neutral. In chapter two, the authors address sin, temptation, and desire with great biblical and theological insight.

Chapters three through five treat issues regarding personal transformation and change. They carefully debunk myths and stereotypes that are often used to assail evangelicals, and thus they help serious Christians to consider what Scripture says to those experiencing same-sex attraction.

EVALUATION

With great precision, Lambert and Burk begin by defining their terms. Without capitulating to secular thought, they employ the American Psychological Association's definition of orientation. While some may rush to critique the authors for their starting point, they succinctly offer disclaimers and argue this as necessary to understand "what people commonly mean by the term sexual orientation" (20).

For those who may just be wading into the often murky waters of this debate, Burk and Lambert provide clear summaries of what the liberal, revisionist, neo-traditional, and traditional approaches to same-sex desire and behavior entail. One of the fine marks of their work is how they engage those with different positions, especially the revisionist Matthew Vines and the neo-traditionalist Wesley Hill.

The authors remind the church that the issue of sexual orientation is a theological issue, not simply one of social construction. Finding help in church history from the anthropology of the Reformed tradition, they cite the historic Princeton theologian Charles Hodge. And they turn to the contemporary voices of Sam Alberry and Rosaria Butterfield in their understanding of how our sexual attraction does not make up our "identity" (36–38).

As they survey the landscape, these men hear the voices of those who argue that while homosexual behavior is sinful, orientation is not. They combat this claim and help the reader to understand that this subject is intensely theological. At the same time, it is an issue "with immediate practical and pastoral implications" (41). Following Augustine's doctrine of sin, they affirm "both evil desire and evil deeds must be regarded as thoroughly sinful" (44).

While critics say that desire may be sinful depending on its "intensity" or its "chosenness", Burk and Lambert exegete Jesus' use of the word *epithumeo* in the Sermon on the Mount and persuasively argue that the key issue is about the "object" of desire (46). Making the biblical-theological connection between Jesus' word and the seventh and tenth commandments, they argue the importance of rightly understanding the sinfulness of same-sex attraction. For it has implication for ministry, counseling, and discipleship, and more (47–48).

In addition to biblical-theological argumentation, the book is filled with earnest compassion. For after three chapters of biblical exposition, the final two chapters, they provide routes of repentance and paths of godly pursuits (81–100). For them, the goal is not a transformation from *homo*sexuality to *hetero*sexuality, but from unrighteous impurity to holiness impelled by faith in the gospel. While they continue to correct wrong assertions and answer false attacks, they emphatically assert that change has nothing to do with a reparative therapy but a reoriented view of God. It is this radical approach to transformation that may catch some Christian off guard and will prayerfully bring liberation to many struggling with same-sex desires.

Finally, the practical advice given to all believers in the final chapter is worth the price of book. Few take the time to hold us to account, to call for our own repentance, and to provide a clear and loving way forward. Burk and Lambert have done the church a great service here. They have reminded church leaders and their members to befriend those struggling individually and corporately, to listen compassionately to them and pray for them, to evangelize and counsel in truth, to stand against oppression, and to receive them as family when God saves them (110–114). This is a needed exhortation for the church of Christ in our day.

CONCLUSION

As the literature on homosexual behavior increases, from Christians and secular writers alike, it is almost impossible to keep up. The church relies on pastor-theologians like Denny Burk and Heath Lambert to help us navigate our cultural terrain. These men have boldly stepped into a part of the conversation with theological nuance or pastoral wisdom. This was the "need" perceived by the authors, and thus the "goal" of their work: "to consider the ethics of homosexual desire" (13). They convincingly, yet caringly, show how faithful believers must consider orientation and desire to also stand opposed to God's Word and his will.

This work should be required reading for all believers, especially pastors and church leaders, so that we may know how to minister more faithfully to those struggling with same-sex desire. *Transforming Homosexuality* is a book that when read seriously will give help to those who struggle with same-sex attraction. And for everyone, whatever the form or focus of our indwelling sin, Lambert and Burk teach us that when anyone feels Christ-like transformation is impossible, they need only turn to the gospel of Jesus Christ. For there in the promises of God's grace, they will hear the sweet and powerful voice of the One who raises the dead and lives to intercede for us.

Book Review of Thomas Bergler. From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 192 pp. \$20.00.

