

THE JOURNAL FOR BIBLICAL  
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MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD

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“Let Marriage Be Held in Honor”—  
Thinking Biblically About So-Called Same-Sex Marriage  
*John Piper*

The Problem of Pornography: Why It’s Wrong and How to Help  
*Heath Lambert*

A Review of Debi Pearl, *Created to Be His Help Meet*  
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A Review of Alan G. Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church*  
*Denny Burk*

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BIBLICAL MANHOOD  
AND WOMANHOOD**

is a biannual publication of the  
Council on Biblical  
Manhood and Womanhood  
ISSN: 1544-5143

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CBMW is a member of the Evangelical  
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## How Important Is Complementarianism? A Dialogue among Friends

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Last August in a blog for the Reformation21 website, Carl Trueman asked why groups like The Gospel Coalition (TGC) and Together for the Gospel (T4G) include complementarianism in their confessional commitments. In short, Trueman thinks it is inconsistent to elevate the importance of a secondary issue like complementarianism while routinely downplaying the importance of other secondary issues like baptism and the Lord's Supper. He writes,

I am simply not sure why it is such a big issue in organisations whose stated purpose is basic co-operation for the propagation of the gospel and where other matters of more historic, theological and ecclesiastical moment are routinely set aside. If you want simply to unite around the gospel, then why not simply unite around the gospel? Because as soon as you decide that issues such as baptism are not part of your centre-bounded set but complementarianism is,

you will find yourself vulnerable to criticism — from both right and left — that you are allowing a little bit of the culture war or your own pet concerns and tastes to intrude into what you deem to be the most basic biblical priorities.<sup>1</sup>

I think Trueman asks a fair question. In fact, the question is not a new one. It has been asked and answered numerous times by members of both TGC and T4G. Justin Taylor<sup>2</sup> has highlighted some of the recent discussion of the matter. I would also point out Kevin DeYoung's<sup>3</sup> helpful little essay from a couple of years ago as well as Ligon Duncan's<sup>4</sup> piece published in *JBMW* in 2008. I too editorialized<sup>5</sup> on the topic for *JBMW* in 2010 (though I'm not a formal representative of either TGC or T4G). This is not a new question, and so the answers are not really new either.

Having said that, Trueman presses the comparison between the gender issue and ecclesiological distinctives such as baptism and the Lord's

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Supper. It is this analogy, I think, that makes his particular critique worth responding to. Is it true (as he suggests) that the gender issue is so analogous to baptism and the Lord's Supper that it should be removed from the confessional commitments of groups like T4G and TGC? I think the answer to that question has to be "no." Maybe the best way to explain that answer would be through an illustration.

Every year I visit my dermatologist for a check-up. In those examinations, he looks at everything growing on or under my skin to see if there is anything that needs to be removed. Every year, he observes a number of moles, skin tags, and other unseemly blemishes. For aesthetic reasons, he'll sometimes suggest that I have one or more of these blemishes removed—a suggestion that I typically refuse. On two occasions, however, my doctor has identified "blemishes" that he insisted *must* be removed because they were precancerous. I rely on the doctor to distinguish the benign blemishes from those that will develop into something that is malignant. Neither type of blemish will kill me. But what grows out of the latter type of blemish can indeed end my life.

Differences over secondary theological issues are like those blemishes. By themselves, they are merely theological blemishes that do not necessarily threaten the central issues of the gospel. Like those blemishes, however, some of them have the potential to turn into a theological cancer. Some secondary issues have more deadly potential than others, and we all have an obligation to be able to distinguish the former from the latter.

This is not to say that *every* egalitarian will eventually become a heretic. Roger Nicole remained a convinced egalitarian and an evangelical stalwart all the way to the end. We can think of other individuals for whom egalitarianism has not and likely will never lead to an erosion of their fundamental evangelical commitments. Nevertheless, the issue at hand is not whether or not we can find orthodox evangelicals who are also egalitarian. The question at hand is whether or not egalitarian doctrine *itself* tends toward the erosion of fundamental evangelical commitments such as inerrancy, the doctrine of

God, and penal substitutionary atonement. Is the egalitarian blemish benign or potentially malignant?

While I believe that paedobaptists are wrong in their interpretation of Scripture, I do not believe their hermeneutic carries with it the seeds of malignancy. I cannot say the same for egalitarian hermeneutics. I believe along with many others that egalitarianism is a potential malignancy. I think Duncan has said it best:

The denial of complementarianism undermines the church's practical embrace of the authority of Scripture (thus eventually and inevitably harming the church's witness to the Gospel). The gymnastics required to get from "I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man," in the Bible, to "I do allow a woman to teach and to exercise authority over a man" in the actual practice of the local church, are devastating to the functional authority of the Scripture in the life of the people of God.

By the way, this is one reason why I think we just don't see many strongly inerrantist-egalitarians (meaning: those who hold unwaveringly to inerrancy and also to egalitarianism) in the younger generation of evangelicalism. Many if not most evangelical egalitarians today have significant qualms about inerrancy, and are embracing things like trajectory hermeneutics, etc. to justify their positions. Inerrancy or egalitarianism, one or the other, eventually wins out.<sup>6</sup>

I know this latter charge is difficult for egalitarians to hear—especially those who remain committed to evangelical faith. Nevertheless, the existence of egalitarian evangelicals does not mitigate the dangers of egalitarian approaches to Scripture in subsequent generations. Again, it is the potentialities of egalitarianism that make it so deadly, not its expression in any particular evangelical. And we have seen those potentialities played out so many times in history.

Several years ago, Mark Dever published an article in *JBMW* in which he compared the relative weight of the complementarian issue to that of



baptism and church polity. In doing so, he invoked his continuing love and admiration for his mentor Roger Nicole, who was an egalitarian. Dever's remarks are worth quoting at length:

"Well then" you might say "why don't you leave this issue of complementarianism at the level of baptism or church polity? Surely you cooperate with those who disagree with you on such matters." Because, though I could be wrong, it is my best and most sober judgment that this position is effectively an undermining of—a breach in—the authority of Scripture....

Dear reader, you may not agree with me on this. And I don't desire to be right in my fears. But it seems to me and others (many who are younger than myself) that this issue of egalitarianism and complementarianism is increasingly acting as the watershed distinguishing those who will accommodate Scripture to culture, and those who will attempt to shape culture by Scripture. You may disagree, but this is our honest concern before God. It is no lack of charity, nor honesty. It is no desire for power or tradition for tradition's sake. It is our sober conclusion from observing the last 50 years.

Paedobaptism is not novel.... But, on the good side, evangelicals who have taught such a doctrine have continued to be otherwise faithful to Scripture for 5 centuries now. And many times their faithfulnesses have put those of us who may have a better doctrine of baptism to shame! Egalitarianism is novel. Its theological tendencies have not had such a long track record. And the track record they have had so far is not encouraging.

Of course there are issues more central to the gospel than gender issues. However, there may be no way the authority of Scripture is being undermined more quickly or more thoroughly in our day than through the hermeneutics of egalitarian readings of the Bible. And when the authority of Scripture is undermined, the gospel will not long be acknowledged. Therefore, love for God, the

gospel, and future generations, demands the careful presentation and pressing of the complementarian position.<sup>7</sup>

I think Dever is right. Wisdom is vindicated by her children. A quick glance at the historical record shows that the children of egalitarianism have not fared well over the long haul. The same cannot be said of those with differing views of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

I love Carl Trueman. Anyone who has read my blog for any amount of time knows that to be the case for of all the times I link to his material. He is an unabashed complementarian and a brother in the Lord. But on this point we disagree. The rejection of biblical gender roles has dire implications for evangelical theology. The hermeneutics of egalitarianism are a blemish leading to theological cancer. The hermeneutics of variant Protestant baptismal views are not.<sup>8</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Carl Trueman, "Confused by Complementarianism? You probably should be," 24 August 2012 [accessed 21 October 2012]. Online: <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2012/08/confused-by-complementarianism.php>.

<sup>2</sup>Justin Taylor, "How Important Is Complementarianism," 28 August 2012 [accessed 21 October 2012]. Online: <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2012/08/28/how-important-is-complementarianism>.

<sup>3</sup>Kevin DeYoung, "Why Do the New Calvinists Insist On Complementarianism?" 2 July 2009 [accessed 21 October 2012]. Online: <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2009/07/02/why-do-new-calvinists-insist-on>.

<sup>4</sup>J. Ligon Duncan, "Why 'Together for the Gospel' Embraces Complementarianism," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 1 (2008): 25–26.

<sup>5</sup>Denny Burk, "Gospel Priorities and Complementarianism," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 15, no. 2 (2010): 2–4.

<sup>6</sup>Duncan, "Why 'Together for the Gospel' Embraces Complementarianism," 25.

<sup>7</sup>Mark Dever, "Young vs. Old Complementarians," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 1 (2008): 23–24.

<sup>8</sup>For more about how egalitarian hermeneutics undermines biblical authority, I recommend Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).

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# Odds & Ends

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## **Book Note: *The New Evangelical Subordinationism?***

In recent years, evangelicals have engaged in a vigorous debate over the doctrine of the Trinity. One group argues that the Father and the Son are equal in authority and power with the Son submitting Himself to the Father only temporarily during the incarnation. Another group argues that the Son's submission to the Father is functional (not ontological) and eternal.

The debate has generated a great deal of discussion not only because it effects the foundational doctrine of God, but also because of its connection to evangelical debates over gender roles. Egalitarians tend to hold the first view of the Trinity, while complementarians tend to hold to the latter. There are voices on both sides of the debate who resist the connection of intratrinitarian relations to discussions about gender roles. This reticence is curious to me since it is the apostle Paul himself who invokes the analogy (see 1 Cor 11:3).

In any case, the discussion is ongoing, and some of the major parties to the debate have just contributed to a book of essays on the topic. The book is titled *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House (Pickwick, 2012). All sides of the debate are represented here, and the contributors include Bruce Ware, Wayne Grudem, Kevin Giles, Craig Keener, Michael Bird, Linda Belleville, and more. I have an essay in this volume as well.

— Denny Burk

## **Stephen Ambrose on Men & Friendship**

I recently read Stephen Ambrose's little book, *Comrades, Brothers, Fathers, Heroes, Sons, Pals* (Simon & Schuster, 1999) and thoroughly enjoyed his celebration of male friendships. He pursues the theme of friendship by examining his own life (brothers, father, and other friends) and

friendships of men he's already written significant volumes about (Eisenhower, Custer, Crazy Horse, Lewis and Clark, and Easy Company). He also has a chapter on Nixon, "Nary a Friend." Ouch. I have no idea where Ambrose was coming from theologically, but he captures a number of things about men, friendship, and the humility required and blessings received from sharing life with like-minded, devoted friends.

Perhaps the best way to briefly mention some of the insights and provide a feel of the book is to list some key quotes:

### ***The natural rough and tumble of boys***

Edgar Eisenhower describing growing up in the Eisenhower household with four other brothers including the future president:

There was no animosity in our fights. We fought for the sheer joy of slugging one another. We had to get rid of our energy and I think that when a fight was over we probably thought more of one another than we did before it began (24).

### ***On his own father***

Ambrose says his father was firm and busy, an anchor of stability though he was not able to spend much "play" time with the boys and was not free with compliments:

But if we wanted to be big men—honest, trustworthy, capable of doing what we said we were going to do—why, we imitated him (131).

### ***The importance of character and virtue, despite any other gifting***

"A man's character is his fate," according to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Nixon had gifts in abundance—brains, acceptably nice looks, good health, a marvelous memory, knowledge, superb

acting ability and stage presence, a faithful family and awesome willpower, among others. Indeed, he had nearly every gift that the gods could bestow. The one he most lacked was character. Virtue comes from character. That is why Nixon despised virtue and railed against it (70).

What man does not long to face a significant challenge and be able to say to a friend the sort of things Lewis and Clark communicate here (in correspondence where Lewis invites Clark to join him on his great expedition):

Thus my friend, you have a summary view of the plan, the means and the objects of this expedition. If therefore there is anything under those circumstances, in this enterprise, which would induce you to participate with me in it's fatigues, it's dangers and it's honors, believe me there is no man on earth with whom I should feel equal pleasure in sharing them as with yourself (100, Lewis to Clark).

This is an undertaking fraught with many difficulties, but my friend I do assure you that no man lives with whom I would prefer to undertake Such a Trip &c. as yourself (101, Clark back to Lewis, original spelling in both quotes).

The quotes could go on. Ambrose notes that the maintenance of friendships can be difficult, but describes how much we need them and how investment in one another leads to flourishing (or the lack of it, e.g. Nixon, leads to withering). The story of Lewis and Clark, how Lewis was given sole command by President Jefferson but chose a shared command with Clark (told more fully in Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage* which is well worth reading), is a powerful example of friendship in a day enamored with solo leadership. Ambrose writes, "What Lewis and Clark had done, first of all, was to demonstrate that there is nothing that men cannot do if they get themselves together and act as a team" (105).

Regarding the benefits of friendship Ambrose frankly discusses how friends helped him and his

wife through troubles with drinking and how he helped some of them through marital difficulties. He also describes the intellectual and professional growth that has come through interaction with friends, as each one did not simply pursue his own purposes in isolation but instead gave time and energy to each other, finding themselves enhanced in the process. He wrote, "Sharing your knowledge with someone who will appreciate it and take advantage of it is just about the best thing to come out of friendship" (93).

Ambrose singles out a colleague, Gordon "Nick" Mueller in the category of "Dearest Friend." He mentions how Nick suggested the approach he should (and did) take on a number of his most popular books (e.g., D-Day as an epic, re-reading Homer on the Trojan War; Lewis and Clark as an odyssey, re-reading *The Odyssey*). Interestingly, from the suggestions he mentions that came from Nick, I think you can see his influence on this book as well. Of this friend Ambrose writes:

I love Nick and he loves me. He would die for me and I for him. We have no secrets. Next to my wife and children and grandchildren, he is the most important person in my life and the one who is dearest to me. Our trust in each other is complete. And we still have projects and fantasies that will go on for as long as we live [at this point they had already accomplished numerous things together including the establishment of the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans]. Our relationship has been a joy and a privilege, indeed an ecstasy. I can't imagine life without Nick.

This is what friendship could, should, might be. Growing together, supporting one another, keeping the other guy's dreams alive. It is not like the competition of youth. There is no element of struggle in it, no pushing, only lifting, drawing the other guy on, teaching, working in partnership without ever having to ask for help (96-97).

This is a powerful portrait of the brotherly love that is supposed to flourish in the soil of the

gospel. By common grace this flower appears in the wild sometimes. The church ought to be a greenhouse full of such flowers and in that way drawing humanity to this richness for which people long.

— Ray Van Neste

### ***Christianity Today's* 50 Women You Should Know**

The cover story of the October 2012 issue of *Christianity Today* is a list of “50 Women You Should Know.” Sarah Pulliam Bailey writes that these are women who are “profoundly shaping the evangelical church and North American society.” It’s an interesting list that includes both evangelicals (like Beth Moore) and non-evangelicals (like Rachel Held Evans). The list also includes women whom you wouldn’t normally find on the Christian speaking circuit—women like Bethany Hamilton (surfer), Condoleezza Rice (former Secretary of State), and Michelle Bachmann (politician).

The article doesn’t include much of a discussion about differences among evangelicals regarding gender roles. Even though there are both complementarians and egalitarians on the list, the article seems to assume an egalitarian framework. In general, it regards high-achieving women excelling in their respective fields as something to be celebrated. Make no mistake, everyone celebrates women excelling in roles that the Scripture commends, but egalitarians continue to disagree with complementarians about what those roles are. In short, the report highlights the influencers without trying to sort out the differences that complementarians and egalitarians have over these issues.

Already, folks have begun discussing who should and should not have been included in this list. That is to be expected. It would be impossible to make a list that everyone agrees with. Here’s the list without the profiles. These are in no particular order.

1. Jennifer Wiseman, 2. Nancy Sleeth, 3. Katharine Hayhoe, 4. Bonnie Wurzbacher, 5. Dorothy Chappell, 6. Tracey Bianchi, 7. Roberta Green Ahmanson, 8. Sara Groves, 9. Roma Downey, 10. Jordin Sparks, 11. Mavis Staples, 12. Bethany Hamilton, 13. Marilynne Robinson, 14. Elisabeth Elliot, 15. Lauren Winner, 16. Luci Shaw, 17. Ann Voskamp, 18. Margaret Feinberg, 19. Rachel Held

Evans, 20. Brenda Salter McNeil, 21. Christine Caine, 22. Bethany Hoang, 23. Lynne Hybels, 24. Amy Sherman, 25. Jenny Yang, 26. Joni Eareckson Tada, 27. Kay Coles James, 28. Condoleezza Rice, 29. Sarah Palin, 30. Jean Bethke Elshtain, 31. Michele Bachmann, 32. Priscilla Shirer, 33. Carolyn Custis James, 34. Anne Graham Lotz, 35. Joyce Meyer, 36. Kay Warren, 37. Beth Moore, 38. Jo Anne Lyon, 39. Amy Julia Becker, 40. Elisa Morgan, 41. Juli Slattery, 42. Leslie Parrott, 43. Jen Hatmaker, 44. Katherine Leary Alsdorf, 45. Esther Fleece, 46. Elaine Howard Ecklund, 47. Nicole Baker Fulgham, 48. Kara Powell, 49. Kim Phipps, 50. Shirley Mullen

— Denny Burk

### **Al Wolters’s Article on 1 Timothy 2:12 and the 2011 NIV**

Al Wolters has a very important article in a recent issue of *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. In the article, Wolters highlights a long-overlooked instance of *authentein* in extra-biblical Greek. He shows that *authentein* is neither pejorative nor ingressive. In other words, extra-biblical sources confirm that *authentein* does not mean “assume authority” but “have authority.” For those of you who have been following the discussion about the meaning of *authentein* in 1 Timothy 2:12, you’ll want to make a note of this article: Al Wolters, “An Early Parallel of *authentein* in 1 Tim 2:12,” *JETS* 54.4 (2011): 673–84.

This is the single most important verse in the discussion among evangelicals about gender roles and ministry, and the 2011 NIV reflects the wrong interpretation. This article from Wolters is another reason the translators ought to consider changing it.

— Denny Burk



# Some Reflections on Discussions about Homosexuality with the Gospel Coalition's Leadership Council

**John Piper**

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### Introduction

In the Spring of 2012, the Leadership Council of The Gospel Coalition (TGC) met for its annual discussions of current issues and the state of gospel-centered ministry among evangelicals. Of the many panel discussions, the most illuminating to me was the one on homosexuality.

The four reflections below were triggered by insightful comments made by the panel participants. But I have developed the thoughts, and I take responsibility for everything in the remainder of this article.

These four reflections are to be read as the completion of the message I gave at Bethlehem Baptist Church on Sunday, June 17, 2012, titled “Let Marriage Be Held in Honor’—Thinking Biblically About So-Called Same-Sex Marriage.”<sup>1</sup> I mentioned at the end of that message that there was much more to say and that I would say some of it elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

### Christ Swallows Up Eroticism in Something Much Bigger

One panelist at The Gospel Coalition discussions of homosexuality said he knew a dozen joyfully married Christian couples with children, in which one of each couple was formerly gay or lesbian. He said that this does not mean there are no more homosexual desires or fantasies. The reason

these marriages work is because love and marriage and life are now seen in a much larger scope. The relationship is seen as much more than an occasion for erotic expression.

It's this bigness of life and love and relationships that Christ brings. He attaches the soul to grand realities. Everything is seen in relation to God and his larger purposes. He reminds us that there will be no marrying or giving in marriage in the age to come. So sexual intercourse cannot be at the heart of human identity. It is temporary. Humans are not.

So one key to enjoying marriage while still having same-sex desires is to let Christ enlarge your vision of what a relationship can be, and what a life together can be in the service of Christ.

### Beware of Naïve Assumptions and False Stereotypes

We should beware of overly-simple generalizations in dealing with people with same-sex attraction, and we should deepen our analysis of what is really going on in a person's soul.