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n the Spring of 2012, American religious historian Thomas E. Bergler dropped a bomb on the playground of evangelicalism with his *The Juvenilization of American Christianity*. In *Juvenilization*, Bergler lays forth an incisive critique of several Christian subgroups: mainline Protestantism, the Black Church, Roman Catholicism, and Evangelicalism. His major thesis was that, in an effort to try to reach youth for the world in the early-to-mid 20th century, the various groupings surveyed actually served to "juvenilize" their youth and thus poison the well for future theological and ethical development.

While all of the critiques served as fascinating case studies, the chapter that stood above them all was his chapter on Evangelicalism. In it, he offered a withering critique of certain patterns, practices, and innovations that did more harm than good for the evangelical enterprise in the long run. Because of the juvenilization that occurred, the rise of things like the seeker-sensitive movement and other forms of individualistic spirituality would reign supreme within evangelicalism, serving to be a fertile ground for the propagation of Christian Smith's "moralistic therapeutic deism." Instead of local churches being a place of formative transformation, the churches began to parrot youth camps and tent revivals—those ministry practices whose original intent was toward pushing youth and non-believers inside the walls of churches. The tail had begun to wag the dog.

Thomas Bergler's *The Juvenilization of American Christianity* served as a catalyst for a much-needed conversation and self-assessment for Christians, especially evangelicals. Yet, questions began to be raised about how helpful Bergler's book was. "After all," many would say, "what good does it do to raise a criticism but not offer any practical suggestions for moving forward?"

It was that question that animated Bergler to write a follow-up to *The Juvenilization of American Christianity*. From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity is

Bergler's response to critics who raised the "so what?" question in terms of American Christianity's juvenilization and what to do about it. Coming in at right under 150 pages, *From Here to Maturity* is a quick survey over some of the issues and what those looking to do—to turn the boat from juvenilization to maturity—might do about them. The book is not meant to be an in depth analysis, but a "practical guide to fostering maturity in local congregations" and to "help church leaders looking to foster maturity in their congregations" (xiii). This is a welcomed aim and I'm glad Bergler set out to do just that.

SURVEY OF CONTENTS

In his first chapter, "We're All Adolescents Now," Bergler runs through some of the issues that he covered in *Juvenilization*, but goes further by looking at the contemporary scorn that many Americans have toward adulthood and growing up. The chapter is devastating. Not only does he recognize that "growing up" isn't what it used to be, he also realizes that "both the journey to adulthood and the destination has changed" (4). Through a variety of factors including, but not limited to, early puberty, institutions that target youth specifically, advertising that praises youthfulness and scorns adulthood, delayed marriage, consumerism, and so forth, we see that maturity simply is not what it once was. Not only is maturity something that is no longer desirable, it's something that many—including the church—don't even really think about. What's more: spirituality is conceived entirely within categories of identity creation, individualism, and a "what's good for me" pastiche spirituality. This is the landscape in which many pastors find themselves ministering.

After exposing the issues, Bergler's second chapter, "Growing Up Into Christ," explores the biblical and theological foundations for maturity in Christ. Through exegesis of the relevant texts—Ephesians 2, Philippians 3, Matthew 28—Bergler shows that the gospel of grace does not free us up to licentiousness or careless living, but calls us to maturity in Christ. "Excluding transformation from the gospel detracts from the glory of God in Christ because it implies that God . . . could not figure out a way to actually fix us to any significant degree" (32). Instead of being Christians who "love the idea of being a child of God," we should remember that God disciplines us (39). The vision for holistic Christian discipleship, according to scripture, is for disciples of Jesus to love one another, serve one another, and seek to grow up into Christ who is the head of the Church. This is something that should be preached on, called for, and desired by those in the church.

Bergler's next chapter, "Helping Adults Mature," is a practical discussion of what it might look like to implement some sort of strategy for Christian maturity within local assemblies. While it's exciting to see Bergler set forth a system for overcoming juvenilization, for various reasons this chapter doesn't seem to deliver. Maybe it's because Bergler is trying to write for a broad constituency, but his transdenominational hopes seem to blunt the force of some of his arguments. For example, in talking about mentor / mentee relationships he speaks of things like "listening to God" and "talking about your spiritual life story." In discussions such as these, I found myself more confused than helped. In fact, this seems to be one of the central weaknesses about *From Here to Maturity*: it serves no good to lay out foundational principles with squishy, plastic phrases like "listening to God," "standing firm," "practice in community," or even "missional living." In fact, for those who have experienced the juvenilizing tendencies within evangelicalism, plastic phrases such as these only serve to further juvenilize, deceiving disciples into thinking they are progressing in sanctification when in fact they're only offering up

empty words and phrases that have a veneer of godliness.