For example, a woman may be a predatory lesbian and a man may be merely experimenting because he longs for male friendship. To deal with these two cases in the same way would be a serious mistake. The spectrum of bondage—from addictive control to casual curiosity—is so great we must not

make assumptions until we have serious and candid conversations.

Similarly, we should deepen our analysis of what is really going on in a person's soul before we conclude that a person is fixed in a same-sex orientation. For example, we may find that a man's homosexual exploits are really a manifestation of a deeper spiritual issue of being harsh and controlling.

In other words, we should never deal with sexual attraction in the abstract. It is always entangled with other facets of our soul that may, at first glance, seem disconnected from our sexual drives.

### **How Do You Relate to a Gay Family Member?**

Is there hope for a relationship with a family member who is not a believer and is in a same-sex relationship and who knows your Christian position? Yes. One story went like this. An adult sister-in-law was in a lesbian relationship and would bring her partner to all the wider family functions when she was invited. She knew her brother-in-law's position. Not only was she sinning to be involved sexually this way, but her very soul was in danger of eternal judgment if she did not repent. She knew that's what he thought.

At first she was very angry and, no matter how kind or gracious or caring the Christian couple tried to be, this sister-in-law saw them as homophobic and bigoted. She assumed she was not loved and let that define the relationship.

Then one day the brother-in-law asked her, "Are you able to love me in spite of my views that you think are so wrong?"

"Yes," she said.

"Then, why," he asked, "will you not give us the same courtesy and assume that we might be able to love you in spite of your wrong views?"

Remarkably, this actually made a difference. She apologized for pushing them away, and for assuming they could not love while disapproving of her ways. Perhaps this might help others open the hearts of relatives to their genuine care.

### **"There Is No Demilitarized Zone in the Issue of Homosexuality"**

All the participants of the panel on homosex-

uality at The Gospel Coalition Council meetings agreed that we have entered one of the most difficult challenges to a gospel-centered approach to evangelism. The reason is not that the center of the Christian gospel has changed but that the center of the cultural gospel has changed. That center for many is the freedom to *be* GLBT and to be *approved*.

Which means that whether we want to make this a frontline issue or not, increasingly it is. As one of the panelists said, "There is no demilitarized zone in the homosexual debate." Pastors must address it. In fact, virtually everyone who communicates with mainstream cultural folk must address it.

The argument against Christianity today is not epistemological but moral. Christianity is rejected not because it is badly argued, or untrue, but because it is evil. And it is evil because it opposes homosexual practice. The panelists agreed that, at least in major metropolitan areas, the issue of homosexuality ranks near the top of the reasons people reject Christianity, along with the problem of suffering and the exclusive claim that Jesus is the only way of salvation.

It is almost impossible to express a compassionate disapproval of homosexual practice without being demonized. But this is not an entirely new situation for the church. On the one hand the state of our culture seems to have changed with lightening speed. On the other hand it may not be as new as it seems.

Consider what it must have been like for Christianity to take root in a totally pagan and debauched culture in the first century. Sometimes we are presented with an overly positive picture of the progress of the faith. We read of how the church was courageous and loving, and how the empire was won over. But here is what it looked like along the way. This is from the mid-first century in pagan Asia Minor:

The time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign

you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:3–5).

This is not pretty. The gospel is landing with power in some lives. So much power that they not only believe in Christ for justification, but their lifestyles are radically changed. They stop doing certain things: “*sensuality, passion, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties . . . a flood of debauchery.*” Believing in Jesus means they don’t do that any more.

The result? Not respect and tolerance, but slander: “they malign you.” That is where we are today in regard to homosexuality. And Peter’s counsel to the maligned Christians who do not approve of the “flood of debauchery” around them is this:

Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings (1 Peter 4:12–13).

Peter also held out hope that if we do not grow weary in doing good we would see saving effects in the lives of people around us:

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation (1 Peter 2:12).

The panelists were sober-minded about the future. One of them suggested that if the cultural battle is lost on the nature and meaning of marriage then there will never be a complete cave-in in this country. Twenty percent of the people will always oppose same sex marriage, and many will go to prison.

Churches will be faced with new and unheard of cases of discipline. Suppose two so-called “married” men hear the gospel and one of them believes and comes to your church. Will you counsel “divorce” and moving out?

One final observation was made from the TGC panel: One of the most powerful things we can do is fold into our churches men and women

who have same-sex attraction and surround them with a bigger vision of life and love and relationships that make it possible for them to flourish in families and friendships. These stories may be one of the most authenticating messages for the Christian gospel.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>John Piper, “Let Marriage Be Held in Honor”—Thinking Biblically About So-Called Same-Sex Marriage” [cited 16 June 2012]. Online: <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/let-marriage-be-held-in-honor-thinking-biblically-about-so-called-same-sex-marriage>. This sermon is also reprinted in this issue of *JBMW*, pp. 36–40.

<sup>2</sup>This article originally appeared as a series of blog posts on the Desiring God website. The first post in the series appeared under the title “Homosexuality, Human Relations, and the Challenges to Evangelism” [cited 18 June 2012]. Online: <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/homosexuality-human-relations-and-the-challenges-to-evangelism>. The subsequent posts are linked at the bottom of the June 18 post.

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# The Problem of Pornography: Why It's Wrong and How to Help

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Pornography is the defining sexual sin of our day. In Christian circles adultery and homosexuality often capture more headlines, but I am persuaded that in terms of sheer numbers they cannot hold a candle to the devastation of pornography. Last year I counseled six people struggling with homosexuality and around eighteen caught in adultery and fornication. I don't know exactly how many I helped who were locked in pornography, but the number is in the dozens. As bad as that number sounds those people are not the ones I am concerned about since they came trying to expose the darkness to light and find grace to help in their time of need. They wanted help.

The people who concern me are the ones who did not seek out me or anyone else. These people pose the deeper problem. They are the ones who are hiding in the dark while destroying their marriages, ministries, and Christian witness under the radar. They are the ones waiting to be caught when they least expect it. They are the ones who will not know God's blessing in their home or ministry even though things might appear to be going well on the outside. They need urgent help, but will not get it because nobody knows they have a problem.

The church must wake up to this problem. Thousands of young Christians are being hooked and making shipwreck of their faith. The church must begin seriously to address this issue with sermons, resources, and skilled counseling that addresses the problem for the horrifying reality it is.

It is not as though there are no resources available on pornography from a Christian perspective. I just completed a book for Zondervan,

due out next year, entitled *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace* about helping people overcome the problem of pornography. In preparation for that book I read a ton of books on the topic by Christians in addition to scores of articles and blogs. Christians write a lot about this issue, but two challenges continue to confront the church when considering pornography.

The first challenge concerns understanding the nature of the problem of pornography. Christians are unanimous in the conviction that pornography is wrong and harmful. What has proven to be a bit more challenging is understanding why pornography is wrong. If Christians do not understand what pornography perverts they will not be equipped to set it right. In this article I want to try to correct some mistaken understandings of the problem of pornography and explain what is at the heart of this problem from a biblical perspective.

A second challenge, and even more pressing than the first, concerns understanding how to help those who struggle with pornography. The best books, articles, and blogs are usually works about pornography. Authors of these resources typically see quite clearly how prevalent pornography is in our culture, and how poisonous it is to everyone involved. They often write about the urgent need to deal with this problem. What is frequently missing is practical strategies to fight the problem. I take it that Christian leaders today can know how to describe the problem of pornography and still lack the practical wisdom to help someone lay hold of the grace of Jesus to overcome this problem. A comprehensive approach to ministry for those



struggling with pornography would take more space than I have in this article so I will only offer one initial step to help those locked in the grip of pornography. Even though this is just a start it is a crucial beginning.

### **What is Wrong with Pornography?**

It may seem silly to ask what is wrong with pornography, but we need more than broad agreement that porn is a problem, if we want to help those who are hooked on it. If my car does not run and I believe the problem is in the alternator when it is actually in the engine, I will not fix the car. If your chest hurts and you believe it is indigestion when you are actually having a heart attack, swallowing antacids will divert attention from the real problem and make matters worse. In the same way, if Christians misunderstand what drives the sinful logic of men who look at pornography they will not be able to help them in the best way possible.

A recent book leads Christians to an aberrant understanding of what drives men to look at pornography. In *Surfing for God: Discovering the Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle*, Michael John Cusick tries to explain the dynamics behind men's desire for porn.<sup>1</sup> Cusick mentions a number of reasons why men look at pornography including their sinfulness, weaknesses, and even spiritual warfare. Cusick spends very little time unpacking these themes, however. What gets the most press in his book is what he refers to as the broken woundedness of men. Men look at porn because they have certain needs for love, well-being, significance, and security that are unmet.<sup>2</sup> Because of these "needs" the love containers in men's hearts are broken.<sup>3</sup> Men who look at pornography aren't ultimately looking for sex, but are lonely and in search of relationship.<sup>4</sup>

There are numerous problems with understanding men who look at pornography in terms of being fundamentally broken, needy, and desiring relationship. First, it misidentifies the problem. The central problem with men who view pornography is not they have a need to overcome loneliness with pornography. Some men who look at porn are lonely, and some are not. In either case there is no logical connection between loneliness and view-

ing pornography. Many of the men I have helped with porn struggles are married to women who love them and have pursued a relationship with them for months and even years while their husbands avoided them in favor of pictures on the internet. I imagine the wives of men who accept Cusick's rationale will be shocked and offended at such an explanation.

Second, emphasizing needy woundedness makes men who are hooked on porn sound as though they are passive in their sinfulness. This is not true. Men who pursue pornographic images are actively corrupt. They search out hundreds and thousands of images to devour. I know that many men who have trouble with pornography are victims of all manner of difficulties in life. As above with neediness, however, there is nothing that essentially links the wounds of previous hurts with the active and sinful pursuit of graphic sexual images.

Third, accepting Cusick's explanation for the logic of viewing pornography will lead to men who are effeminate. Cusick's needs-oriented understanding of looking at pornography paints a picture of men who are basically passive. They have containers (to use his language, referenced above) that are waiting to receive the love of others. If they do not receive this love they respond in sinfulness until their leaky love containers are repaired and filled up. When the solution to pornography is finding a way to fill up your neediness, the result is passivity. Cusick tells of his own struggle to deal with pornography where he learned to wrap himself in a quilt and retreat into a closet to cry unconsolably and avoid his family and friends.<sup>5</sup> This anecdote from Cusick's own life demonstrates the harmful and unbiblical passivity that flows from his understanding.

Such passivity leads to (and can be equated with) effeminacy because the call to biblical manhood is the call away from passive withdrawal and a summons to active engagement with God and others. Men are called to lead, not pull back. The Bible never commends a tearful retreat as a strategy to change. Scripture depicts the struggle against sexual sin as warfare—a metaphor that hardly favors passivity. "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:11). Men are called to run into the

fire of life's troubles fighting with the grace of Jesus to defeat sin, and love and serve others in spite of their own struggles. This truth does not mean men must demonstrate implacable strength without a hint of weakness, that they do not struggle with sin, or that they never cry over the pain of their sinfulness. It does mean that when Cusick calls men to fight for purity by searching to have their relational needs met it will lead to the kind of tearful withdrawal to the closet he seems to commend. Cusick's experience is not an exemplary strategy for change, but will lead strugglers further away from biblical masculinity and closer towards effeminacy.

For these and other reasons Christians should reject Cusick's rationale explaining men's struggles with pornography grounded in unmet needs. The biblical logic behind temptations to view pornography is much more straightforward. In fact, I want to argue there are at least seven perverse and sinful desires driving the heart of men who look at pornography.

The first perverse desire is lust. Men crave what they do not have instead of being thankful for what the Lord has already given them. Lust is the greedy desire for something that does not belong to you. Sinful people can lust after money, power, status, or anything else. Men are guilty of sexual lust when they have greedy desire for sexual intercourse with a woman who is not their wife. The opposite of greedy desire is thankfulness for everything the Lord has given (Eph 5:3–4). Far from embracing an unbiblical notion of unmet needs, a thankful man overflows with the grateful acknowledgement that the Lord will see to it he is never without what he needs in the truest sense of the term. Men enslaved to pornography fail to believe this reality in favor of a lustful desire for more than what they have received.

The second perverse desire behind pornography is the one for promiscuity. Men who search for the sexual images of pornography desire many sexual partners instead of one. The Bible speaks with crystalline clarity about the importance of monogamy in marriage. One clear place where this standard is heralded is in the qualifications for elders in 1 Tim 3:2. A man who would lead God's church is

required to be, literally, a "one-woman man." Christians have disagreed on the precise meaning of this phrase, but at a minimum the passage is teaching the importance of monogamous sexuality in marriage. Men who look at pornography show a dissatisfaction with the singularity of marital sex, and pursue the plurality of a pornographic harem.

A third perverse desire guiding the hearts of men who pursue porn is a craving for anonymity in sexual relationships. Porn is all about anonymous sex. The women in porn don't know or care if the man gawking at them seems distracted by work, is fifty pounds overweight, has a nasty anger problem, or smelly breath. They don't know these things because they don't know him. He is anonymous. This kind of sexual encounter makes porn "safe" for perverted men. They can ogle the bodies of beautiful women without risking the rejection that always comes with being known. In contrast to this secrecy the Bible talks about sexual expression in terms of intimate knowledge. The Bible refers to sexual intercourse as "knowing" (e.g., Gen 4:1), not because of a prudish desire to avoid details, but to make a statement about the intimacy that is an intended part of sexuality. Men who look at porn are made uncomfortable by the knowledge that comes with a relationship and so seek the anonymity of pictures.

A fourth perverse desire is the one for short relationships. In Mal 2:13–16 God condemns his people for breaking the faith of the marriage covenant. That passage makes clear that even though a man's spouse is his partner by covenant he has broken faith with this woman Malachi twice refers to as "the wife of your youth." God clearly intends marriage to begin in the days of youth and to extend to old age and ultimately to death. God desires for men to grow in a relationship with one woman that is sustained over the years as they each experience the profundities of life together. When men turn to pornography they short-circuit this intention. Pornography offers a brief and fleeting encounter that is anything but a relationship. The encounter begins when sexual desire is awakened and ends when sexual desire is sated. The people involved in the encounter share no other element of relation-

ship and are done with each other in moments. Men who look at porn sinfully desire a fleeting encounter with a woman for sex, rather than an enduring relationship with a whole person for life.

Fifth, and closely related to this reality, is a perverse desire for shallow relationships that are free of entanglements. The previous issue has to do with length; this one has to do with depth. Fleeting and shallow encounters with electronic images do not require the relational complications that are present with real women. In a normal marriage, sex is a blossom that flourishes on a well-cultivated plant. Sex is a delight to be enjoyed, but that enjoyment comes at the end of a lot of relational effort. Married men are called to desire sex from women who perhaps struggle with sorrow, have temper problems, are stressed out about how their kids are doing in school, or are annoyed by a joke made at their expense while out with friends. In most authentic sexual relationships these issues have to be addressed before sex can be enjoyed. This reality does not hold true for the women in pornography. Women in porn have no problems—at least as far as the men who gape at them are concerned. Men look at a pornographic actress without having to worry about her cycle, comforting her when she is sad, or providing for her financial needs. The relationship is frivolous. The pornographic actress seems to want to satisfy him sexually, and he lets her do it. When he clicks out of the screen, any other commitment is irrelevant. For men who are called to love their wives as Christ loved the church, such a frivolous desire is the opposite of biblical care and commitment.

A sixth perverse desire of pornography is the desire for youth. I'm confident pornographic actresses have a very brief shelf life. No woman is involved in pornographic films for decades because men who look at such products do not want to see elderly women. The allure of porn is found in the tight bodies of young women with no gray hairs or crow's feet. When women inevitably grow old, the men who look at porn have no more use for them. In opposition to this, the God of the Bible commands men, "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times

with delight" (Prov 5:18–19). The phrase "wife of your youth" is here used again as an encouragement to men to desire their wives sexually throughout life. A man should find sexual delight in his wife exclusively whether the couple is newly-married in their twenties or whether they are elderly. A husband is to desire his wife sexually regardless of age. The perverse logic of porn tempts men away from this standard and makes youth the object of sexual desire, rather than seasoned commitment.

Finally, a perverse desire for the ease of passive sexual fulfillment drives some men to look at pornography. Men who choose to view porn are lazy, and sex is hard work. It takes work to woo a woman who might not be in the mood for sex. It takes guts and grace to be told, "Not now honey," when sexual desire is strong. It takes time, effort, and patience for a man to ensure that his wife enjoys the sexual encounter as much as he does. In the face of such hard labor, porn is easy. There are no lengthy romantic pursuits, no fear of denials, and no pressure to serve another person in a sexual way. With porn, all you have to do is sit, watch, and enjoy. The sinful ease of pornography leads perverse men to desire watching sex more than participating in it.

Men look at pornography because they are full of ungrateful lust for anonymous, fleeting, frivolous, easy sex with numerous women. The wicked rationale driving men's desire for pornography is as simple and sinful as this. As important as it is to understand this twisted logic, however, we need more than understanding if we are to help men who struggle.

### **How Do We Help Men Struggling with Pornography?**

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article it is not enough merely to understand why men look at pornography. It is essential also to know how to help men stop looking at it. Far too many write about what is wrong with looking at pornography without offering help to those who want to be done with it. When Christians do this we actually make matters worse because most of the Christian men who read our statements about the problems of porn already agree that it is a prob-

lem and want to quit. When we only tell them what they already know adding to the weight of conviction against sin without offering assistance in shouldering that weight, we compound their hopelessness and despair. I have talked with countless men struggling with pornography and believe that quite often their problem with realizing true repentance has less to do with their own commitment to change, and more to do with the inability of Christian ministers to know how to offer wise and loving help.

For ministers, this is the problem of moving from ethics to ministry. Ethics is concerned with the morality or immorality of an activity. Ministry is concerned to help someone take those principles and show, with wisdom and skill, how to change. The church is going to be in miserable shape if we do not learn how to match skilled ministry with proper ethics. It is not enough to understand pornography is a distortion of gospel masculinity, femininity, and sexuality. The church needs leaders who know how to help struggling persons defeat this problem. That is the purpose for the rest of this article.

There is far more to say about how to help people battling pornography than I can offer in one article (which is why I've written a book on the subject). For now, let me look at one passage particularly rich in fighting the war against porn. In Rom 13:11–14 the Apostle Paul says,

Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

In this passage, Paul gives two crucial categories for fighting pornography. First, Paul gives strugglers a message to be believed. Paul states that the hour has come to wake from sleep and affirms

that salvation is nearer now than when we first believed, saying that the night is far gone and the day is at hand. Paul is saying Christians live in the daylight of righteousness and salvation. The days of sinning are over, and believers now have Christ's own ability to live in victory over sin in a powerful, though imperfect way (cf., Rom 6:1–11). As Christians live in the midst of powerful temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, this message is true, but it requires faith. Christians must reckon it true that, because of the work of Christ, their lives are no longer defined by sin and darkness, but by righteousness and light.

This is a powerful message for those caught in the grip of pornography. For many, porn feels like a vice gripping them so tightly that freedom is impossible. The first step in ministry to these people is to call them to believe the radical truth that in Christ they are set free from sin. Jesus has ushered them into the broad daylight of salvation, which approaches progressively the more they walk with him. Believing this truth offers power to those in a ferocious struggle against sin, and in encountering this power there is magnificent hope that ultimate victory has been secured by Christ and is theirs in him.

Second, in this passage Paul gives strugglers a message to be obeyed. Having believed a true message about who they are in Christ, Paul now calls Christians to behaviors that naturally flow from this position. Having believed the truth, Christians must now walk properly. Paul's call to obedience comes in negative and positive poles. In negative terms, Paul characterizes this proper walk by what it is not—what Christians should stop doing. Not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality. Christians are to make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. There is no place in the Christian walk for pornography so Christians should make no provision to gratify the fleshy desires that drive pornography.

Such a command is full to bursting with practical implications. Christians are to consider the desires of the flesh that motivate them to look at pornography and eradicate any opportunity to gratify those desires. This reality will make it important for ministers to help Christian men



eliminate as many opportunities as possible to view pornographic material. Removing such opportunities will mean that we listen carefully to how the men whom God has given us to shepherd access pornography. People can access pornography electronically (TV, phone, or computer), in retail stores (like video rental locations or adult bookstores), or from a friend or relative (a dad may have a stash of porn, or a friend's computer may unwittingly offer unfettered internet access). Christian ministers need to think creatively and boldly about how to help men restrict such access through software, passwords, confession to those whose equipment has been used for it without their knowledge, and even making it difficult to make purchases by viewing bank statements.

Outward attempts to avoid making provision will ultimately be fruitless unless and until Christian ministers help men deal with the perverse and fleshy desires that guide men to looking at pornography. Men need to learn to seek the Lord's grace to forgive and change them of the perverse and sinful desires examined earlier in this article and to cultivate hearts that love purity. This grace belongs to any who lay hold of it by faith. This inward work is the hardest, but is made possible by the finished work of Christ. By his grace men who are driven by a desire for novelty in sex can grow to love committed, and faithful sex.

Paul's message to be obeyed does not come only in negative terms. There are positive categories as well. Paul doesn't merely tell Christians what they must stop doing. He also tells them what they must start doing. As Christian men put off the immorality of pornography, Paul tells them to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. The fight for purity is not ultimately a fight merely to avoid looking at porn. In the first place it is a fight to be riveted, captivated, and stunned by the Lord Jesus Christ. The fight away from porn is the fight towards Christ. As Helen Lemmel wrote in her classic hymn,

Turn your eyes upon Jesus  
Look full in his wonderful face  
And the things of earth will grow  
strangely dim  
In the light of his glory and grace.

This is as true for those who struggle with pornography as it is for anyone else. When your heart is flooded by the majesty, beauty, power, glory, and grace of Jesus Christ there is simply no room in your heart for pornography. A man who is turning to Jesus, learning to encounter him in the Word and prayer, and singing out to him from the bottom of his heart in worship is a man who is pulling porn up by the roots and will soon be done with it. The men whom the Lord gives us to shepherd will ultimately be free from pornography when they realize that beholding the beauty of Jesus is more wonderful than beholding the form of pornographic actresses.

Pornography is a serious and weighty problem. It is characterized by a complex of distorted and devious desires wrecking the lives of many men, women, and families. Pornography is a problem, but grace is more wonderful than porn is terrible. "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20). The powerful, abounding grace of Jesus gives us more than understanding about what drives men to look at porn. Jesus' grace also gives us practical strategies that ultimately point to him so men grow in the power to turn their eyes upon Jesus instead of actresses in pornography. The call of Christian ministers is to take of this mighty weapon of grace and wield it against porn so perverse and immature men can be presented mature in Christ.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Michael John Cusick, *Surfing for God: The Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 30–31, 76, 157, 162.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 40–41.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 79–80.

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# Marriage in the Cosmic Plan of God

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God invented marriage to display the power of the gospel. He created marriage to broadcast the love of his Son for his bride and to broadcast the submission of the church to his beloved Son. But like an unhatched chick inside a dark egg, this Christ-revealing meaning behind marriage was hidden inside a shell for thousands of years. The mystery was conceived when Adam took Eve as his bride, and the mystery was revealed when Christ burst from the stone tomb and ascended into heaven.

Because marriage figures prominently into God's plan, Christian husbands and Christian wives play a unique role in the storyline God has written. This storyline is majestically wrapped into a massive cosmic vision of God's ultimate purposes in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians. To see marriage in this broader scope we must first see the panorama of Paul's theology in Ephesians.<sup>1</sup>

## Overview

To that end, this article has a threefold purpose. First, I sketch out four important theological pillars in Ephesians that highlight the cosmic importance of Christ's death and resurrection. Second, I illustrate how those four theological themes set up and sustain the marriage passage in 5:22–33. Finally, I conclude by drawing the theology and application together into one cohesive vision statement about how Paul's letter to the Ephesians reveals to us the role of marriage within the cosmic work of Christ.

## Four Theological Pillars

In order to understand the marriage passage in Eph 5:22–33, and ultimately in order to understand our own marriages, we must see four theo-

logical themes that Paul has interwoven through the entire letter:

- (1) Christ has defeated the cosmic powers of evil to become the focal point of everything.
- (2) Christ has inaugurated a new creation.
- (3) Christ is now restoring first creation patterns.
- (4) Christ is now restoring the relational harmony unraveled by the chaos and discord of sin.

This four-part cluster of Christology will set the stage for understanding our own marriages later in this article. Before we apply these theological points to marriage, I first want to detail each theme as they develop in Ephesians.

### ***(1) Christ has defeated the comic powers of evil to become the focal point of everything.***

In his death and resurrection, Christ has triumphed over the cosmic forces of evil, and has ascended to the place of Lord over all creation. He has conquered and he is now bringing all the chaos of this fallen creation into subjection to himself, which is to say that Christ has become the focal point of the universe. All things must now be measured in relation to Christ: either *in* and *under* Christ, or *separated* from Christ. This is one of the grand themes of Ephesians.

Ephesians begins and ends within a massive, cosmic scope (1:9–10; 6:10–13). The context for this book is larger than marriage and larger than the local church. Ephesians encompasses the entire creation. In his death, resurrection, and ascension, Christ has become the nucleus of the cosmos. Everything in heaven and earth must orient to him

and under him (1:9–10). These two verses are essential for understanding the entire book and reveal “God’s full plot” for the created universe.<sup>2</sup> Christ can begin the work of ordering, or re-creating, the world because he has defeated the cosmic powers of evil and broken sin’s tight grip.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the created cosmos, once only fallen and splintered and chaotic because of sin, is now being put in order. In part, this reordering is revealed as sinners are reconciled to God through the blood of Christ (see Col 1:20).

Paul frequently returns in his letter to the victory of Christ over evil (1:20–23; 2:5–6; 3:10; 6:12). Christ’s victory over evil is the supreme example of a long history of God’s victories over evil throughout the Old Testament. Paul quotes from Psalm 68 to make this connection (4:8). God’s miraculous deliverance in the Exodus and his victory over the Canaanites remind Paul of the decisive work of Christ. “By his death on the cross, Christ has met the big enemies of sin, Satan, and death and has utterly routed them.”<sup>4</sup> Christ has taken the victor’s position over the cosmos. He came to defeat evil—and he won decisively (3:10; 4:8–10).

Especially when 1:10 is read in light of these passages, it becomes clear that God in the victory of Christ has begun to eschatologically harness the sin-twisted chaos in the cosmos. Christ is the terminating point of everything; it is by Christ that everything else is now measured. Believers submit to him willingly and are united into Christ, and thus are properly oriented to him (1:11–18). The church is oriented *under* him and *over* the cosmos (1:19–23). And the church now gathers to stand in awe of this cosmic plan of God that is revealed in the death and resurrection of Christ (3:14–21).

At the same time, Christ’s victory speaks to the end of evil. In the end, all chaos, all the wickedness of rebel sinners, all the angels, even death itself, will be completely subject to Christ (willingly or unwillingly). When the entire cosmos has been brought under Christ, and when order is once again brought to creation, Christ will subject it and himself to God (see 1 Cor 15:23–28). Paul’s point in Ephesians is to demonstrate that Christ has already won the victory over evil in his death

and resurrection. Christ is now the nucleus of the cosmos, and like the North Pole, all things must now orient to him, including husbands and wives.

## **(2) *Christ has inaugurated a new creation.***

As we have already discovered, the Apostle Paul does not limit the work of Christ in the gospel to bringing about individual salvation. For Paul, the gospel comes to the world in cosmic proportions, the death and resurrection of Christ alter the course of world history, and this cosmic unfolding of the gospel affects everything Paul writes.

Paul views history in two very distinct periods of time, or two orders of existence: (1) *The old aeon*, the age “in Adam” that includes the beginning of sin and the fall, and the curse on creation. This *old aeon* continues into the present and finally ends when Christ returns and all of creation is fully re-created. (2) *The new aeon*, or the new creation “in Christ,” is the age begun and inaugurated in Christ’s death and resurrection. It marks the beginning of the re-creation of the cosmos, a reality that has already begun in the “new creation” believers in the church, and an age that will come to full expression when Christ returns (see Revelation 19–22).

By his finished work, and particularly his resurrection, Christ has ushered in a new aeon that is set at odds against the old aeon of sin, rebellion, and death. This new aeon is evidenced by the long-awaited arrival of the Holy Spirit. To be in the old aeon is to be spiritually dead and dominated by sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil. To be in the new aeon is to have justification, spiritual life, and freedom from sin (see Rom 6:1–14).

The dawning of the new aeon in Christ is at the very heart of Paul’s entire theology.<sup>5</sup> And at this present time in redemptive history we find the old aeon and the new aeon co-existing side-by-side in ongoing tension. Everyone belongs to one aeon or the other.

The tension between aeons hits close to home for the Ephesians (and for all of us). All non-Jews (Gentiles) were once among the walking dead of the old aeon, futile in mind, blinded by sin, alienated to God, sons of disobedience, children of wrath, blinded by Satan, and headed for judgment

along with the whole fallen realm (2:1–3; 4:17–19). But God intervened. In Christ he saved us from the old aeon. We were united to Christ, we were raised with him, and we are now citizens of his new aeon (2:4–6). Christians now belong to the new aeon by the fact that we are “in Christ” (no longer “in Adam”). In Christ, every Christian has experienced a definitive breach with the old aeon. We have laid aside our old man. We have put on the new man of the new aeon (4:20–24). Or to use stronger language, in Christ we *are* “new creation” (2:10, 15; 4:23–24; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

Therefore, Christians are called to walk as resurrected “children of the light,” not children of the old aeon of darkness (5:7–10, 14). Spiritually, we are citizens of the new aeon. But we find sin within us, and we groan for the day when we shall be physically raised from the dead and totally set free from all sin (see Rom 8:18–25). Until that day we are learning to act consistently with this new self (4:17–24).<sup>6</sup>

So much of the new aeon is unconsummated that we have much to look forward to when Christ returns (1:14; 1:21; 2:7; 4:30; 5:5, 27; 6:8, 13). Yet Paul assumes that the new aeon has begun already, and Christians have been transferred from the old aeon into the new aeon (see Col 1:13). The arrival of the new aeon does not negate the need for Christians to pursue maturity (4:23), nor does it eliminate all our sin temptation. This “aeon transfer” helps to make sense of our temptations. In our spiritual immaturity we are perpetually lured to live as though we are citizens of the old aeon (see Rom 6:1–23)!

We find ourselves at a strange point in redemptive history. The old aeon (that is passing away), and the new aeon (that will be consummated at the return of Christ), now co-exist. We who are in the new aeon remain tempted by the empty allurements of the old aeon, and especially toward discord-causing sins like racism and selfishness, sins that wreck relationships and split churches and sink marriages.

### ***(3) Christ is now restoring first creation patterns.***

The new age inaugurated in Christ is nothing

less than God’s chosen means to restore the cosmos to His original pre-fall design. Christ has come to redeem the world from the fall, and in that way the redemption of humanity and the redemption of the cosmos go hand-in-hand (see Rom 8:22–23). When Adam and Eve rebelled, Satan and cosmic evil and humanity joined forces to destroy the original intentions of the Creator. Redemption in Christ is a return to Eden and a picking up of God’s original plan in creation.<sup>7</sup>

In Ephesians, Paul returns to the language of the Old Testament to show how Christ’s work is nothing short of creation restoration.<sup>8</sup> One of the most prominent references connects back to Adam. God created Adam, and therefore all humanity, to have dominion over creation, a profound point made by Psalm 8. Sin brought about the curse, and the plan was disrupted from this original design (see Gen 3:14–19). No longer could Adam control the chaos of the sin-cursed creation. Then Christ appeared. In his life and death and resurrection, Christ assumed the Adamic role over creation. Paul alludes to Ps 8:6 in Eph 1:22 to make the connection. Christ took his place over creation in a way that God intended for Adam. In that sense Christ became the Second Adam over creation, proving once again that Christ has become the focal point of the cosmos, but also revealing that the new aeon is nothing short of a return to God’s original pattern for creation.

This restoration is made clear in other areas in Ephesians, like in God’s design for unity to flourish among all people and among all nations. This unity was fractured even before the first couple could reproduce. And God later instituted the Mosaic Law as a means to separate his chosen people (Israel) from the Gentile nations. In this way God could expose sin for what it was, he could mark a remnant of faith-filled believers in the Old Testament, and he could protect the Messianic seed from the surrounding paganism until the time was right for Christ to be born into the world. The Law, for all its good and benefit, was needed because of sin. But the Law also worked as a concrete barrier between the Jews and the alien Gentile nations. It was a useful separation, but it also prevented



unity among the nations. One of the major themes in Ephesians is that Christ fulfilled the Law, and by this Christ abolishes the God-ordained separation that was necessary (2:13–17).

Besides these passages, there are other cues that Ephesians is given to a restoration of the intention of the Creator, and especially that the sanctification of a Christian's life is the restoration of God's design for Adam and Eve's pre-fall holiness and reflection of God's purity (1:4; 2:10; 4:20–24; 5:1; see Col 3:10). By his death and resurrection, Christ seeks to restore the image of God in mankind. The holiness that God expects to see in the lives of his children is nothing short of the holiness he intended to be reflected in the lives of Adam and Eve before the fall. In this new aeon, sin's power is broken so God's children can begin to reflect the holiness of God that Adam and Eve were intended to reflect.

Paul will return to this theme of redemption in Christ, and describe it as nothing less than a restoration of the first creation, when he speaks of God's design for marriage.

#### ***(4) Christ is now restoring the relational harmony unraveled by the chaos and discord of sin.***

The harmony between the nations laid out in the Old Testament is beginning to be materialized (see Isa 66:18–23). In Christ, God's plan for this ethnic reconciliation is manifested in the church. The church is the focal point in which Christ is reconciling, gathering, and orienting the nations to himself.

The perfect work of Christ restores this relational harmony. Christ abolishes the law, removing the barrier that separated Jews and Gentiles, thus forming together one new man from the two, bringing peace between them and a holy God (Eph 2:11–3:6). In this way Christ populates the church, a church that proclaims in its unity the cosmic victory of Christ (3:7–13).

Or (as Ephesians 5 puts it) when sinners repent, they are restored to God, they become citizens of the new aeon, they are given the Holy Spirit, and they willingly take their place in the church (the Second Eve), which in turn is submitted to Christ (the Second Adam).

A particular mark of the victory of Christ is seen in church unity. For the sake of maturity in unity, Christ gives a diversity of gifts to the church (4:7–16). We need these gifts because Christians in the church are still maturing. We are still tempted by the sinful thinking of the old aeon, and as a result we are called to wage warfare against the sins that bring discord (4:11–16). This unity among God's people must be fought for, and the disunity of the powers of the old aeon must be battled against (6:10–20).

Our relationships must not conform to the dark and splintering old aeon. We are not to steal or lie, hold grudges, or speak to one another with filthy jokes or corrupting speech. These things destroy relational harmony and show one to be outside of the new aeon (5:5). Rather, in Christ, we are to build others up with our words, speak the truth in love, voice thankfulness, forgive one another, show tenderness and kindness, gather and sing together, and grow the church together in unity (4:15–5:21).

This relationship-restoring power of the gospel is the overarching theme of Ephesians. Christ has come to address the fragmented nature of fallen humanity and to heal the separation of Jew and Gentile. This gospel is so big it addresses all levels of fractured relationships—ethnic divisions, local church divisions, and divisions and disharmony in marriage.<sup>9</sup>

### **Thirteen Proposed Implications For Our Marriages**

The plan of God in Christ that Paul builds in Ephesians is breathtaking. But what does it have to do with my marriage? Once we begin to get our heads around this cosmic big-picture plan of God, the place of marriage begins to make sense. What follows are several implications from these theological trajectories that lay a foundation for what Paul says about marriage in Eph 5:22–33.

#### ***(1) Marriage was originally created by God to proclaim the mystery of Christ and the church.***

In no other letter does Paul talk more about the *μυστήριον*—the “mystery.” He uses this term six times (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19). So what is

this mystery? In short, the four points above are part of the mystery. The mystery is the full scope of Christ's cosmic-shaping work for and in the church. It also means the beginning of the new creation has arrived. Marriage participates in the mystery by illustrating the union of Christ and his bride, a union so close it had never been put in such one-flesh language before (5:32).

The union between Christ and the church is the mystery, and marriage union between a man and a woman is God's chosen mechanism for broadcasting the mystery to the world.<sup>10</sup> But for marriage to accurately broadcast this mystery, marriage must first be liberated from the twistedness of the old aeon of sin; it must be redeemed to its original design in creation. This liberation requires marriages to be populated by new aeon Spirit-filled men and women who are rightly oriented to Christ. Christ inaugurated the new aeon to save husbands and wives and to orient them to himself in order to create marriages that broadcast this Christ-church union to the world and to our neighborhoods. In the end, Christ died for the church, and the church submits to Christ, a beautiful picture God intended to proclaim to the entire cosmos. Godly marriages broadcast this *mystery*.

***(2) The gospel aims to restore God's original design for marriage.***

In the fall, God's original design for social harmony was broken. Man was created to submit to God, woman was created to submit to and help the man, and the animal world was created to submit to man and woman. In the fall this is all gets twisted backwards. The woman yields to the creature, man yields to the woman, and nobody yields to God.<sup>11</sup> It is within this twisted distortion of God's original design that social harmony is shattered and the old aeon begins. But will God turn his back on this cosmic mutiny?

As we have seen in Ephesians, the answer is *no*. Christ, the Second Adam, gives up his life to inaugurate the new aeon, which aims to restore the original creation (and ultimately to usher in a superior re-creation<sup>12</sup>). This restoration stands in brilliance when Scripture brings us back into

the marriage context to see what a restored marriage should look like. Here the divinely instituted hierarchy is restored. It took nothing less than the inauguration of the new aeon for human history to return to a pattern of marriage that God intended.

So if we find it hard to discover the meaning and proper structuring of marriage when we look at culture, that's to be expected. Every culture in the old aeon will find creative ways to distort the covenant model of marriage. Right now the culture drifts towards so-called "same-sex marriage." This distortion and others like it are not new. But however twisted marriage becomes in the old aeon between the fall and the moment when marriage was culturally defined for the Ephesians in popular Greco-Roman household codes, and whatever has happened to marriage for us in the past fifty years, God's intention is clear through Paul. The original pattern for the first husband and wife matters. It matters so much that Christ died to restore marriage.

Therefore, we are wise to distinguish between marriage that is twisted in the old aeon and marriage that is redeemed in the new aeon. Spirit-filled marriages can taste again what God intended for Adam and Eve.<sup>13</sup> Which means that the Romans did not invent male headship in the home. American traditionalism did not institute a wife's submission to her husband. And the fall did not create the headship of the husband or submission of a wife. God created complementarian marriage before sin, and the Second Adam came to restore that original design. "The redemption we anticipate at the coming of Christ is not the dismantling of the created order of loving headship and willing submission, but a *recovery* of it."<sup>14</sup>

***(3) Christ died, rose, disarmed cosmic evil, and inaugurated the new aeon to restore relational harmony to husbands and wives.***

The original design of marriage was botched by sin. Christ died and rose to defeat the twistedness of the old aeon and to restore relational harmony. What is true of this harmony in the church is expected to be true between a Christian husband and a Christian wife. There is no closer human relationship than the one-flesh relationship of

a husband and wife in covenant union, and God uses this unity to broadcast the closeness of the church's union with Christ.