In his fourth chapter, "Reaching the Tipping Point: Youth Ministries That Help the Whole Church Mature," Bergler focuses his sights specifically on youth ministry and what churches can be doing to change the culture of their youth ministries. Indeed, Bergler asserts that "if I am right about how juvenilization works, then it is crucial for churches to help teenagers catch a vision for spiritual maturity. Otherwise, they may get stuck in spiritual adolescence and become the next generation of mature adults." (81) This is a noble aim, though it may strike some—especially those approaching congregational life from a more family integrated approach—as an odd way to approach issues of juvenilization by focusing so much on what makes juveniles themselves "stick." Bergler highlights some of the issues from chapter one and shows that in order to reach emerging adults, there must be a plan of attack. With the aid of social science research, Bergler calls for churches to consider ways in which they, as congregations, can best set youth on a trajectory toward spiritual growth.

In his fifth and final chapter, "From Here to Maturity," Bergler sets out a four step plan for congregations to move toward spiritual maturity. Through observation of practices, Bergler raises some key issues for church leaders to evaluate. For example, part of the issue for juvenilization in previous generations has been from a lack of consideration about the medium by which one wishes to communicate the gospel. As an example, Bergler explores the nature of music in congregational worship. This proved to be a very helpful chapter, especially when considering the formative nature of practices—for good or for ill. Bergler also has scores of diagnostic questions for pastors and church leaders to consider throughout.

CONCLUSION

The Juvenilization of American Christianity has proven to be one of the more impactful books I have read in the last five years. In it, Thomas E. Bergler raised issues which helped me diagnose things that seemed to be at variance with orthodox Christianity; for that I am very grateful. While From Here to Maturity raises similar issues it hopes to overcome, I couldn't help but feel a little underwhelmed. Strangely, it seems that some of the practices that he encourages congregations to undertake would only continue to undermine his central goal: maturity in congregations. It's possible that by writing to a "big tent" audience some of the language and suggestions he employs seems to blunt his argument.

Instead of focusing so much on principles, maybe it's that in aiming for maturity we let the words of Scripture confront us as individuals and congregations—each with our own cultural idolatries—and are called to an ethic that shames the wisdom of this world. Maybe overcoming juvenilization, while difficult, stands to be as simple as hearing and obeying Saint Paul's words when he says, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." Churches which take seriously the authority and primacy of Scripture will not help but aim at such a goal as simple as that.

A Review of Kevin DeYoung. What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality? Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. 160 pp. \$12.99.

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hat does the Bible teach about homosexuality? Whether someone believed the Bible to be true or not, that question used to have an obvious and simple answer: homosexuality is sin. For some today the answer is no longer so obvious. But for all of us the answer is no longer that simple. A transformed context means that more needs to be said, and said with greater care, understanding, and with a more thoughtful vocabulary. The question before us is no longer, "What does the Bible *teach* about homosexuality?" but, "What does the Bible *really* teach about homosexuality?"

This is the subject of Kevin DeYoung's new book framed with that question, What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality? His book is divided into two parts. Part 1, "Understanding God's Word," carefully expounds the relevant passages. Part 2, "Answering Objections," addresses popular challenges to the traditional understanding of homosexuality. DeYoung writes as a pastor who believes that the Bible is "inspired, authoritative, unbreakable, and fully trustworthy" (15). Other writers share this conviction, but DeYoung's book is unique for its narrow agenda, broad appeal, and pastoral delivery. These three features will organize my review.

ONE MAIN QUESTION

I originally expected this book to address a variety of issues. Yet, while DeYoung acknowledges as many as thirteen questions he could address from politics to same-sex attraction, his aim is purposefully narrow (16). To be specific, DeYoung writes to make plain the Bible's teaching concerning homosexual sex acts (15, 16). This is an even narrower aim than the title might suggest. This question, though, is foundational. As DeYoung puts it, "once we answer that question, we can move onto a thousand points

of application" (16). Given what's at stake, this question should not be assumed so quickly by pastors, teachers, and parents about those under their care (19).

And while this question might seem simple, it actually occasions a careful examination of no less than seven crucial texts, including: Genesis 1-2 and 19, Leviticus 18 and 20, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Timothy 1. Together, these passages yield a framework for more than an ethic of homosexual sex, but of human sexuality, marriage, and the problem of sin, a doctrine basic to the gospel.