If there is a cosmic defeat of the splintered humanity, and if there is a Spirit-filling of redeemed hearts, this will show itself in a harmonious complementary marriage. This is not to condemn marriage conflict. Every Christian is learning to put off the sin of the old aeon, and occasional marriage conflict plays an important role in the process of personal sanctification. Still, marital harmony reveals the cosmic plan of God in bringing sinners together in the new aeon. If there is any hope of a joy-filled and harmonious marriage, if there is any protection from self-focused and splintering divorce, it is to be found in the Christ who inaugurates the new aeon to restore marriage relationships to their proper order by ordering them all under himself.

***(4) The church in Ephesus was a household (2:19), indicating that when Paul addresses marriage he addresses the church in microcosm.***

When Paul talks about the home in Eph 5:22–6:9 he is “laying out a manifesto for the New Humanity, painting in broad strokes a vision for how believers ought to conduct themselves in new creation communities, thus epitomizing the triumph of God in Christ.”<sup>15</sup> The complementary harmony in the home is nothing short of a picture of Christ's cosmic victory. That is true because marriage is a microcosm of the church. Paul moves naturally from harmony in the church to harmony in the home. I take this to mean the health of our churches cannot be defined apart from the health of our homes. Harmonious homes functioning according to God's design bring vital stability to the local church. These marriages are a snapshot of church unity, and thus also participate in the cosmic harnessing of all things in Christ yet to come.

***(5) Role distinctions and hierarchy in the Christian community are not erased in the new aeon.***

However we define mutual submission (5:21), we cannot ignore the next verse (5:22). In fact 5:21 may actually help us to protect headship and subordination among God's people.<sup>16</sup> Paul reveals that

life in the new aeon does not remove hierarchy or role distinctions. Christ was raised in his defeat over cosmic evil, and out of that victory he gives gifts to the church (4:8–12). In this way there are specially-selected men chosen to lead and direct the church, men who are in some way distinguished from “the saints” (4:12). This gift-defined authority does not divide the church but rather builds unity among the people of God, as the context shows. Elsewhere Paul returns to the created order to remind the early churches that gender-based hierarchy is rooted in God's original marriage design (see 1 Cor 11:2–16 and 1 Tim 2:8–15). There is no reason to think the complementary structure of the first marriage in Eden is somehow undone in the new aeon. Quite the opposite. In the new aeon, the celebration of complementary marriage roles is a display of the cosmic harmony brought in the gospel, and a display of the cosmic victory of Christ over the relationship splintering of the old aeon.

***(6) New aeon complementary marriage is a micro-cosmic picture of Christ's macro-cosmic work in orienting all things to himself (1:10).***

A husband who has repented and has trusted in Christ is a Spirit-filled new creation and belongs to the new aeon. As a result, he is to be committed to selflessly lead and love his wife like Christ leads and loves the church. By his loving leadership he proves himself to be rightly oriented under Christ in the new aeon. His task is not thwarted by the immaturity and sin that he sees in himself. And he is not thwarted by the immaturity and sin he sees in his wife, but he uses those sins to be reminded of the particular and patient care of Christ as he washes and matures his own bride (5:22–28). “A Christian husband loves his wife by offering a lifetime of daily sacrifices, so that she might become ever more radiant as a woman of God.”<sup>17</sup> To this end he presses on. In this self-sacrifice the husband shows that he is rightly aligned vertically under Christ in reverence, and so he seeks to co-operate with his wife in the home for her flourishing (1:9–10; 5:21).

On the other side of the bed, a wife who has repented and trusted in Christ is a Spirit-filled

new creation and she now belongs to the new aeon. As a result, she willingly submits herself to her husband's leadership. Her role is not thwarted by the failings she sees in her husband, but she helps him grow and celebrates his leadership successes. It is no stretch to say that a wife's humble submission to her husband reflects her own proper orientation under Christ (5:22). Thus, it is out of her vertical alignment under Christ in reverence that she seeks to co-operate with her husband in the home (5:21).

It is worth addressing two points that emerge from this connection between marriage roles (5:22–33) and cosmic order in Christ (1:9–10). First, I fear too few men and too few women make this connection between the cosmic work of Christ in orienting all things to himself and to their faithfulness to our Creator-given, Christ-revived, Spirit-empowered roles in marriage.<sup>18</sup> More on that later.

Second, I fear complementarian marriage is too frequently built from a horizontal, rather than a vertical, starting point. We are tempted to root complementarian marriage roles in the responsiveness of our spouses. We suggest that if/when my wife is submissive to me, *then* I will lovingly lead her. Or, if/when my husband starts leading me well, *then* I will submit to him. For the wife this thinking is twisted because even wives of unbelieving husbands are called to submit as a powerful way of winning their husbands (see 1 Pet 3:1–2). For the husband this thinking is profoundly irrational because it clouds the gospel in which Christ died for his bride at the very point that she was an awful, unsubmitive rebel of a wretch (see Rom 5:8)! But even more foundational on both counts, this thinking is wrong because it fails to root the leading of the husband and the submissiveness of the wife in the vertical plane. The posture of the husband to lead and the posture of the wife to submit are postures that find their proper basis in Christians who are properly oriented under Christ (1:9–10) and who live relationally out of reverence to Christ (5:21). Paul makes this point especially clear for the wife in 5:22. The vertical order is the only proper basis for fulfilling our marriage roles in the home, and this vertical orientation will protect the wife when her husband asks her to follow him into sin.

She will at that point not follow because she is first and foremost properly ordered under Christ, and to follow her husband into sin would be to dislocate her vertical orientation of reverence under Christ.

***(7) A husband's self-centered laziness and harshness toward his wife is part of the defeated old aeon.***

Whatever causes a husband to mishandle his authority is rooted in the old aeon. Men often abuse marriage as either a place for personal ease or as a place for manipulative control. In the old aeon, husbands view marriage as a place *to be served*, not *to serve*. Likewise, in the old aeon men domineer over women through pornography and human trafficking and in a myriad of self-centered ways that twist women into objects of lust. This behavior reflects the old aeon that is twisted by the sinful domineering patterns of cosmic evil. In Christ, that cosmic evil has been defeated. In Ephesians, Paul pens for husbands a counter-cultural new creation lifestyle that uses authority in the home as the basis of the self-giving model of Christ. In the old aeon, men use headship as a way to justify selfishness. In the new aeon, God intends headship as a way to exemplify selflessness. In the new aeon—as was God's intent in the original design of creation—men are called to serve and feed and wash and protect their wives. Christian husbands will feel the perpetual magnetic pull of the old aeon tugging at their marriages, even from their own still-sinful hearts. And that tug must be resisted. Distortions to manhood and husbandhood will remain; temptations will rise up in a man's heart, but those ways of thinking must be seen for what they are: part of the old aeon that is passing away and is to be “put off” by Spirit-filled men of God.

***(8) A wife's self-centered independence toward her husband is part of the defeated old aeon.***

God created the marriage context for a wife to submit to the leadership of her husband. This was true before sin entered the picture. In Ephesians we behold the work of Christ, the Second Adam, and the Holy Spirit in restoring the wife's proper role. Therefore, whatever causes a wife to *de facto* reject her husband's headship can only be think-



ing rooted in the twisted rebellion of the old aeon. In fact, any thinking that rejects the wife's role to submit to her husband in marriage can only *arise from* the old aeon. Because the Second Adam has defeated evil to restore the proper exercise of marriage roles in the new aeon, because the Holy Spirit empowers a wife's submission, the voice of feminism can speak only from the old aeon—it cannot speak from the new.<sup>19</sup> All of the various forms of distorted thinking that suggest submission has been done away with for Christian wives is to be seen for what it is—thinking that finds its origin in the old and fallen aeon of the world. It is thinking that is passing away. It is thinking that is to be “put off” by Spirit-filled women of God.

***(9) Complementarian marriage fits into the Spirit-filled community of the new aeon people of God.***

A common assumption is that it does not. Some say that male headship in the home and female submission is overridden in the new aeon, and the common argument is taken from Galatians 3:28. But there is little need (nor room) to discuss Galatians here. We can see in Ephesians that Christ's re-orientation of the cosmos and the inauguration of the new aeon do not erase roles, hierarchy, or headship in the Spirit-filled community of believers. This is obvious in the natural flow of the book and of Christ's distribution of leadership gifts in the church. Within the home there remain distinct roles for the husband and wife, roles defined by the Creator, and roles redeemed by the victory of the Second Adam. Christ does not expunge human hierarchy in the new aeon; he rather purifies and redeems it from the twisted evil of the old aeon.

Now, it is true that marriage will be done away with in heaven (which is the new aeon in full splendor and full manifestation).<sup>20</sup> But there is strong evidence to suggest that gender is eternal. And this point combined with the prominence of marriage in the new aeon, should caution us from assuming that eternity will be egalitarian. In fact, the final and eternal submission of Christ to the Father that we read about in 1 Cor 15:27–28 (the final and full fulfillment of Eph 1:10) seems to prove otherwise. That some form of comple-

mentary relationship between men and women will exist in eternity, however changed and transformed and improved and perfected, fits well in a trajectory that flows from Eden to the church and into the new aeon.

So there is no tension between either idea that the new aeon redeems God's original created marriage pattern, and that at some point in history marriage will be finally and fully ended. The principle of continuity behind both marriage harmony and church harmony is the continuity of co-operation of God's people. Likely we will forever fulfill some form of gender-based complementary in our co-operation and harmonious relationships in eternity, and every man and woman will flourish as a result.

***(10) A harmonious, complementary, interracial marriage between a believing husband and a believing wife is nearly a perfect microcosm of God's cosmic purpose for the church.***

Paul does not explicitly make this connection, but in following his logic it seems to be a beautiful implication of his thinking. The nations are brought together in Christ, and in Christ the church is gathering various ethnicities into one Body. Husbands and wives are a microcosm of the Spirit-filled church unity.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, local churches should be quick to celebrate a husband and wife with diverse ethnic heritages who are living out a harmonious complementarian marriage under Christ. Such a marriage is an especially beautiful picture of the powerful work of Christ, and of his intention for the church and the cosmos.

***(11) Marriage done right is war.***

A husband loving his wife like Christ loves the church is a really high calling and really hard work. A wife's submission to her husband is a really high calling and is also really hard work. Complementary marriage is difficult because it strives against the temptations of the old aeon in a warfare played out on a cosmic stage. Satan is out to destroy the harmony of churches and the harmony of marriages. The only way a harmonious complementarian marriage will work is by Spirit-filling (5:18).

And it will require men and women to pick up the weapons of war (6:10–20).

In case we are tempted to think that Paul's cosmic language from the beginning of the letter has been dropped in his application, we are ushered into God's armory to be fitted for battle at the end of the letter. Christ has won the cosmic victory at the beginning of the letter, yet those cosmic powers have not been eradicated, as we see at the end of the letter (6:12). Husbands and wives are to shod themselves with the armor of God in the pushing back of the defeated evil of the old aeon (6:10–20). In this fight to preserve unity in the church and unity in our marriages, we need gifted teachers and leaders (4:7–16). As we are led, as we grow, as we strive against the old aeon in our marriages, we realize that the battle we wage is ultimately to preserve the bold broadcast of the victory of Christ in the gospel (6:18–20). This is spiritual war, and we should not expect anything less in our marriages.

***(12) Marriage harmony is largely determined by how we use words.***

Such a large section of Ephesians is taken up with an ethic of our tongues (4:1–5:21). Paul especially focuses on this when he addresses Christians in the local church. In the old aeon, corrupting acid came out of our mouths and corroded relationships. Now that we belong to the new aeon in Christ, our language is to give grace and build relationships. It should be no surprise that as soon as Paul is done addressing speech ethics in the church, he addresses wives and husbands. This principle carries over. As relational harmony in the church is largely determined by our language, so too, relational harmony in the home is largely determined by our language. With our tongues we build harmony, we offer love, we lead, we submit. It is in our language that we give evidence that we are properly oriented to Christ (see also Rom 10:9 and 1 John 1:9).

***(13) New creation husband-wife complementarian marriage broadcasts to the world the Groom-Bride, New Adam-New Eve, Christ-Church relationship.***

So-called “homosexual marriage” cannot do this. Even egalitarian marriages that abandon head-

ship and submission cannot broadcast this mystery to the culture. For the world to see that Christ has given everything for his bride, we need bold and courageous men who love their wives through thoughtful and proactive leadership motivated by radical self-sacrifice. And for the world to see that the church is submitted to Christ the church needs valiant, bold, and courageous women who are submitted to the leadership of their husbands. And a balance must be struck here to proclaim the harmony. It is not enough for men to lead or for women to submit. What is needed is a harmony of loving headship and joyful submission, a complementarian relationship that requires the Spirit-filled power of God (5:18). In this way, the *mystery* of the cosmic plan of God in Christ is broadcast to the world. Our marriages can achieve no higher end on earth, and it is to this end we must strive.<sup>22</sup>

**Drawing it All Together**

The book of Ephesians draws together four Christological pillars that I outlined in the first section of this article. I believe Paul intentionally pulls complementarian marriage harmony into the discussion to show how it serves as a unique point of unity in God's redemptive plan and in the display of the mystery of Christ to the world (5:32). Returning to the four themes we saw at the beginning, here is a summary of the marriage connections in Ephesians:

- (1) A husband and wife who live out a harmonious complementarian marriage show themselves to be rightly oriented under Christ now, which is God's plan for the cosmos ultimately.
- (2) A husband and wife who live out a harmonious complementarian marriage are a microcosm of the Spirit-filled life and unity of the new aeon people of God.
- (3) A husband and wife who live out a harmonious complementarian marriage are a living illustration of the restorative power of the Second Adam in redeeming God's original creation design.
- (4) A husband and wife who live out a harmonious complementarian marriage are a living microcosm of the gos-

pel's power to unify the sin-splintered humanity.

Putting the letter of Ephesians together into a unified vision for Christian marriage I would say it this way: By his death and resurrection, Christ broke the power of sin and death of the old aeon, he inaugurated the new aeon,<sup>23</sup> and he has become the centerpiece of the universe. He has now begun to bring his rebellious creation into alignment to himself in the church. This is the *mystery* of God finally revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. In Christ, the church is now being populated by new creation people of God, sinners who are now humbly submitted to Christ and who pursue unity with one another within a structure of authority under Christ and out of reverence to him (5:21). The unity of the Spirit-filled church is expressed in Spirit-filled couples. A husband submits to Christ in his selfless sacrifice and loving leadership of his wife, in the same way Christ uses his self-sacrificing authority to sanctify the church (5:25–33). A wife submits to Christ as she submits herself to the God-given authority of her husband, just as the church submits to Christ (5:22–24).

A redeemed marriage broadcasts the power of the gospel. A harmonious complementarian marriage is a beautiful picture of the new humanity Christ has achieved in his cosmic victory. This marriage is a snapshot of the church, and a microcosm of the cosmic work of Christ. Complementarian marriage displays the new aeon victory of Christ over the old aeon. Thus, part of Christ's work in eschatologically harnessing all of his rebellious creation into submission is *right now* being fulfilled in the divinely appointed complementarian structures in marriage—as Spirit-filled men and women, once fragmented by sin, are now living in marriage harmony. These harmonious complementarian marriages re-announce to the rulers and authorities of the old aeon the victory of Christ (3:10; 6:12).

The big point to see is this: The *mystery* revealed in Christ's orienting of the cosmos to himself (1:9–10) and the *mystery* of Christ's union with the church illustrated in marriage (5:22–33) are intimately and strategically interconnected.

One day Christ's work of bringing all things into cosmic submission to himself will be finally completed—death will be no more, every knee will bow to Christ, and all things will be finally ordered under him. The church has already been oriented under Christ. Complementarian, Spirit-filled marriages are evidence of husbands and wives who are already properly oriented under Christ. What yet awaits is the return of Christ to finally and fully orient all of heaven and earth in the same way. At that climactic point in cosmic history, when all has been finally submitted under the feet of Christ (the Second Adam), he will then submit himself and the fully harnessed cosmos over to the Father (see 1 Cor 15:27–28). It is this ultimate cosmic goal that brings meaning and clarity to God's design for Christian marriage.

Indeed it is perfectly appropriate for one theologian to write, "To the extent that a married couple sees itself as part of the global eschatological movement toward 'summing up all things in Christ' (1:10), it will experience fulfillment and share the perspective on marriage Paul presents in the passage at hand [5:22–32]." <sup>24</sup> Lord, may this vision for marriage in the cosmic storyline take hold of our marriages.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For the sake of length, this article will not address the important roles of single men and women in the church, nor will it address marriages in which only one spouse is a follower of Christ. This narrows my audience, but it also keeps the focus here on marriages in which a Christian husband is married to a Christian wife in order to drive home Paul's logic in Eph 5:22–33.

<sup>2</sup>Puritan Thomas Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (Edinburgh, 1861), 1:196: "Take all things in heaven and in earth, all creatures else, and they shall all be restored to him; and when that is done, there is all God's full plot, all that was in his heart toward Christ, and us, and the whole creation. There is a time a-coming wherein the creatures shall be restored, all things in heaven and in earth, to their first original, and a more glorious condition, in and through Christ."

<sup>3</sup>Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 3:454–55.

<sup>4</sup>Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 573.

<sup>5</sup>Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 44ff.

<sup>6</sup>See G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 298–304, 835–70.

<sup>7</sup>See *ibid.*, 346–49.



<sup>8</sup>Frank Thielman, "Ephesians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 814.

<sup>9</sup>Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 180–81.

<sup>10</sup>See *ibid.*, 882–83. One may object by asking why the parent/child and master/slave structures in 6:1–9 do not also participate in the mystery, and that is simply because marriage is a human institution created by God to reveal this mystery in a way other institutions (God ordained or merely cultural) do not. The child's subordinate relationship with his parents is not part of the *mystery*, nor is the slave's subordinate relationship to his master (a relationship not instituted by God to begin with). The gospel certainly provides moral guidance for these other relationships, but marriage remains unique. Thus we must be careful not to write off headship and submission as merely cultural defined preferences that are no more relevant today than is Greco-Roman slavery. The marriage relationship in 5:22–33 appears in God's redemptive-historical unveiling of the mystery in Christ. For more on this distinction of marriage within early Roman household code, see Everett Berry, "Complementarianism and Eschatology: Engaging Gordon Fee's 'New Creation' Egalitarianism," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 64–65.

<sup>11</sup>See D. A. Carson's lecture, "Creation and Re-creation—Male and Female in the Image of God, The Fall and Redemption" [accessed 18 Aug 2012]. Online: <http://stream.efca.org/efcatc2012/Session%206%20DA%20Carson.mp3>.

<sup>12</sup>Goodwin, *Works* 1:518: "God doth take the same world that was Adam's, and makes it new and glorious; the same creation groaneth for this new world, this new clothing; as we groan to be clothed upon, so doth this whole creation. And as God takes the same substance of man's nature, and engrafteth the new creature upon it, the same man still; so he takes the same world, and maketh a new world, a world to come, for the second Adam. For the substance of the same world shall be restored to a glory which Adam could never have raised it unto, the same world that was lost in Adam. And this God will do before he hath done with it; and this restitution is the world to come."

<sup>13</sup>An especially strong case is made for headship and submission exiting in the sinless, pre-fall world by Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr. in his chapter "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1–3," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway 1991), 86–104.

<sup>14</sup>John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2011), 220.

<sup>15</sup>Timothy G. Gombis, "A Radically New Humanity: The Function Of The Haustafel In Ephesians," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 2 (2005): 319.

<sup>16</sup>Clearly 5:21 does not signal the end of male headship in marriage. This is rather a focus on co-operation among believers that is typified in marriage. See Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., *God's Unfaithful Wife: A Biblical Theology of Spiritual Adultery* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 152–53. Likewise, Gombis writes, "The *Haustafel* as aimed at counteracting the devastating effects of the powers upon human relationships and in transforming relationships within appropriate hierarchical structures. The solution that Paul provides does not involve overthrowing such structures, but rather subjecting them to new creation dynamics so that relationships within the New Humanity take on a renewed character. In this context, then, Paul is not calling for mutual submission, but for the ordering of the New Humanity in such a way that involves subordination" ("A Radically New Humanity," 324).

<sup>17</sup>Ortlund, *God's Unfaithful Wife*, 158.

<sup>18</sup>Although some do. For a rare exception see the article by Rebecca Jones, "Submission: A Lot More Than Giving In," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1998).

<sup>19</sup>See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation* 3.2 (T&T Clark, 1960), 312.

<sup>20</sup>That marriage will not take place in heaven is clear enough from Jesus' words in Scripture (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35). But evidence suggests there will remain a preserved gender-identity in the bodily resurrection, therefore leaving open the possibility that gender-based complementary structures will exist in eternity. See Daniel R. Heimbach, "The Unchangeable Difference: Eternally Fixed Sexual Identity For an Age of Plastic Sexuality," in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. Wayne A. Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 274–89. See also Mark David Walton, "What We Shall Be: A Look at Gender and the New Creation," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 9, no. 1 (2004): 15–26; and Mark David Walton, "Relationships and Roles in the New Creation," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 11, no. 1 (2006): 3–17.

<sup>21</sup>On the beauty of interracial marriage in the Church see chapter 15, "Interracial Marriage," in John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011).

<sup>22</sup>Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 883–84: "It is true that marriage is for the purposes of fulfillment in love (physically, spiritually, and emotionally), for propagation, and for sanctification. When problems arise in the marriage relationship, husbands and wives need to remember that there is an ultimate redemptive-historical purpose for marriage that transcends their own human relationship. As husbands unconditionally love their wives and as wives respond to this love in a faithful manner, they are actors on a redemptive-historical stage performing a play before the onlooking audience of the world. As husbands and wives perform their roles on this stage in the way God has designed, their roles are an object lesson to the watching world that Christ has left his Father to love become one with his bride, and that those who respond in faith can become part of this corporate bride. In doing so, people will leave the sphere of the old world and enter into the new. Christian mates are part of the new creation, and the ethic regulating their marriage is a recapitulation of the original design of marriage in Eden, which pointed to Christ and the church. When conflict enters the marriage relationship and division begins to occur, both partners need to remember that they have covenanted with each other before God to love each other, to remain loyal to that covenant, to continue to become one and, hence, to maintain the peace of the new creation of which they are a part. In contrast to the divisions and conflicts that remain elsewhere in the old creation, husbands and wives are to reflect the peaceful unity that was to have been characteristic of Adam and Even in Eden before sin (and that would have been characteristic of all marriages in imitation of Adam and Eve's marriage if sin had not occurred). This peaceful unity that was to be true of the first marriage in history is to be characteristic of all those living in the inaugurated phase of the new creation in Christ."

<sup>23</sup>For more on this important theme see <http://spurgeon.wordpress.com/2010/03/24/the-cosmic-shock-wave-christs-resurrection-and-the-dawn-of-the-new-creation>.

<sup>24</sup>Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Mystery Of Christ And The Church: Head And Body, 'One Flesh,'" *Trinity Journal* 12, no. 1 (1991): 93.



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# The Challenge of Homosexuality for Gender Roles

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On July 13, 2011, California governor Jerry Brown signed into law a requirement that gay history be taught in the social studies curriculum of California's public schools. Proponents of the new bill argued that the goal was not to teach sex education in the social studies classroom, but instead they wanted to see sexual identity recognized. Will Grant, a California teacher and proponent of the new law, stated in an interview, "Sex is something that you cover in health class. Sexual identity is this idea of who does your sexuality make you into, and how does that affect a person's—and a group of peoples'—social position and the way society looks at them, and the way they look at society. That's what we cover."<sup>1</sup> Opponents of the law believe that teaching gay history will be a distraction to the learning environment and will promote the agenda of the LGBT community over that of the rest of society. One of the biggest effects of the new law relates to the writing and purchasing of textbooks. National Public Radio reports, "The new law means California will begin buying new textbooks that include gay and lesbian history once the state budget improves. California is one of the biggest buyers of teaching materials in the U.S. That means these textbooks will most likely be offered to other states as well."<sup>2</sup>

For those hoping to push the discussion of homosexuality back into the closet, the California law is a reality check. No longer can this discussion be reserved for political and social debates among adults. Children in California and across the country will address the issue of homosexuality in social studies classrooms from elementary school onward.

While much of the current debate has centered on gay rights and same-sex marriage, it is imperative to understand how the issue of homosexuality impacts a biblical understanding of gender roles. By its very nature of describing a relationship between two members of the same sex, homosexuality seems to make the question of gender roles irrelevant. Thus, there are vast challenges that homosexuality creates for a biblical discussion of gender roles. If believers are going to address these challenges both within the church and in the culture, they must first understand the impact that homosexuality has on a complementarian view of the sexes. Homosexuality denies the God-ordained nature of gender roles as revealed in Scripture by rejecting the complementary nature of sex, by subverting the complementary nature of marriage, and by distorting the complementary nature of the Christ-church relationship.

## Definitions

Before embarking on the task of exposing how homosexuality denies God-ordained gender roles, it will be helpful to consider some definitions. Discussions about homosexuality often risk miscommunication because of differing definitions of the term *homosexuality*. Depending on context, the term can be used to refer to orientation, behavior, or both.

Homosexual orientation is perhaps the more difficult of these aspects to define. Simon Rosser states, "Sexual orientation refers to adult stable sexual attractions, desires, fantasies, and expressions toward other adult men and women."<sup>3</sup> Rosser's

definition applies to sexual orientation in general and can be described as heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual. Therefore, homosexual orientation refers to the sexual attractions, desires, fantasies, and expressions of one person to someone of the same sex. Sexual orientation is a complex concept that encompasses more than just behavior. Rosser goes on to explain, “As defined scientifically, sexual orientation concerns far more than the genitals of one’s sexual partner(s) or one’s sexual behavior. As a complex construct, it can include, but is not limited to, the gender(s) of those we find erotic, the gender(s) of the focus of our sexual thoughts, fantasies, and desires, and the gender of persons with whom we bond emotionally and fall in love.”<sup>4</sup> Sexual orientation is often used synonymously with the concept of sexual identity, but orientation is merely one aspect of several that compose sexual identity.<sup>5</sup> Thus, homosexual orientation is the attraction of one adult to another adult of the same sex. Orientation does not necessarily equate to behavior because someone with a particular sexual orientation may not actually act on it.

Homosexual behavior is the act of participating in a sexual relationship with someone of the same sex. John and Paul Feinberg suggest that sexual behavior can include “celibacy, monogamy, promiscuity, etc., and homosexuals, heterosexuals, and bisexuals can engage in any and all of those behaviors.”<sup>6</sup> While sexual behavior is linked to sexual orientation, it is possible for someone to act outside the norm of their supposed orientation. For example, a heterosexually-oriented male may engage in homosexual behavior, and a female with a homosexual orientation may engage in heterosexual behavior.

While these definitions may seem unnecessary to some, they help to clarify exactly what parties to the debate are discussing. One of the most important considerations in any discussion is to make sure all parties are discussing the same concept. However, when it comes to the discussion of homosexuality, some people may use the term in relation to behavior, while others use it in reference to orientation. If the meaning of the term is not identified at the outset, the discussion may prove

fruitless. For the purpose of this article, the term homosexuality will be used to encompass both orientation and behavior at the same time because it will be shown that both aspects deny God-ordained gender roles. When further clarification is needed, orientation and behavior will be specified.

### **Homosexuality Rejects the Complementary Nature of Sex**

A complementarian view of gender roles impacts how one views the nature of sex. In essence, complementarians believe that men and women are ontologically equal, yet functionally distinct—with men primarily characterized by servant leadership and women primarily characterized by gracious submission. This complementarian position extends beyond the roles exhibited within the marriage to a biblical understanding of sexual intercourse as well. Daniel Heimbach describes the complementary nature of sex as follows:

Sex unites beings made for each other. Men and women are human and neither is more or less human than the other. But our equal humanity does not mean we are perfectly identical. As sexual creatures, men and women are different in ways that complement each other, and the value of complementary relationship in sex is so positive that any denial or attempt to erase it is immoral.<sup>7</sup>

As Heimbach notes, sexual intercourse is designed to take place between two individuals who are fully human, yet they exhibit different, complementary characteristics that allow them to be united in a physical relationship.

By contrast, homosexuality rejects the complementary nature of sex through the union of two identical partners. We can see this more clearly by considering three biblical purposes of sex—procreation, unity, and sexual purity—and how they relate to the complementary relationship between a man and a woman.<sup>8</sup> Homosexuality, both in orientation and behavior, violates these three purposes as will be shown below.

The first purpose of sex we find revealed in

Scripture is procreation. Immediately after creating the first humans, God commands them to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it” (Gen 1:28). What is not said in Gen 1:28, but is clearly implied in the command, is that God instructed the first man and woman to engage in a sexual relationship so as to produce offspring and fill the earth. The Creator intended for his created beings to reproduce themselves on the earth through the mechanism that he created—sexual intercourse. We can all recognize that there are biological differences between men and women as it relates to their reproductive organs. These differences were designed by God so as to complement each other in the sexual relationship and facilitate reproduction. This same command is repeated again to Noah and his family following the flood (Gen 9:7). God instructs Noah’s family to “populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.” How was this to be accomplished? Noah’s sons and their wives were to begin the process of repopulating the earth through the complementary nature of sex.

God takes the complementary nature of the sexual act so seriously that he calls any deviation from his designed plan an abomination. In the Holiness Code of Leviticus 18–20, God addresses several distortions of his intention for human sexuality. In Lev 18:6–23, God forbids incest, adultery, bestiality, and homosexuality. Those sins are labeled *tō’ēbāh* (“abomination”) in the text. Although some proponents of homosexuality propose that the label of “abomination” refers to ritual uncleanness rather than a condemnation of the homosexual act,<sup>9</sup> the contextual evidence of the passage suggests otherwise. Köstenberger and Jones surmise:

Indeed, sometimes *tō’ēbāh* refers to activities that are morally offensive to God, such as homosexuality. In the context of this passage of the Holiness Code, it is interesting to note that activities other than homosexuality are also labeled as *tō’ēbāh* (cf. Lev. 18:26), including incest (Lev. 18:6–18), adultery (Lev. 18:20), and bestiality (Lev. 18:23). If we were to apply a consistent hermeneutic throughout this passage, we would be forced to

conclude that these other activities are likewise only prohibited within the context of idol worship. Of course, such an interpretation would be irresponsible in light of the fact that these other activities are consistently condemned throughout Scripture, as is homosexuality.<sup>10</sup>

The similar prohibition in Lev 20:13 adds to the abomination language and requires the death penalty for all parties involved in the homosexual act. This speaks to the serious nature of the offense before God, and similar punishment is prescribed for the sins of adultery (Lev 20:10), incest (Lev 20:12), and bestiality (Lev 20:15).

One reason that these perversions of God’s design for sex receive such strong condemnation is that they inherently violate the command to procreate. While not all heterosexual sex is procreative in nature, the biological possibility for procreation among heterosexual couples of child-bearing age is not prevented by the act of intercourse. Sexual relationships within a homosexual context violate this first purpose of sex because it is impossible for them to procreate. Biological sameness prevents every homosexual couple from being able to reproduce their own biological offspring. Instead, homosexual couples are forced to use artificial reproductive technologies in order to procreate, and then any subsequent child can only be the biological offspring of one of them.

The second purpose of sex that we see revealed in Scripture is unity. At the institution of the first marriage in Genesis 2, Scripture declares, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). One of the key aspects of this verse is the unique one-flesh union that is both physical and metaphysical. The unity of sexual intercourse reveals the physical component as two bodies are joined together in the complementary fashion to which their unique biological features testify. The metaphysical side of unity comes from the perspective that sexual intercourse is a coordinating sign of the covenant of marriage—depicting the intimate union between a man and a woman. Dennis Hollinger describes this union as follows:

Every sexual act after the initial consummation is an ongoing affirmation of the husband and wife's unique union. It is not only a sign of their oneness but an ongoing deepening of that oneness, whereby two distinct individuals (i.e., male and female, two distinct personalities) merge their deepest longings and commitments into a shared reality. This oneness has profound significance for everything the couple is and does. It does not eradicate the unique personhood and individual characteristics. But it does mean that personhood and those characteristics no longer belong just to oneself.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, unity in sex depicts the unity of marriage. However, homosexuality is incapable of expressing this type of unity, and extending marriage rights to homosexual couples does not address the issue.<sup>12</sup> Homosexual sex does not bring together the complementary biological parts that were created by God to give expression of the intimacy and union of marriage. Homosexual marriage further distorts the God-designed complementarity of marriage and condones immoral sexual activity between the two individuals.

The third purpose of sex in Scripture is sexual purity. In 1 Cor 7:8–9, Paul instructs his readers, “But I say to the unmarried and to the widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” While the other two purposes of sex can be accomplished outside the confines of marriage, this purpose is uniquely fulfilled only inside marriage. The same idea is also expressed by the author of Hebrews as he writes, “Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb 13:4). As a husband and wife engage in a sexual relationship, they satisfy their individual sexual desires within the covenant of their marriage. This outlet of sexual fulfillment then serves as a mechanism for purity. Homosexuals, however, have a twofold problem as it relates to maintaining this aspect of the complementary nature of sex. First, homosexual behavior

violates the idea of purity because Scripture labels such activity as “degrading passions,” “unnatural,” and “indecent acts” (Rom 1:26–27). If sexual purity is a God-given purpose of sex, then the sexual activity itself must be free from sin. However, Paul makes it clear in Romans 1 that homosexual behavior is sinful activity and is subject to judgment. Second, homosexual marriages are by definition non-monogamous—if monogamy is defined as the exclusive union of one man and one woman. In spite of the attempts to legalize same-sex marriage<sup>13</sup>, such relationships cannot exhibit the sexual purity required in Scripture. According to the Gay Couples Study from San Francisco State University, same-sex “marriages” have high rates of promiscuity. Around 50 percent of gay couples openly and knowingly participate in sexual activity outside of marriage.<sup>14</sup> In God's economy, a husband has authority over his wife's body, and a wife has authority over her husband's body, and they fulfill each other's sexual desires (1 Cor 7:3–4). Even if a homosexual couple maintained an exclusive commitment to one another, they cannot fulfill the purpose of sexual purity because their sexual behavior is by definition sinful.

The result of the homosexual distortion of God's design for sex is that same-sex couples reject the complementary nature of sex. From a biological standpoint, they are unable to procreate. From a spiritual standpoint, homosexual sex does not provide the physical and metaphysical union that God intended for sex in marriage. From a purity standpoint, homosexual couples exhibit higher rates of promiscuity as they participate in sexual acts that are condemned in scripture. Robert Gagnon summarizes the problem succinctly, “Yet the story [Gen 1–3] remains authoritative for conveying that the obvious complementarity (and concordant sexual attraction) of male and female witnesses to God's intent for human sexuality. Male and female are ‘perfect fits’ from the standpoint of divine design and blessing. Male and male, or female and female, are not.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Homosexuality Subverts the Complementary Nature of Marriage**

Not only does homosexuality reject the



complementary nature of sex, but it also subverts the complementary nature of marriage. Roles in marriage are intrinsically connected to biological sex. As complementarians, we believe that husbands have particular roles in marriage, and wives have particular roles in marriage. We believe that men and women are ontologically equal—being, personhood, value, etc.—but that God has established different roles for them to exhibit based upon their biological gender. Within the context of marriage, we understand that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church—sacrificing, sanctifying, cleansing, cherishing, nourishing (Eph 5:25–29). This flows out of the fact that a man is joined to his wife as one flesh in marriage (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:31–32). Wives, on their part, submit themselves to the leadership of their husbands just as the church submits to Christ. She respects her husband and seeks his counsel on spiritual matters (Eph 5:22–24, 33; 1 Cor 11:3; 14:35). As complementarians, we believe these gender roles were instituted at creation (Gen 2:18, 20) and are reaffirmed after the fall (Gen 3:16–19).

Homosexual relationships, by contrast, create a real challenge for gender roles in a committed, marriage relationship. If God designed the marriage relationship to exhibit these complementary roles defined by biological gender, then homosexual relationships subvert this ideal. Sometimes homosexual couples act out a distorted version of traditional gender roles when individuals within these same-sex relationships exhibit roles contrary to their biological gender. As Köstenberger and Jones note, “Although same-sex couples cannot participate in God’s complementary design for gender roles in marriage, one partner almost always adopts the leadership role (assigned by God to the husband), while the other adopts that of helper assigned by God to the wife.”<sup>16</sup> The clearest biblical evidence of such behavior is found in the vice lists of 1 Cor 6:9–11 and 1 Tim 1:8–10. In these passages, two words are introduced by Paul (both in 1 Corinthians 6, and one in 1 Timothy 1) that depict the distinct roles displayed within homosexual relationships. In 1 Cor 6:9, Paul denotes two types of individuals who will not inherit the

kingdom of God—the effeminate and the homosexual. The term translated “effeminate” in the New American Standard is the Greek word *μαλακοί*. While some have argued that the term merely references male call-boys who are part of ritual cult prostitution,<sup>17</sup> it seems that the best understanding is of one who takes the passive, or female, role in a male homosexual relationship. David E. Malick suggests,

*Μαλακός* is thus not a technical term to describe being effeminate. It often had a more general sense of ‘soft’ or ‘mild.’ When it is employed in reference to sexual relationships of men with men, however, it is also not a technical term for male call-boys in a pederastic setting. The term may mean effeminate with respect to boys or men who take the role of a woman in homosexual relationships.<sup>18</sup>

The second term introduced by Paul is *ἀρσενικοῦται*. This term, coined by Paul, appears to be based on the LXX reading of Lev 20:13. James B. DeYoung surmises, “It is a reasonable position that Paul coined the term based on the juxtaposition of the two words *arsenos* and *koitēn* in the LXX of Lev 20:13 (cf. 18:22), though absolute proof of this is impossible. It may be suggested that the criteria of style, practice, familiarity with the LXX, and context make this a highly plausible conclusion, however.”<sup>19</sup> If this observation is correct, then the proper understanding of *ἀρσενικοῦται* is the same idea expressed in Leviticus 18 and 20: a male lying with another male for sexual intercourse. Thus, the *ἀρσενικοῦται* are the dominant partners of a male homosexual relationship while the *μαλακοί* represent the passive partners. Used together they denote the various roles exhibited by homosexuals in their relationships, and both are condemned in Paul’s vice lists.<sup>20</sup>

In this way, homosexuality subverts the God-ordained complementary nature of marriage.<sup>21</sup>

### **Homosexuality Distorts the Complementary Nature of the Christ-Church Relationship**

The final step in the denial of God-ordained

gender roles by proponents of homosexuality is the undermining of the nature of the Christ-church relationship. The key passage drawing the connection between marriage and the Christ-church relationship is Eph 5:22–33. In this passage, Paul denotes the clear connection between the way that Christ relates to his bride, the church, and how a husband relates to his wife, and vice versa.

Paul begins by instructing the wife to submit to her husband “as to the Lord.” The motivation for submission by the wife in a biblical marriage is love, reverence, and submission to Christ. Paul further states that a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. Although some would argue that headship merely means “source”<sup>22</sup> or “preeminence,”<sup>23</sup> it seems evident from the description immediately following that authority is in view. In describing how a wife submits to her husband, Paul draws the analogy that the church submits to Christ. George W. Knight III explains,

Suffice it to say here that Paul indicates the significance of “head” (*kephalē*) by saying that “the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church” (verse 23). It is evident that Christ is the head of the church as the authority over it because the following verse speaks of the church as submitting to Christ. The two concepts mutually explain one another: the church submits to Christ’s authority because He is the head or authority over it.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the wife submits to her husband as one under authority.