There are other books doing a faithful job of addressing this question along with a variety of other questions. And there are authors that deal with the biblical texts and contemporary challenges with technical rigor and length (28, 41, 47, 112, 113). But, to date, we really haven't had a book at the popular level that does this in a way that is both thorough enough to be intellectually persuasive and simple enough for "ordinary" Christians to read and distribute (19). To say it differently, DeYoung is doing at the popular level what Robert Gagnon did in his exhaustive academic work, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*.¹

MANY DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Writing to be heard on this subject requires sensitivity to the diverse assumptions and experiences held by the book's readers. For this reason, one of my first questions in picking up any book on this subject is, who can I give this to? Will the author chase away a person with overly harsh statements? Will the author assume too much, raising more questions than he answers? Will the writer loosen the reader's confidence in the clarity of Scripture by making the matter more complicated than it is?

Thankfully, DeYoung is a student of the Word, but also his audience; or better, his audiences. He even devotes half of an appendix to the topic how different people hear this discussion (148–149). For the purposes of framing his book, he identifies three kinds of readers (17–19). The *convinced* are settled or mostly settled on the traditional view. The *contentious* are set against the biblical view. The *confused* aren't sure what to believe. Were DeYoung tackling a myriad of questions his book may have been irrelevant to the contentious or not sufficiently helpful for the confused. It may seem counter-intuitive, but by narrowing his subject matter, DeYoung has actually broadened the appeal of his book.

For most readers, Part 2, "Answering Objections," will peak their interest. There, DeYoung addresses a variety of claims and questions, including: "The Bible Hardly Ever Mentions Homosexuality," "What about Gluttony and Divorce?," "You're on the Wrong Side of History," and "The God I Worship is a God of Love." In answering these questions, DeYoung explores a number of other issues along the way: the necessity of speaking up on this issue (77), and the origin of homosexual desire (110-112), for example. While centered on a single question, the book manages to scratch a lot of itches before it's done.

BRINGING THE BIBLE TO BEAR

DeYoung writes to make the Bible clear, evident in his judicious use of extra-biblical material to support but never distract from the Bible (36, 53–54, 73, 81–86). But he understands that with the Bible's clarity comes responsibility for its reader. He is, after all, a pastor, and this issue is fundamentally

^{1.} Robert Gagnon, The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002).

spiritual in nature. Hopefully, every reader will hear a Word concerning salvation. The Bible's salvation story, calls to repentance, comforts with the kingdom of heaven, and instruction on the Christian life are all there (9-14, 98-100, 134).

For those who are *confident* in their position, DeYoung encourages question asking, long listening, and weeping with those who weep (17, 75, 110, 147). Understanding the sinfulness of homosexual sex should engender a humility that recognizes the problem of sin common to us all. People's stories and experiences should matter to us if we're to help them, even if every experience must be brought under the interpretive authority of the Word (18, 21, 116-117, 132).

The *contentious* will not escape DeYoung's direct and unequivocal statements about sin. Here's an example of how he begins one chapter: "Let me be blunt: the Bible says nothing good about homosexual practice. That may sound like a harsh conclusion, but it's not all that controversial" (79, cf. 74, 87, 115). This confidence is grounded in the demonstrated clarity of Scripture and the Bible's own handling of sexual sin (74). DeYoung will admit complexity, but he does not concede the Bible's clarity (59). The *confused* will hear God's voice on the matter and, so we can pray, realize what's at stake for marriage, Scripture, and souls when the sinfulness of sin is denied (74, 77, 130–131).

MORE ON SHELLFISH AND THEIR CREATOR

If I could recommend one improvement, it would be to clarify further the relationship of Leviticus to the Christian in chapter 3. Christians are often accused of reading the Bible selectively, keeping commands about sexuality while neglecting commands about shellfish, for example. DeYoung offers six excellent points, but I'm not sure it satisfied the objection. In various and qualified ways he said that Leviticus has significance for Christians, but did not adequately explain how one adjudicates the relative contemporary application of different commands. Rooting commands concerning sexuality in creation order was mentioned but not developed. Yet this is a simple way of showing how certain commands carry over to Christians while avoiding the somewhat tricky New Testament application of the Levitical law as a whole. This small critique, though, shows how well in my estimation the book accomplished its stated aim.

What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality? is an excellent book for anyone looking for a clear or clearer answer to that question. For other questions there are other books, and DeYoung makes some recommendations at the end of his (151–153).

Many subjects could be addressed. This subject *must* be addressed. Souls depend on it. So does every other question we're asking.

A Review of Eric Metaxas. Seven Women: And the Secret of Their Greatness. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015. 256 pp. \$26.63.