Paul then describes the role of the husband as one who loves his wife just as Christ loves the church. This is a sacrificial love that brings sanctification and nourishment in the same vein that Christ’s sacrifice of his own life for the world brings sanctification and nourishment to those who are part of the church. Knight describes this Christ-like love in two parts—giving of oneself and benefiting the wife. He states, “Christ’s giving of himself was for the benefit of His bride—He gave Himself up ‘for her.’ Just so, the husband’s self-

giving should be for his wife’s benefit. In short, we may speak of this love as a giving of oneself for the benefit of the other.”<sup>25</sup> In so doing, the husband depicts the relationship between Christ and the church in his love for his wife.

So how does this relate to homosexuality? It is in the very nature of the Christ-church and husband-wife analogy that homosexuality presents a fundamental distortion. The homosexual couple is incapable of loving as Christ and submitting as the church because they are identical without distinction. The members of a same-sex couple cannot stand in selfless headship nor respectful submission as Christ and the church. John Frame adeptly describes this problem:

In Ephesians 5:22–33, the difference between man and woman is crucial to the meaning of marriage. The man (so very inadequately) represents Christ, and the woman represents the church. The church must never be confused with Christ. But in homosexuality, there is no such distinction between the partners. Although one partner may be more passive than the other, there is no clear distinction between husband and wife, between bridegroom and bride. Ultimately, the roles are interchangeable. But symbolically, this suggests that God and man are interchangeable. And that notion is not only wrong, but the root of all sin—the primal heresy.<sup>26</sup>

Any attempted biblical defense of homosexuality (particularly as it relates to the justification of homosexual marriage) must address the problem created by Eph 5:22–33. How can a homosexual couple exhibit the characteristics of the Christ-church relationship without cheapening the authority and status of Christ?

As Frame noted, making God and man interchangeable is a supreme act of hubris. While it is most likely not the direct intent of proponents of homosexuality and same-sex marriage to undermine the Christ-church relationship, it is nonetheless the result of their argumentation. Two men or two women attempting to live as a married couple

cannot express the distinct roles intended by God in the marriage relationship. In addition, it was God who instituted the analogy between husband-wife and Christ-church. Since God established that analogy through his inspired Word, then we must be careful to protect that analogy. Anything that undermines the intent of that analogy must be rejected as sub-Christian

## Concluding Thoughts

As demonstrated above, homosexuality creates real challenges for a complementarian understanding of gender roles. By rejecting the complementary nature of sex, subverting the complementary nature of marriage, and distorting the complementary nature of the Christ-church relationship, homosexuality stands in direct opposition to God's created order for gender. Nowhere is the attack more dangerous than within the walls of the church. The acceptance of homosexuality within the church will destroy the significance of marriage and corrupt the message of how God relates to his people.

So where do we go from here? The church should declare with Paul that homosexuality can be overcome through the redemptive power of Christ and restoration to God-ordained complementarian gender roles can be achieved. In 1 Cor 6:9–11, Paul provides a list of vices that describe individuals who will not inherit the kingdom of God. Among those vices is homosexuality. However, in verse 11, Paul declares, "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." May we work toward seeing those trapped in this lifestyle come to Christ and be restored to God's design for gender and sexuality.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Ana Tintocalis, "California Brings Gay History Into the Classroom," 22 July 2011. Online: <http://www.npr.org/2011/07/22/138504488/california-brings-gay-history-into-the-classroom>.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>B. R. Simon Rosser, "A Scientific Understanding of Sexual Orientation with Implications for Pastoral Ministry," *Word & World* 14 (1994): 246.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 247.

<sup>5</sup>According to Rosser, sexual identity includes orientation, natal gender, gender identity, and social sex role. Ibid., 246–47.

<sup>6</sup>John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (2nd ed.; Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 310.

<sup>7</sup>Daniel R. Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 169–70.

<sup>8</sup>There is healthy discussion on what the purposes of sex are. Dennis Hollinger has proposed four purposes of sex—consummation of marriage, procreation, love, and pleasure. John and Paul Feinberg suggest six purposes of sex—procreation, companionship, unity, pleasure, to raise up a godly seed, and curbing fornication and adultery. While both sets of these purposes have been taken under consideration, I have chosen to discuss three purposes of sex that are developed from Augustine's three purposes of marriage. In his work, *De Bono Coniugali*, Augustine notes three goods of marriage—offspring, fidelity (or faith in chastity), and sacrament. The three purposes of sex as developed from Augustine include procreation (offspring), sexual purity (fidelity), and unity (sacrament). Although I do not take the sacramental language of Augustine's formulation to have any soteriological significance in my discussion of the purposes of sex and marriage, it should be noted that a sacramental understanding of marriage developed from Augustine's formulation as the Roman Catholic Church developed its sacramental theology. However, most believe that Augustine was not using the Latin term *sacramentum* in the technical sense of a sacrament in this specific work.

As it relates to the purposes proposed by Hollinger and the Feinbergs, I believe the three I have suggested actually encompass the concepts that the other authors have suggested. All are in agreement that procreation is a clear purpose of sexual intercourse, although I would argue that the Feinbergs unnecessarily make a new category of raising up godly seed. Under my heading of unity, I would place Hollinger's other three categories (consummation of marriage, love, and pleasure) and the Feinbergs' unity, companionship, and pleasure. I am in agreement with the final purpose offered by the Feinbergs of curbing fornication and adultery. I use the terminology *sexual purity* in my formulation, but I am confident we mean the same thing and are also in keeping with Augustine's *fides*.

See Dennis P. Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 93–115; Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 300–02; Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, in *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (trans. Charles T. Wilcox; vol. 27; New York: Fathers of the Church, 1955), 24.32.

<sup>9</sup>See John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980), 100–05; John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (updated and expanded ed.; Boston: Boston Press, 1988), 57; Daniel A. Helminiak, *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* (San Francisco: Alamo Square, 1994), 43–54.

<sup>10</sup>Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (2nd ed.; Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 207.

<sup>11</sup>Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex*, 100.

<sup>12</sup>Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 171.

<sup>13</sup>With the addition of New York in June 2011 and Washington and Maryland in February 2012, there are only eight states—Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont, and Washington—plus the District of Columbia that allow same-sex marriage. California briefly allowed such marriages, but they are currently in a legal fight to determine if they will be allowed again. See "New York Becomes the Sixth State to Legalize Gay Marriage," 25 June 2011. Online: <http://www>.



foxnews.com/politics/2011/06/24/gay-marriage-headed-to-vote-on-ny-senate-floor/. "Washington state lawmakers pass gay marriage bill," *USA Today*, February 9, 2012. Online: <http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-02-08/washington-same-sex-marriage/53013882/1>. Aaron C. Davis, "Maryland Senate passes same-sex marriage bill," *The Washington Post*, February 23, 2012. Online: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/maryland-senate-passes-same-sex-marriage-bill/2012/02/23/gIQAfbakWR\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/maryland-senate-passes-same-sex-marriage-bill/2012/02/23/gIQAfbakWR_story.html).

<sup>14</sup>Scott James, "Many Successful Gay Marriages Share an Open Secret," *The New York Times*, January 28, 2010. Online: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/29/us/29sfmetro.html>. Information about the Gay Couples Study is available from the Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality at San Francisco State University. Online: <http://crgs.sfsu.edu/research/gaycouples.htm>. Another interesting conclusion related to this topic is that gay couples are worse at making up after fights, and it is believed that it relates to their sex lives. John Cloud suggests, "No one is sure why gay men are worse at making up after fights, but I have a theory: it's less important for their sex lives. Probably because they don't have women to restrain their evolutionary male sexual appetites, gay men are more likely than straight and lesbian couples to agree to nonmonogamy, which decreases the stakes for not repairing. And according to a big study from Norway published in *The Journal of Sex Research* in 2006, gay men also consume more porn than anyone else, making them more 'partner-independent.'" John Cloud, "Are Gay Relationships Different?," *Time*, January 17, 2008. Online: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1704660,00.html>.

<sup>15</sup>Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 62. Although Gagnon is an egalitarian, he recognizes the complementarity of the sexual relationship in marriage.

<sup>16</sup>Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 355 n. 9.

<sup>17</sup>Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 106–08.

<sup>18</sup>David E. Malick, "The Condemnation of Homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993): 490. Gagnon agrees with this interpretation as he writes, "Therefore, in 1 Cor 6:9, *malakoi* should be understood as the passive partners in homosexual intercourse, the most egregious case of which are those who also intentionally engage in a process of feminization to erase further their masculine appearance and manners." Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 312.

<sup>19</sup>James B. DeYoung, "The Source and NT Meaning of ARSENO-KOITAI, with Implications for Christian Ethics and Ministry," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 3 (1992): 211.

<sup>20</sup>Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 338–39.

<sup>21</sup>As a side note, some have argued that the egalitarian position opens the door to the acceptance of homosexuality as normative. See David W. Jones, "Egalitarianism and Homosexuality: Connected or Autonomous Ideologies?," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8 (2003): 5–19; Alexander Strauch, *Men and Women Equal Yet Different* (Colorado Springs: Lewis & Roth, 1999), 100–01; John Piper and Wayne Grudem, "An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 82–84. The connection is made through the denial of gender distinctions among egalitarians. It should be noted that most evangelical egalitarians condemn homosexuality. See William J. Webb, "Gender Equality and Homosexuality," in *Discovering Biblical Equality* (2nd ed., ed. Ronald W.

Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 401–13; Catherine Clark Kroeger, "Does Belief in Women's Equality Lead to an Acceptance of Homosexual Practice?," *Priscilla Papers* 18 (2004): 3–10. However, there seems to be a similarity in exegesis between those who argue for egalitarianism and those that argue for homosexuality as a biblical option. No matter on which side of the debate one falls, homosexuality generates problems for a biblical understanding of marriage. The only way to overcome such problems is to agree with biblical prohibitions against homosexuality (Lev 18:22 and 20:13, Rom 1:26–27, 1 Cor 6:9–11, and 1 Tim 1:8–10).

It is not within the scope of this paper to consider whether or not egalitarians also argue for the acceptance of homosexuality. Taking them at their word, it appears that they have no desire to move in that direction. However, it does seem evident that their hermeneutic of cultural interpretation of Scripture resembles the hermeneutic employed by those who attempt to build a biblical case for homosexuality. If employed consistently, the egalitarian hermeneutic certainly allows for that next step. William J. Webb has attempted to overcome this difficulty, but many complementarians are still left unconvinced that he has closed the door. See William J. Webb, *Slave, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2001).

<sup>22</sup>See Allison Young, "1 Corinthians 11:2–16," CBE International. Online: <http://www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/1-corinthians-112-16>.

<sup>23</sup>See Gordon D. Fee, "Praying and Prophesying in the Assemblies," in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 149–55; I. Howard Marshall, "Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage: Colossians 3:18–19 and Ephesians 5:21–33," in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 198–200.

<sup>24</sup>George W. 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*, 169.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>26</sup>John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2008), 759.



# “Let Marriage Be Held in Honor”— Thinking Biblically About So-Called Same-Sex Marriage

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Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (Heb 13:1–6, ESV).

Today’s message is built around eight points designed to give a biblical vision of marriage in relation to homosexuality, and in relation to the proposed Marriage Amendment in Minnesota. I asked that Heb 13:1–6 be read not because I will give an exposition of it, but to highlight that one phrase in verse 4: “Let marriage be held in honor among all.” That is what I hope to advance, for the glory of God and for your guidance and your good.

**(1) Marriage is created and defined by God in the Scriptures as the sexual and covenantal union of a man and a woman in life-long**

**allegiance to each other alone, as husband and wife, with a view to displaying Christ’s covenant relationship to his blood-bought church.**

This is seen most clearly from four passages where these truths are woven together.

## ***Genesis 1:27–28***

Genesis 1:27–28: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.’”

## ***Genesis 2:23–24***

And then God linked his design in manhood and womanhood with marriage in Gen 2:23–24. When the woman is created from his side, the man exclaims, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

In other words, God created man male and female so that there might be a one-flesh sexual union and covenantal cleaving with a view to multiplying the human race, and displaying God’s covenant with his people, and eventually Christ’s covenant with his church.

### **Matthew 19:4–6**

Remarkably Jesus picked up on this link between creation and marriage and life-long covenant, weaving together these very two texts from Genesis. Matthew 19:4–6:

Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female [Gen 1:27], and said [quoting Gen 2:24], “Therefore [linking creation and marriage] a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

And in our cultural setting, the words “Let not man separate the male and female that God has joined together,” has vastly greater significance than anyone ever thought it would.

### **Ephesians 5:24–32**

One more text on the meaning of marriage makes the distinction between male and female—husband and wife—covenantally significant as a portrayal of Christ and the church:

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. . . . “Therefore [quoting Gen 2:24] a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church (Eph 5:24–32).

In other words, from the beginning there has been a mysterious and profound meaning to marriage. And Paul is now opening that mystery. And it is this: God made man male and female with their distinctive feminine and masculine natures and their distinctive roles, so that in marriage, as husband and wife, they could display Christ and the church.

This means that the basic roles of wife and hus-

band are not interchangeable. The husband displays the sacrificial love of Christ’s headship, and the wife displays the submissive role of Christ’s body. The mystery of marriage is that God had this double (of wife and husband) display in mind when he created man as male and female. Therefore, the profoundest reality in the universe underlies marriage as a covenantal union between a man and a woman.

### **(2) There is no such thing as so-called same-sex marriage, and it would be wise not to call it that.**

The point here is not only that so-called same-sex marriage *shouldn’t* exist, but that it *doesn’t* and it *can’t*. Those who believe that God has spoken to us truthfully in the Bible should not concede that the committed, life-long partnership and sexual relations of two men or two women is marriage. It isn’t. God has created and defined marriage. And what he has joined together in that creation and that definition cannot be separated and still be called marriage in God’s eyes.

### **(3) Same-sex desires and same-sex orientation are part of our broken and disordered sexuality owing to God’s subjection of the created order to futility because of man’s sin.**

In Genesis 3 we read about the catastrophic moment when the first man and woman rebelled against God. The effects on them and on the world are described in chapters 3 and 4, and then illustrated in the sin-soaked and death-ridden history of the Old Testament—indeed the history of the world.

The apostle Paul sums it up like this in Rom 8:20–21:

The creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

And we know from verse 23 that part of the creation that was subjected to death and futility was our own bodies—and he stresses, yes, the bodies of the redeemed. “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,

groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23).

And I am arguing that same sex-desires and same sex-orientation are in that category of groaning—waiting for the redemption of our bodies. This means they are in the same broad category with all kinds of disordered bodies and minds and emotions. If we tried to make a list of the kinds of emotional and mental and physical brokenness of the human family the list would be unending. And all of us are broken and disordered in different ways. All of you are bent to desire things in different degrees that you should not want. We are all disordered in our emotions, our minds, our bodies.

This is a call for careful distinctions lest you hurt people—or yourself—unnecessarily. All our disorders—all our brokenness—is rooted in sin—original sin and our sinful nature. It would be right to say that same-sex desires are sinful in the sense that they are disordered by sin and exist contrary to God’s revealed will. But to be caused by sin and rooted in sin does not make a sinful desire equal to sinning. Sinning is what happens when rebellion against God expresses itself through our disorders.

**(4) Therefore, same-sex intercourse, not same-sex desire is the focus of Paul’s condemnation when he threatens exclusion from the kingdom of God.**

The clearest statement is found in 1 Cor 6:9–10:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

The words, “men who practice homosexuality” is a translation of two Greek words that refer to the passive and active partners in homosexual intercourse.<sup>1</sup> The focus is not on same-sex desire, but on same sex practice. And notice that homosexual practice is not singled out but included with other

ways of sinning: idolatry, adultery, stealing, greed, drunkenness, reviling, etc.

The point is not that one act of homosexual or heterosexual experimentation condemns you, but that returning to this life permanently and without repentance will condemn you. “Men who practice—who give themselves over to this life, and do not repent—will not enter the kingdom of God.” They will perish.

**(5) Therefore, it would contradict love and contradict the gospel of Jesus to approve homosexual practice, whether by silence, or by endorsing so-called same-sex marriage, or by affirming the Christian ordination of practicing homosexuals.**

We must not be intimidated here. The world is going to say the opposite of what is true here. They are going to say that warning people who practice homosexuality about final judgment is hateful. It is not hateful. Hate does not want people to be saved. Hate does not want people to join the family. Hate wants to destroy. And sin does destroy. If homosexual practice (and greed and idolatry and reviling and drunkenness) leads to exclusion from the kingdom of God—as the word of God says it does—then love warns. Love pleads. Love comes alongside and does all it can to help a person live—forever.

**(6) The good news of Jesus is that God saves heterosexual sinners and homosexual sinners who trust Jesus, by counting them righteous because of Christ, and by helping them through his Spirit to live lives pleasing to him in their disordered brokenness.**

After warning the Corinthians not to fall back into lives of sinful practice Paul says this in 1 Cor 6:11, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

This is the heart of biblical Christianity: “Such were some of you.” There are Christians in the church at Corinth who were fornicators and adulterers and thieves and drunkards and “men who

practiced homosexuality.” They were not driven away. They were folded in.

And the way they were folded in was that they were “justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” That is, they put their trust in Jesus, they turned from their practice, they renounced sinful pursuit of their desires, and God justified them—he imputed to them the righteousness of Christ, and counted them as acceptable in his sight, and adopted them into his family—our family.

They were washed—that is, God took away all their guilt and shame. “Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Pet 2:24). So when they trusted Christ, all that he did counted for them, their sins were washed away.

And then they were “sanctified” — God set them apart for himself and gave them his Spirit and was working in them a power for holiness that would swallow up their disordered desires in something greater and more beautiful and more desirable so that they could walk in a way pleasing to God, even in their brokenness.

The heart of Christianity is that God saves sinners through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The best news in all the world is that Jesus Christ died and rose again so that the most bizarre sexual predator—homosexual or heterosexual—can be rescued from his path of destruction, washed, justified, sanctified, and given a place in God’s all-satisfying presence, by faith in Jesus Christ. This is the heart of our message.

**(7) Deciding what actions will be made legal or illegal through civil law is a moral activity aiming at the public good and informed by the worldview of each participant.**

Minnesota citizens are being asked this November to vote yes or no on this question: “Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to provide that only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota?” And a blank vote is a no vote. If passed section 13 will be added to Article xiii of the State Constitution which reads, “Only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as

a marriage in Minnesota.”

How should Christian citizens decide which of their views they should seek to put into law? Which moral convictions should Christians seek to pass as legal requirements? Christians believe it is immoral to covet and to steal. But we seek to pass laws against stealing, not against coveting. One of the principles at work here seems to be this: the line connecting coveting with damage to the public good is not clear enough. No doubt there is such a connection. God can see it and the public good would, we believe, be greatly enhanced if covetousness were overcome. But finite humans can’t see it clearly enough to regulate coveting with laws and penalties. This is why we have to leave hundreds of immoral acts for Jesus to sort out when he comes.

Laws exist to preserve and enhance the public good, which means that all laws are based on some conception of what is good for us. Which means that all legislation and all voting is a moral activity. It is based on choices about what is good for the public. And those choices are always informed by a worldview. And in that worldview—whether conscious or not—there are views of ultimate reality that determine what a person thinks the public good is.

This means that all legislation is the legislation of morality. Someone’s view of what is good—what is moral—wins the minds of the majority and carries the day. The question is: Which actions hurt the common good or enhance the common good so much that the one should be prohibited by law and the other should be required by law?

Here are a few thoughts to help you with that question.

A constitutional amendment should address a matter of very significant consequence. To give you an idea of what has been regarded as worthy inclusion in the state constitution, Section 12 of Article xiii was passed by voters in 1998. It reads as follows: “Hunting and fishing and the taking of game and fish are a valued part of our heritage that shall be forever preserved for the people and shall be managed by law and regulation for the public good.” In deciding whether the meaning of marriage is significant enough to put in the constitution



one measure would be to weigh it against hunting and fishing.

The recognition of so-called same-sex marriage would be a clear social statement that motherhood or fatherhood or both are negligible in the public good of raising children. Two men adopting children cannot provide motherhood. And two women adopting children cannot provide fatherhood. But God ordained from the beginning that children grow up with a mother and a father, and said, “Honor your father and your mother” (Exod 20:12). Tragedies in life often make that impossible. But taking actions to make that tragedy normal may be worth prohibiting by law. That’s a factor to consider.

Marriage is the most fundamental institution among humans. Its origin is in the mind of God, and its beginning was at the beginning of the creation of humankind. Its connections with all other parts of society are innumerable. Pretending that it can exist between people of the same sex will send ripple effects of dysfunction and destruction in every direction, most of which are now unforeseen. And many of those that are foreseen are tragic, especially for children, who will then produce a society we cannot now imagine.

Before now, as far as we know, no society in the history of the world has ever defined marriage as between people of the same sex. It is a mind-boggling innovation with no precedent to guide us, except the knowledge that unrighteousness destroys nations, and the celebration of it hastens the demise (Deut 9:5; Prov 13:34; Rom 1:24–32).

**(8) Don’t press the organization of the church or her pastors into political activism. Pray that the church and her ministers would feed the flock of God with the word of God centered on the gospel of Christ crucified and risen. Expect from your shepherds not that they would rally you behind political candidates or legislative initiatives, but they would point you over and over again to God and to his word, and to the cross.**

Please try to understand this: *When I warn against the politicizing of the church, I do so not to diminish her power but to increase it.* The impact of the church for the glory of Christ and the good

of the world does not increase when she shifts her priorities from the worship of God and the winning of souls and the nurturing of faith and raising up of new generations of disciples.

If the whole counsel of God is preached with power week in and week out, Christians who are citizens of heaven and citizens of this democratic order will be energized as they ought to speak and act for the common good. I want to serve you like that.

Marvin Olasky expressed this well in this week’s *WORLD* magazine:

Wise pastors prompt [Christians] to form associations outside the church, and leave the church to its central task from which so many blessings flow. That pattern in the 18th and 19th centuries worked exceptionally well. New England pastors in colonial times preached and taught what the Bible said about liberty, and the Sons of Liberty—not a subset of any particular church—even-  
tually sponsored a tea party in Boston harbor. Pastors through America during those centuries preached about biblical poverty-fighting, and in city after city Christians formed organizations such as (in New York) the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (*WORLD*, June 16, 2012, 108).

There is so much more to say, and I plan to write more on the Desiring God Blog this week, especially as it relates to personal relationships with people who have same-sex attraction. There is more hope in those relationships than you may think. And I would like to help as much as I can.

For now, remember, you who trust in Jesus, “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). Be amazed that you are saved. And offer this to everyone.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 306–31.

# An Unreliable Guide to Complementarian Womanhood

A Review of Debi Pearl, *Created to Be His Help Meet:  
Discover How God Can Make Your Marriage Glorious*. Pleasantville, TN: No Greater Joy, 2004.

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### Introduction

There are parts of the Christian life that can be easier caught than taught. A godly mentor is able to serve as a powerful display of the way truth works itself out in a life. The second chapter of Paul's letter to Titus commands older women to take an active role in mentoring those who are younger, and Debi Pearl steps into the role of mentor in *Created To Be His Help Meet*. At the time of writing this review, it has been on the market for 8 years, yet it is still ranked inside the top 3,000 books on Amazon and sits at #35 on the list of marriage books. It is selling well and is gaining influence.

Pearl seeks to be the Titus 2 woman, sharing with her readers wisdom that she has accumulated in many years of being a Christian, of being a wife, of raising a family. But there is a serious problem. Throughout the book, Pearl shows that she is a poor and unwise mentor. In place of the wisdom and the fruit of the Spirit that ought to mark a mentor, she displays a harsh and critical spirit, she offers foolish counsel, she teaches poor theology, she misuses Scripture, and she utterly misses the centrality of the gospel.

(Note: I am familiar with some of the controversy surrounding the Pearls and what they teach regarding disciplining children. To keep this review focused, I will not discuss their child-raising techniques.)

### Areas of Agreement

*Created To Be His Help Meet* is not entirely bad, of course, and Pearl offers several valuable insights. She and I agree that the Lord has created women to be distinct from men not only in body, but also in role. In his wisdom, the Lord has given to men the position of leadership in the home and he has given women the complementary, helping role. She says, "When you are a help meet to your husband, you are a helper to Christ, for God commissioned man for a purpose and gave him a woman to assist in fulfilling that divine calling.... As we serve our husbands, we serve God." Pointing to the Trinity, she shows that there is nothing inherently undignified in a helping role: "Men are created to be helpers of God. Jesus willingly became a helper to the Father. The Holy Spirit became a helper to the Son." She shows that a husband and wife who embrace these roles are able to be a display of Christ and his church. "Knowing that my role as a wife typifies the Church's relationship to Christ has molded my life. As I reverence my husband, I am creating a picture of how we, the Church, should reverence Christ."

That broad theology of complementarity is a consistent thread from the first chapter to the last and, when combined with some wise and clever insights, assures that there is some value in this book. Alas, these nuggets of gold are

surrounded by too much waste, too much folly masquerading as biblical wisdom.

### Critical Spirit

Perhaps most troubling and most noticeable of all the book's weaknesses is the anger and harshness that pervades and influences so much of what Pearl says. This is one of the harshest, angriest books I have read on this side of Richard Dawkins and this critical spirit is displayed in insulting language, in lack of sympathy, and in the passing of harsh judgments.

Here is an example from early in the book: "A few years back, there was an overweight hillbilly woman who worked in the local store in our hometown ... this woman was ugly, I mean *hillbilly ugly*, which is worse than regular ugly." Not surprisingly, this woman does not end up being the hero of the short story Pearl tells of her. First she mocks her ugly appearance, and then her ugly demeanor.

At one point Pearl describes a woman she had conflict with and labels her "The Crazy Lady." When this woman eventually has an apparent nervous breakdown, Pearl is quick to determine that this breakdown was God's judgment upon her, saying "God had visited her with madness. He does 'fearful' things like that." Never is there even the smallest shred of grace or sympathy in her words or her tone; never does she consider that this woman may have suffered from a mental illness.

When a woman writes to ask Pearl how to deal with a husband who idolizes television and allows their young children to view inappropriate shows, Pearl responds by telling her to imagine the day her husband leaves her. "You will wonder if the babysitter is having her boyfriend over for a little sex in the bedroom while the kids watch TV alone. The young children will cry when you leave for work, and the older children will be glad to see you go so they can exercise their new found liberties." It goes on for a long and taxing paragraph before Pearl writes, "Now, Susan, let's come back to the present. If you continue to dishonor your husband, the above scenario will likely become our own personal nightmare—soon! ... The Devil would love to steal your children's souls. He will not do it through your

husband's TV; he will do it through your dishonor."

Shortly after this tirade she begins another about "a new breed of woman today," describing women who have gone through divorce and are now single moms. "They dress cheaply; their hair has a ragged cut, and the dark circles under their young eyes testify to their faded hope." Even though a husband was addicted to pornography or had anger problems, it is the wife who brought about her divorce. "It all started when you were mad about a TV commercial, or when he watched the car races on a Sunday afternoon. It got worse when he wanted you to do something exotic sexually. Divorce is never planned, but is almost always preceded by certain avoidable reactive behavior and events. Don't let it happen to you." A consistent thread in the book is that a failing marriage is always—or very nearly always—the fault of the wife; she is the one to blame, regardless of what her husband has contributed to the problem.

For women who struggle with accepting their husband's sexual advances she offers this counsel: "Don't talk to me about menopause; I know all about menopause, and it is a lame excuse. Don't talk to me about how uncomfortable or painful it is for you. Do you think *your* body is special and has special needs? Do you know who created you, and do you know he is the same God who expects you to freely give sex to your husband? Stop the excuses!" This is always a difficult and sensitive issue, yet Pearl offers not a trace of sympathy and absolutely no grace.

When a woman writes Pearl to ask advice on honoring a husband who is so lazy that the house and property are falling apart, Pearl has her take a "A Dumb-Cluck Test" and then asks, "Well, are you a dumb-cluck? ... You asked me, 'What should I do?' You should get off your easy chair and learn to do a thing or two."

Another story involves a young woman who reacted with visible irritation when her husband put his arm around her. Even though Pearl knew nothing of the context to this action, she was just a spectator from across the room, she says, "I wanted to get up and shake that girl until her teeth rattled. It would have shocked her to know that everyone

in the room felt extreme disdain toward her.” Well, we know that at least one person felt extreme disdain for her, but by now you are seeing that this is rather common in the life of Debi Pearl. She is a harsh, critical, and angry person, and this ugly tone pervades this book. Where is the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control that ought to mark the Christian, and especially the Christian mentor? Who would want their wife or their daughter or anyone else to be mentored by a harsh, graceless, angry person like Debi Pearl?

### **Foolish Counsel**

Much of what Pearl teaches in this book comes via answers to letters she has received. She consistently offers poor, even shocking, counsel in her return letters.

To one woman she says that if her husband sexually handles their children, that woman must call the authorities (wise!), but then she tells her that she ought to bring the children to visit their father in prison three to four times a year (potentially *extremely* unwise depending on the situation!). Not only this, but she tells the wife that if she does this, it will certainly win her husband to the Lord so once he is released, they can get on with life. This is far too terse and has far too little nuance to be at all helpful.

She quietly warns women away from close friendships with anyone but her husband, suggesting that for a woman to bond with another woman in this way is “a perverted expression of woman satisfying woman.”

A woman who is suspicious that her husband may be carrying on an emotional, or perhaps sexual, affair is told that she needs to “learn to use her feminine wiles” to woo him back. With no knowledge of the facts, Pearl calls the husband’s secretary a “cheap slut” and passes all manner of judgment on her. She advises this wife that instead of confronting her husband in any way, she should ooze sexuality and constantly seduce him in order to show him what he is giving up. This *will* work, she says. Her source of authority here is not Scripture but Loretta Lynn and her song, “You Ain’t Woman Enough to Take My Man.”

It may be no surprise at this point that Pearl seems to have no real theology of the local church. Speaking of how she submits to her husband she writes, “There is no pastor or minister higher than my husband.” In fact, if a pastor claims authority, he is, according to her husband, “a liar and a deceiver.” With the local church out of the picture, there is no court of appeals, nothing between submission to husband and calling the police. So when a husband dresses like a woman and wants his wife to engage in perverse role-play, she can do nothing more than tell the woman to express her disgust and to tell her husband that he is going to hell. There is no room for this woman to seek counsel and help in the local church. In neglecting the role of the church and the God-given spiritual care and authority of the local church, she neglects a great means of grace to the Christian.

Much of Pearl’s counsel is utterly heartless and even that which is not is too often proud and terse and utterly devoid of biblical wisdom. She displays a distinct lack of wisdom.

### **Poor Theology**

Throughout the book, Pearl teaches poor theology, especially when it comes to her understanding of how a husband and wife are to relate within their God-given roles. Here are a few representative quotes:

“If you are a wife, you were created to fill a need, and in that capacity you are a ‘good thing,’ a helper suited to the needs of a man. This is how God created you and it is your purpose for existing.”

“The only position where you will find real fulfillment as a woman is as a helpmeet to your husband.”

“God’s ultimate goal for you is to meet your man’s needs.”

“God has provided for your husband’s complete sanctification and deliverance from temptation through you, his wife.”

“No single man completely expresses the well-rounded image of God.”

Though she affirms a broadly complementarian position, Pearl goes much too far when she



says that a woman's deepest purpose and deepest meaning is bound up in her husband and that she is "good" only in relation to her husband. This would mean that a single woman has no purpose and meaning, even though the New Testament extols the single life when that singleness is offered to the Lord. Similarly, it is audacious, and just plain wrong, to say that no single man can adequately express the image of God. Was Jesus then an inadequate expression of manhood? If our unmarried Lord was less than "a well-rounded image of God" we are without hope and without a Savior. She far overstates a biblically-consistent complementarian understanding of the purpose for which God created men and women and the nature of the relationship between them. As she does this, she undermines the very position she seeks to affirm.

When Pearl describes how authority and submission work themselves out within marriage, she often makes broad statements that are entirely lacking in nuance. "A husband has authority to tell his wife what to wear, where to go, whom to talk to, how to spend her time, when to speak and when not to, even if he is unreasonable and insensitive, but he does not have authority to command her to view pornography with him or to assist him in the commission of a crime.... Wives are to obey an unreasonable and surly husband, unless he were to command his wife to lie to the Holy Ghost." Such statements are far too broad to be helpful. As it is, they are lacking in nuance and torn from any useful context.

In place of a satisfying and biblical view of masculinity and femininity, she tends to offer little more than a dangerously inadequate caricature such as "[Men] like to play or watch games where they knock each other down, just to prove who is the strongest and toughest. Everything they do must end with a testosterone-driven climax." Femininity is similarly caricatured: "He likes best a woman who will give him a token struggle and then surrender to his wit, charm and strength. He must thoroughly conquer. It is a battle I always enjoy losing. I like to be conquered and consumed by my man. That is my created nature." We do not read about Jesus reaching testosterone-driven climaxes in wrestling matches with his disciples. You do not

see Jesus, surely the best of men, in her caricatures. Neither do you see many other good men.

In a chapter dealing with sex, she says of a husband, "Making his wife feel glorious when he touches her is the ultimate test of his manhood—the very measure of the man" and "God made man to need sex. He must be relieved of his built-up sexual desire, even if it means spilling his seed in his sleep." In her view, men appear to constantly teeter on the edge of control and only a woman's regular sexual attention will hold him at bay. His sexual desire is a need that a wife must satisfy lest they both suffer the consequences of his lack of self-control. While Scripture tells us that sex is a crucial component of marriage, it never tells us that sex is a need like eating and breathing; it never even hints that the measure of a man is his ability to please his wife in the bedroom.

There are many, many examples of a twisted or just plain wrong view of masculinity and femininity and many other areas where the theology she teaches is subtly or completely unbiblical. Her view of masculinity can barely account for Jesus Christ, of all men the one who most exemplified what it means to be a man (and of whom we have no record that he had to be relieved of built-up sexual desire).

### **Poor Use of Scripture**

Pearl often uses the Bible to say what she needs it to say rather than what it actually says. For example, she quotes Sarah in Genesis 18:12: "After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" She then relates this statement to sexual pleasure, even though the context tells us that Sarah was far more interested in the pleasure of an heir than the pleasure of an orgasm. She claims that David's adultery with Bathsheba was actually Bathsheba's fault. "Her lack of discretion cost her husband his life, his comrade-in-arms their lives, her baby son his life, and the integrity of one whom God upheld as a man after his own heart." Yet, of course, Nathan, speaking on behalf of the Lord, called David to account, not Bathsheba (though this does not necessarily mean that she was entirely without fault).

Looking to the first days of human history,

Pearl suggests that Adam was lonely in the Garden of Eden before Eve was created. Many children's Bibles have pictures of Adam pining away in the Garden, disappointed in his lot, but the Bible says no such thing. Adam had an awareness that there must be something—someone—out there who would complete him. After all, how could he be fruitful and multiply and fill and subdue the earth on his own? But he wasn't lonely! How could he be lonely when he was in perfect and unbroken fellowship with God?

Looking to the first sin, Pearl says that the reason Satan tempted Eve was that Adam apparently could not be tempted. God has made men in such a way that they are nearly unttemptable, but made Eve weak and easy to deceive. Satan, a masculine being, knew this, so approached the woman who "didn't have the armor to ward off his fiery darts of deceit." The Bible tells us that Eve was tempted rather than Adam, but it does not tell us that this was due to a deficiency in her nature.

Too often Pearl stretches Scripture far beyond its plain meaning, inserting ideas that are foreign to the text.

### Law in Place of Gospel

All through the book there is a notable absence of gospel and the endless accumulation of law. Pearl never teaches the freedom that is found when a woman finds her identity in the gospel. Rather, she teaches that a woman's deepest meaning, her very identity, is found in her role as a help meet. When the gospel is missing, we will always turn to law or to lawlessness. Pearl turns to law, constantly giving rules and mandates and commands, but never grounding them in the good news of what Jesus Christ has done.

We see her graceless, legalistic God in words like these, taken from the book's final pages: "God is awesome and terrible in his judgments. He is also full of mercy, and of grace. His strong desire is to bless his people, but too often by our 'carelessness,' we force him to judge. I believe he wearies of judgment." Pearl presents a God who offers mercy and grace only to those who please him. To the rest there is judgment. This is a God who reacts to our

every careless or thoughtful deed with anger and judgment. He is gracious only when we do what he demands, only when we earn his favor. And this means, of course, he is not a God of mercy and grace at all, not when his favor must be merited.

She seems to have no category for a woman who does her absolute best, who does everything by the book, who submits to her husband's every whim, and who still has a failing marriage. "It doesn't take a good man, or even a saved man to have a heavenly marriage. But it does take a woman who is willing to honor God and by being the kind of wife God intended." In other words, she has no category for God's sovereignty, for his good purposes beyond our best efforts. She teaches that if we do our bit, God will do his. After all, we've earned his favor. Though she may make a kind of gospel call in the book, that gospel does not pervade life beyond that moment of salvation. This may be the most tragic shortcoming of them all.

### Conclusion

The Titus 2 command for older Christian women to serve as mentors to younger Christian women is too good, too important to ignore. Yet the ideal mentor offers not only years, but also spiritual maturity and evidence of God's sanctifying grace. From the first page of *Created To Be His Help Meet* to the last, Debi Pearl shows that she is an unsuitable mentor; her counsel is too often foolish, her words too often harsh, her grasp of Scripture and theology inadequate, and, not surprisingly then, her grasp of the utter centrality of the gospel almost completely missing. I would recommend avoiding this book at all costs.

Here are some alternatives that will prove far more valuable:

- *Helper by Design* by Elyse Fitzpatrick
- *The Excellent Wife* by Martha Peace
- *True Woman 101* by Nancy Leigh DeMoss and Mary Kassian
- *Feminine Appeal* by Carolyn Mahaney
- *When Sinners Say "I Do"* by Dave Harvey

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# Preserving Biblical Gender Roles in a “Pre-Adult” Culture

A Review of Kay S. Hymowitz, *Manning Up: How the Rise of Women Has Turned Men into Boys*.  
New York: Basic Books, 2011.

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In *Manning Up: How the Rise of Women Has Turned Men into Boys*, author Kay Hymowitz tracks the emerging gender shifts and confusion that result from the rise of “pre-adulthood” in modern society. Hymowitz observes that pre-adulthood has introduced a period of delayed adolescence that provides a “contemporary stage for young men and women to deal with the big questions about their lives” (7-8). The book comments on how “pre-adult” men and women have coped with this transformation caused by the emergence of the knowledge economy in ways that have upended traditional cultural (and, more importantly for our purposes, biblical) norms about gender.

Capturing a cultural buzzword that is generally used in situations calling for courage in the midst of crisis, *Manning Up* discusses how the rise of women has coincided with the delay of adolescence among men. Along the way, Hymowitz documents the ascendance of the “alpha girl” and the fall of the “child-man” who is the “cultural antithesis of the alpha girl” (14). While the emergence of pre-adulthood and the knowledge economy has enabled women to reach new heights, the reverse has happened to men. As a result, questions about gender roles, gender distinctives, and vocation have shaped the search for identity among pre-adults. Though Hymowitz writes from a largely secular feminist perspective, *Manning Up* calls for a reflection on the impact the knowledge economy

has had on both sexes in a way that can help evangelicals reconsider how they preserve gender roles in the church and the home.

Several ideas that shape Hymowitz’s discussion of the contemporary gender revolution can help evangelicals think through how to preserve biblical gender roles in the church and the home. First, *Manning Up* recognizes that a root issue for gender confusion is a crisis of identity. Hymowitz observes, “As a mass phenomenon, a largely open-ended what-should-I-do-with-my-life question is a cultural novelty, one that has fundamentally transformed the life script for a good chunk of the American population” (21). For contemporary pre-adults, work, career, and independence are “the primary sources of identity today” (45). Instead, Christian men and women are able to find their identity in their faith-union with Christ who anchors them amidst the upheaval of modern gender expectations. Hymowitz recognizes that the question, “What should I do with my life?” then turns out to be another way of asking “Who am I?” (42). Evangelical churches must equip their young adults to find their answers to these questions in the narrative of Scripture rather than the surrounding society.