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s I scroll through Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram feeds I feel compelled to compare my life to the lives of those I follow. I wonder why my Pinterest pizza rolls just don't look like the gourmet picture that I pinned just days earlier. I wonder how parents get their toddlers to sit perfectly still—and smile—for the best family photo of the year. And I think if we knew the whole story behind those feeds that we so closely monitor, we would be more content with our own lives and not be so covetous of the lives that we see on screen.

Biographies offer you insight into the featured person's life—their birth, death, and everything in between. I love how biographies don't just focus on the grand and glamourous, like we often do on Facebook, but also introduce you to the pain of life that the person endured.

As a follow-up to his book *Seven Men*, Eric Metaxas has given us a compelling collection of notable women in *Seven Women*. He engages us with the lives of seven very different women who were all categorized as those who changed their world and were faithful to Christ.

FIERCELY FEMININE

But, something else about these women engages us and first engaged Metaxas. And that is the unique task of living *as women*: women who love Christ and display a fierce femininity. The author shares the struggle he had in choosing which seven women to write about. He didn't want to choose women because they "should somehow be compared to men" (xiv). He goes on to tell his readers why he chose the seven he featured in his book: "What made them great has nothing to do with their being measured against or competing; their accomplishments are not gender-neutral but are rooted in their singularity as women" (xv).

Although it wouldn't be helpful for us to compare ourselves with these featured women, it does help us to examine their lives with the help of the author. By considering their faith we can examine our lives to see if there is any area of growth the Spirit would bring about in our character.

THE SEVEN WOMEN

Not all of the women mentioned in this book are ones familiar to most of us. I learned a great deal about some of these women, which is just one of the many reasons I found this book so intriguing and captivating. Here are the seven.

- Joan of Arc was a single, heroic, leader against military injustice. She would die before she reached twenty years of age—and die a horrific death of a martyr at that.
- Susanna Wesley was a wife and mother of many children who would live into her seventies and see most of those children die before she did.
- Hannah More was a single woman of influence in the world around her and fought against injustice in all areas of life until her death in her late eighties.
- Saint Maria of Paris, a poet, mother, and church reformer, would be over fifty by the time she died and much later be recognized as a saint in the Orthodox church.
- Corrie Ten Boom, one of the more familiar of these ladies, lived a full life of self-abandonment for the good of others in the name of Jesus.
- Rosa Parks, who left this earth not too long ago, fought injustice in America and held at her core her relationships, especially with her husband.
- Mother Theresa, fitting that she would be the last of the seven in this book, had a saying that epitomized her life and the life of the others in this volume: "Faithfulness, not success" (167).

Three characteristics stand out to me about these women. These traits manifested themselves in different ways, but each had an indelible mark on these women's lives. The first one concerns the pain they experienced. Often in social media we only see the good. As I read the lives of these women and was introduced to the pain in their lives, I often was grieved for them and wonder how they remained steadfast.

Another trait I saw was faithfulness. These women knew what was entrusted of them to do and they did it, despite the rage against them. They mothered, fought, loved, and supported. And thus displayed strength in their unique calling as women.

And finally, I noticed that these women all fought against injustice. Each of them faced different facets of injustice, but they all experienced it acutely in their world. From slavery, to racism, to the poorest of the poor, they knew that the God they served and loved was the author and perfecter of justice. They wanted to be His fingerprints on their world.

SEVEN WOMEN WHO GAVE LIFE TO OTHERS

Each of these women exuded life through pain, faithfulness to God, and a commitment to righteousness and justice, all the while still modeling femininity. You could say that all of these women offered

life to those around them. Even as Eve was the mother of all living, these women were life-givers to those around them. Their influence as women of faith, their heroism, and their faithfulness has influenced other women to display these characteristics in their own lives today. May we seek to live out their example in our lives, as beautiful women following a faithful God who calls us to love Him and love others.

A Review of Matt Chandler.

The Mingling of Souls: God's Design for Love,

Sex, Marriage, and Redemption.

Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2015. 224 pp. \$15.99.

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elationships are messy. That doesn't mean that they are not worthwhile. Relationships are a tremendous avenue for growth and joy precisely *because* they are messy. This is surely the case in the context of marriage. Marriage is the union between two sinners. And entering into this often-messy marital relationship should be done carefully, patiently, and wisely.

Matt Chandler, the lead pastor of The Village Church in Dallas, TX, writes *The Mingling of Souls* with Jared C. Wilson in an effort to help us think about romance, dating, marriage, and sex. Chandler roots his discussion in the Song of Solomon. This is a fantastic aspect of the book and would pair well with focused reading in the Song. Furthermore, the book is laden with wisdom. Though Chandler is relatively young, it is obvious that God has granted Matt wisdom beyond his years. He speaks about the complexities of attraction, the ins-and-outs of dating, the peculiarities of courting, and struggles of marriage winsomely. These are reasons enough to take up and read what Chandler has written.

Given our cultures infatuation with relationships and sex, one would think it would be easy to access wise counsel for these issues. Yet, though there are innumerable books, articles, and other resources, it seems there is "a profound lack of wisdom and practical know-how" (11). Chandler sets out to fill the gap.

ATTRACTION

Chandler begins with a discussion about attraction. The move from the "natural feeling of being drawn [to someone]" (23) and finally moving towards marriage is full of complexity. For instance, attraction often arises because we see a physically desirable characteristic in another person, but physical beauty can be deceptive and often fades away (26). Being attracted to someone because you find him or her a

delight to the eyes is a good thing, but "our romance—sense of beauty itself—must run much deeper than physical attraction" (27). In other words, we need to go "deeper than the surface" (32). A person may please the eyes, but are they a person of character? Chandler gives some practical advice for answering that question (31–47). Are they submissive to authority? Does the person commit to things, like a local church and local church leadership? How do they respond in suffering and pain? Looking past the surface, to what lies beneath, helps us think carefully about someone we find a delight to the eyes.

DATING AND COURTING

After giving appropriate caution to how we think about attraction, Chandler begins to talk through wise approaches to dating and courting. Though these two ideas may be collapsed into one in our culture, Chandler helpfully shows the differences. Two people who are attracted to one another physically will likely find ways to "hang out." And, if these two people like what they see in terms of character qualities, there will likely be a desire to move the relationship beyond friendship. For Chandler, this means two people begin to get know each other at a deeper, yet appropriate, level. If there is a mutual desire to pursue this dating relationship (52–54), it seems life giving (55), and godly people have given an approving nod (56–58), then start hanging out in healthy ways. These "ways," however, will look vastly different from the rest of society. Christian dating is a stark contrast to the hook-up culture we find ourselves in.

For Christians, "dating ... has a specific trajectory" (68). We do not awaken love until it's time (Song 2:7). But we are moving towards that "time" by clarifying our intentions in dating. At this point Chandler says two people should consider courtship. Courtship means entering into, "I think this is the one" territory (72). It's a season of life where two people are sorting through their issues. They share their fears, dreams, struggles, and joys. Chandler writes, "This is why courtship is deeper than dating—because it is dangerous, vulnerable, and awesome all at the same time" (77). This is a helpful part of the book. Move towards the commitment of marriage, but do so wisely, patiently, and with intentionality. The two chapters on dating and courtship combine to elevate the seriousness of the pre-marital relationship. Relationships are messy, and they are not a game.

MARRIAGE

Entering into marriage relationships is entering into a covenant. "The way our culture tends to depict the working marriage relationship resembles less the covenant of grace and more a business arrangement" (101). Chandler helpfully shows the need to look at marriage as a covenant, not a contract. It is a committed relationship the community has rejoiced over, and in which the husband sacrificially leads his wife. Once the wedding bells have sounded, and the couple enters the bedroom for the first time, Chandler offers some guidance. Throughout the book he has highlighted that sex is a good gift from the Lord and "can draw you closer to God" (142), if approached in a godly manner.

Chandler has bestowed a good amount of wisdom and he isn't finished. He helpfully walks the reader through practical ways to navigate relational tensions. Since "the flesh will always be there" (144), a couple must think carefully about how they respond when disagreements arise. Furthermore, any couple that's going to finish well must "keep putting logs on the fire" (179). Dating your wife or

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husband is not something that can go away once you've said, "I do." Instead, if you want to finish the course of marriage and hear a "well done" at the end, then you must keep pursuing each other till the last day dawns.

EVALUATION

This book helpful roots the whole idea of marriage in the gospel of Jesus. The gospel is never far away from Chandler's mind and is found throughout the pages. The fact that marriage is a picture of Christ and his church (Eph 5:2–33) colors much of what we read. The handling of a difficult Old Testament book is fair, with bridges from the ancient text to the modern world built with care. In short, this is a holistic book that is not only biblically and theologically careful, but is intensely practical. It is a welcome resource. It would benefit the average layperson, while serving well in pre-engagement, pre-marital, and even marriage counseling contexts. I highly recommend the book.