Second, *Manning Up* recognizes that a root issue for gender confusion is a crisis of vocation. On the one hand, “the very heart of pre-adulthood” is a women’s quest to gain financial independence

before marriage (11). On the other hand, “pre-adults are looking for something much bigger than a way of earning a living” (39). These twin attractions towards independence and significance in vocation are the same things the serpent used to coax Adam and Eve into sin in the garden—a biblical narrative Hymowitz mentions but misunderstands (78). Can evangelical churches help young adults navigate the enticement toward finances and fame in the workplace? Hymowitz is precisely correct in identifying the challenge young adults face, but the church must be able to show how vocation fits into God’s good plan for men and women or it will perpetuate the cultural confusion on gender all around them.

Third, *Manning Up* recognizes that a root issue for gender confusion is a crisis of gender roles. The knowledge economy has resulted in what Hymowitz calls a “New Girl Order” (58). In this leveling of gender roles, “The child-man is the fun house mirror image of the alpha girl. If she is ambitious, he is a slacker. If she is hyper-organized and self-directed, he tends toward passivity and vagueness. If she is preternaturally mature, he is happily not” (110). Yet, Christians must recognize that the Bible calls men and women to something more and something better than this. In the biblical call for men to lead, provide, and protect, men show the ambition and maturity to emulate the God-man in sacrificially serving in the church and home. In the biblical expectation of women to submit and serve, women are able to embrace a Christian standard of femininity that is distinct from the cultural standard of the New Girl Order.

Fourth, *Manning Up* recognizes that a root issue for gender confusion is a crisis of marriage. Hymowitz notes that “pre-adults marry later than ever before in history” (45). Why? In the rise of the knowledge culture, pre-adults have seen marriage as an option to be considered rather than an ideal to be embraced. She notes how one writer points out that for women, ambitions to marry and raise a family “were intentionally airbrushed” from their vision of the future (72). But the Bible paints a different picture of marriage. There is no way to airbrush Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for his bride. And

there is no way to overlook the priority of marriage in the Scripture. In the midst of a culture of confusion about gender roles, churches must continue to portray the biblical portrait of marriage.

Fifth, *Manning Up* recognizes that a root issue for gender confusion is a crisis of parenting. The rise of the knowledge economy and the resulting trend toward pre-adulthood have created an environment where “provider husbands and fathers are now optional” (16). Hymowitz concedes that one thing above all distinguishes the child-man from his forefathers: “They knew they were going to be tied to, and responsible for, a family. He does not” (127). If the culture sees marriage as optional, then it sees children as peripheral; either as luxury or inconvenience. This phenomenon should prompt churches to champion a different vision of parenting—a vision that sees children as a blessing from the Lord to shepherd rather than a nuisance to tolerate.

*Manning Up* capitalizes on a buzzword in our culture to document the way the knowledge economy has transformed gender roles, resulting in gender confusion. Those who read the book will learn not only about the economic and cultural factors that have contributed to this shift but also about the significant effects it is having on the “pre-adult” population. But, for the evangelical reader, the true value of the book lies in calling the church to reflect on its mission to raise men who lead, provide, and protect and women who submit and serve. It’s time for the church to address these issues head on by manning up.



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# An Edifying Vision of Marriage

A Review of Timothy Keller, with Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God*. New York: Dutton, 2011.

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There are dozens of good Christian books on marriage. Why another one? Because our cultural context has changed so drastically.

Tim Keller has witnessed this change from a front-row seat since 1989, when he planted Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, which he still pastors. He penetratingly understands how non-Christians and young Christians tend to think about the Bible's counter-cultural teachings on marriage. His church reflects the demographics of center-city Manhattan: over 80% of the people are single. Keller has found that singles are very interested in the topic of marriage, and this book is based on his most listened-to sermons: a nine-part series he preached on marriage in 1991.

This is Keller's sixth book published by Dutton. The first five are *The Reason for God* (2008), *The Prodigal God* (2008), *Counterfeit Gods* (2009), *Generous Justice* (2010), and *King's Cross* (2011). Like the previous ones, this book's target audience is broad. Keller successfully reaches his "primary goal": "to give both married and unmarried people a vision for what marriage is according to the Bible" (12). This is a book I would give to Christians and non-Christians, married and single, older couples and newlyweds, engaged couples and singles—including singles who are not interested in getting married. Keller weaves the gospel throughout the book while disarmingly exposing harmful views on marriage, realistically explaining how God designed marriage to work, and powerfully demonstrating how glorious marriage is. He anticipates objections (e.g., regarding homosexuality or the role of women), probably states them better than the objectors could

themselves, and respectfully responds.

In contrast to some of Keller's previous books (e.g., *Counterfeit Gods* or *King's Cross*), Keller's exegesis is easy to follow straight through to his theological statements and applications. Sometimes Keller shares a brilliant insight but bases it on a text that I'm not convinced supports it. But this book straightforwardly explains and applies Ephesians 5:21–33, and Keller shares, "I follow closely [Peter T.] O'Brien's exegesis of the Ephesians 5 passage throughout this book" (253 n. 53).

The book's argument unfolds in eight steps:

(1) Our culture views marriage very differently than the Bible presents it; God instituted marriage and designed it to illustrate the gospel (ch. 1, "The Secret of Marriage").

(2) The Holy Spirit enables husbands and wives to serve each other joyfully (ch. 2, "The Power for Marriage").

(3) Marriage is about love, which is not merely romantic passion but commitment to our promise (ch. 3, "The Essence of Marriage").

(4) The purpose of marriage is for two best friends to help each other become more holy (ch. 4, "The Mission of Marriage").

(5) We can help our spouse become more holy with the power of constructive truth, renewing love (especially the "love languages" of affection, friendship, and service), and reconciling grace (ch. 5, "Loving the Stranger").

(6) God created men and women with equal value but distinct roles (ch. 6, "Embracing the Other").

(7) Singles should neither overvalue nor

undervalue marriage, and those seeking marriage should take some precautions (ch. 7, “Singleness and Marriage”).

(8) God created sex solely for marriage as a glorious uniting act that maintains the marriage covenant (ch. 8, “Sex and Marriage”).

One of Keller’s recurrent themes is that the popular “I love you because you make me feel good about myself” concept of love is bankrupt and shallow. “In the long run,” Keller comments in an interview about the book, “the more superficial things that made a person sexually attractive will move to the background, and matters of character, humility, grace, courage, faithfulness, and love will come to the foreground. So companionship, duty, and mutual sacrifice are, in the end, the sexiest things of all.”<sup>1</sup>

Except for chapter 6 and a short appendix, Keller writes the book in his own voice but acknowledges that it “is very much the product of *two* people’s mutual experience, conversation, reflection, formal study, teaching, and counseling over thirty-seven years” (245 n. 1). Kathy Keller writes chapter 6 and the appendix in the first person, and she winsomely shows how the Son’s submitting to the Father applies to the roles of husbands and wives (174–76, 242–44).

Most of my criticisms of *The Meaning of Marriage* are pedantic and not worth highlighting. I’ll mention just one: with reference to God’s commanding husbands to love their wives, Keller states, “Emotions can’t be commanded, only actions, and so it is actions that Paul is demanding” (103). I’m not convinced that dichotomizing emotions and actions like that is viable. I ask my three-year-old daughter to obey me “with a happy heart” (i.e., cheerfully, joyfully, without arguing or complaining), and I don’t think that standard is unreasonable. The writings of John Frame and John Piper, among others, present a more satisfying view of emotions.

I could apply many adjectives to the book: insightful, shrewd, disarming, realistic, convicting, pastoral, warm, gracious, penetrating, theological, relevant, faithful, incisive, accessible, clear, compelling. But perhaps best of all (because of those

traits), it’s edifying. It has inspired me to glorify God by loving and leading my wife like Ephesians 5:21–33 commands.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>See [http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-reviews/interview/meaning\\_of\\_marriage](http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-reviews/interview/meaning_of_marriage).

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# Redefining Submission

**A Review of Alan G. Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission*.  
Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.**

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In Ephesians 5, the apostle Paul makes an analogy between Christ's relationship to the church, and a husband's relationship to his wife. The analogy goes like this in Eph 5:24, "As the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything." This comparison has been a bit of a sticking point in egalitarian interpretation because the wife's submission is patterned after the church's submission to Christ. Evangelical interpreters agree that the church should submit to Christ, but they do not agree that a wife should submit to her husband. What then are egalitarians to do with Eph 5:24 and the clear implication that a wife's submission should be patterned after the church's proper submission to Christ? Isn't wifely submission the clear implication of this passage? Moreover, what are egalitarians to do with other texts (like 1 Cor 11:3) that suggest Christ's headship over man is analogous to a man's headship over his own wife? Christ's obvious authority over man necessarily implies the authority of man over woman both in marriage and in church leadership.

This is the challenge that Alan Padgett takes on in his recent book *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission*. Padgett argues that Christ actually does submit to the church. Because of that, complementarians need to reconsider their view of gender roles as patterned after Christ's relation to the church. Padgett argues that Christ submits to the church

and provides us with an example for us to follow in submitting to others. Before making his case, however, Padgett suggests that there are two types of submission. Type 1 submission is obedience to an external authority, which can be voluntary but often is not. Type 2 submission is "the *voluntary* giving up of power in order to take up the role of a slave, so that one may serve the needs of another person" (xiii). Padgett argues that Jesus submits to the church only in the second sense. Type 2 submission is essentially "mutual submission," and it precludes any notion of gender based roles or hierarchy between men and women.

## SUMMARY

The rest of the book attempts to defend the thesis that Christ renders Type 2 submission to the church and that church members should imitate his example in their relationship to one another. Chapter 1 surveys the evangelical debate over gender roles since the 1970's and describes the complementarian point of view as "man-centered leadership" that is "neither biblical nor evangelical" (2). Padgett says a biblical ethic that is "Christ-centered" and "truly evangelical" is not one concerned with gender at all but with the use of power in a variety of social situations. Thus mutual submission, not gender hierarchy, is the solution to inequities of power.

Chapter 2 calls into question the distinction

between mutual submission and “servant leadership” (31). It argues, in fact, that Scripture’s depiction of servant leadership is non-hierarchical. Padgett writes, “The argument that servant leadership is somehow different from mutual submission is profoundly unbiblical” (55).

Chapter 3 argues that controversial gender texts in Ephesians and 1 Corinthians have been misinterpreted by complementarians and are really just attempts to teach mutual submission. The church may submit to Christ, but Christ also submits to the church. “Does Christ ever submit to the Church? The answer of the New Testament is yes. Jesus submits to the church by freely becoming a servant in his earthly ministry” (65).

Chapter 4 deals with biblical passages in 1 Peter and the Pastoral Epistles dealing with the gender issue. Among other things, Padgett argues that 1 Peter 3, Titus 2, and 1 Timothy 6 are not normative for readers today: “As we have already seen regarding the submission commands in 1 Peter, the ethics of submission in these letters are not for every time and place. They are specific to the situation of the churches in Crete and Ephesus” (87). Padgett argues that 1 Tim 2:8-15 is a midrashic interpretation of Genesis 2 and that the author has little concern for the original contextual meaning of Genesis 2. In any case, Padgett does not believe that Genesis 2 establishes Adam’s headship over Eve. “The so-called headship of the husband, understood as authority over, is a result of sin, not a creation-order” (99). In Paul’s midrash on Genesis 2, Adam is a type for Paul, and Eve is a type for the church. Thus the point of 1 Tim 2:12-13 is to exhort all believers (i.e., Eve) to submit to Adam’s (i.e., Paul’s) sound doctrine. Padgett writes, “The idea that women are to be in submission to husbands or men is not at all the point” (99). Ultimately, Padgett concludes, “Certainly the patriarchal interpretation of this passage has the great weight of a long tradition on its side and has many defenders today. But it just doesn’t fit the facts very well” (100).

Chapter 5 consists of Padgett’s egalitarian exposition of 1 Cor 11:2-16. He takes the rather novel approach of explaining the passage “from the

bottom up”—meaning that his exposition begins at verse 16 and works backwards to verse 2. In the critical verse 15, Padgett argues that a woman having “authority” on her head means that she should have “freedom” over her own body (117). He comes to this interpretation based on the meaning of the word “authority” (*exousia*), which he says “always” means “the person’s own authority, not someone else’s” (112).

Chapter 6 concludes with a word about how mutual submission should be applied in the lives of Christians today. Padgett suggests that complementarianism is not a “fully *Christian* reading of the submission ethics of the New Testament” (126). The biblical way is the way of justice, and justice requires mutual submission.

## EVALUATION

Padgett’s book is well-written and easy to read. It exhibits a thorough knowledge of the exegetical and theological issues at state in the evangelical gender debate. Having said that, there are some significant weaknesses. First, the entire thesis of the book—that Christ submits to the church—relies upon some fairly sketchy exegesis. Padgett argues that the term for “submit” (ὑποτάσσω) in the New Testament has been misconstrued. He claims that it almost always refers to mutual submission, a relationship that includes no hint of hierarchies or gender roles. Yet the standard NT Greek lexicon and a host of other New Testament scholars recognize that ὑποτάσσω means “to take a subordinate role in relation to another.”<sup>1</sup> Delling writes, “It is a hierarchical term which stresses the relation to superiors.”<sup>2</sup> Thus “submitting” has everything to do with submission to a recognized authority. Exegetically, the special definition of “submission” that Padgett embraces has a very weak showing in the literature.

Padgett’s explanation of the meaning of the word “head” (κεφαλή) is equally problematic. He argues that “head” means “source” not “authority.” Thus man is not the authority over woman in 1 Cor 11:3 or in Eph 5:23. He is merely the “source” of the woman in the sense that the first woman Eve was created from Adam’s side



(66–67; 70–71). Yet the meaning “head” in these texts has been an ongoing dispute in evangelical gender debates. Wayne Grudem has argued convincingly that “head” often means “authority” and that there is not one reference in all of Greek literature in which it clearly and unambiguously means “source.”<sup>3</sup>

Padgett’s explanation of other key texts is equally unconvincing. To say that 1 Peter 3, Titus 2, and 1 Timothy 6 are no longer normative is an enormous hermeneutical and theological statement. There is no indication from either Peter or Paul that such a limitation should be placed on these texts, yet Padgett says there should be. Likewise, Padgett’s suggestion that 1 Tim 2:12 is a midrash which only properly applies to the original readers is equally problematic. Primogeniture is in play in this text, and Adam’s prior creation implies his authority in his relationship with his wife. Despite Padgett’s argument to the contrary, the prohibition of 1 Tim 2:12 is rooted in the order of creation recorded in Genesis 2. And this means that Adam’s authority over Eve derives from God’s good purposes for His creation, not from the fall of man into sin.

## CONCLUSION

There really is not much new ground covered in this book. The exegetical debates are well-worn, and Padgett does not move the conversation forward in any meaningful way. His suggestion that Christ submits to the church is based on a misinterpretation of the term “submit,” and his case falters on that exegetical error alone. At the end of the day, complementarian interpretations of these hotly contested gender texts still seem to be the most convincing. Thus readers can take a pass on Padgett’s novel approach to an old debate.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, 1990), 367; cf., “ὑποτάσσω,” BDAG.

<sup>2</sup>Gerhard Delling, “ὑποτάσσω,” *TDNT* 9 (1972), 41.

<sup>3</sup>Wayne Grudem, “Appendix 1: The Meaning of *Kephalē*,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 467–68.

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# A Frank but Hopeful Theological Vision of Marriage

A Review of Paul David Tripp, *What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage*.  
Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.

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Anyone who appreciates Paul David Tripp's writing will be glad to hear that in this book, he applies his general approach to theology and life to the relationship of marriage. Tripp is frank about the reality that marriage is encumbered by both sin and human limitation ("What Did You Expect?"). He is also hopeful about the ability of Christ to redeem this reality ("Redeeming the Realities of Marriage"). The book presents a theological vision of marriage from Scripture framed by practical commitments for couples to consider for their own marriage.

Marriage is about worship before anything else. It is meant to provide companionship, bring joy, and generally benefit spouses. But these are benefits of—not the primary purpose for—marriage. Tripp grounds marriage in the worship of God by means of faith in Christ. As each spouse, by faith, is learning to obey the first great commandment of loving God, they are also learning to keep the second great commandment of loving the other as themselves.

Tripp frames this love for one another in six commitments that unpack the foundational themes of the book. These commitments are framed in the first person plural for easy transfer:

- We will give ourselves to a regular life-style of confession and forgiveness.
- We will make growth and change our daily agenda.
- We will work together to build a sturdy bond of trust.

- We will commit to building a relationship of love.
- We will deal with our differences with appreciation and grace.
- We will work to protect our marriage.

Tripp maintains well the awareness of human sin in relationship, without getting bogged down in a slough of relational despond. He never loses sight of the need for both spouses to work hard to maintain self-aware dependence on Christ for personal forgiveness and redemption. Both spouses need to pull weeds of sin and plant seeds of gospel. Both will need to maintain vigilance over their hearts for the protection of their marriage. Both must extend forgiveness daily.

And yet his approach is also able to recognize less egregious human foibles, calling for a gospel-awareness that deals patiently with both. His chapter dealing with differences in marriage was uniquely helpful for appreciating personality and gender differences without losing sight of the fundamental corruption of the heart as it functions in relationship. He does not get caught up in a lot of the silliness out there about "compatibility," yet he is also not simplistic in his presentation of relational dynamics between people whose internal responses to the world do not always match up.

I have found *What Did You Expect?* to be a helpful textbook in premarital as well as marriage counseling, when set alongside other books whose purpose is to focus more on expositing the bibli-

cal texts regarding marriage. Like *When Sinners Say 'I Do'* by Dave Harvey, this book serves well as either a reality check for glassy-eyed engaged couples or a hope-filled commiseration for weary spouses.

# Letting Go of Your Grip of Perfection

A Review of Amy Spiegel, *Letting Go of Perfect: Women, Expectations, and Authenticity* (Nashville: B&H, 2012)

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Walk into a bookstore, and in the Christian women's section you'll find books for virtually every type of woman: singles, mothers, mothers to multiples, young, college-age, aging, new wives, wives without children, widows, and the list goes on. Seldom do I find a book that very intentionally applies to all women, but Amy Spiegel's *Letting Go of Perfect* is that book. She seeks to help women leave behind the standard in their mind of the "perfect Christian woman"—a standard usually derived more from society than from God's own standards for our roles as women, wives, and mothers. Spiegel is a very relational author. She shares her life with her readers and makes herself an open book. She writes not only about her success stories and moments of applause, but also about her failures, anxieties, and fears.

Chapters 1, 3, and 4 deal with our reactions and commitments to what comes our way in life. Chapter 1 discusses marriage, God's timing, and especially whom we marry. Many women have an ideal "Mr. Darcy" in mind, and Spiegel encourages her readers to investigate what God has in mind for our marriage. Chapter 3 looks at a woman's life with children: "The experience of becoming a parent enlightened me a great deal on the subject of suffering and the role it plays in our lives" (36). Parenting seldom goes along our time schedule even if we have mastered the art of "babywise." In chapter 4 Spiegel addresses the chaos and monotony of a woman's daily schedule. "I was willing to forego the pleasures of this world," she writes, "for the sake of lesson planning and sleep schedules" (49). If we could pencil our imaginary timeline of how

life-events should occur, what would it look like, and how would it correspond to reality? Spiegel encourages women not to make an idol of the perfect schedule but to plan responsibly and live each day as it comes. While the author's life looks very different than mine, Jer 29:11 applies to us both: God plans our lives, and his plans are best.

Chapter 2, aptly titled "Vanity's Flair," talks about our pursuit of perfection in our appearances. This particular chapter spoke volumes to me because I'm pregnant, and pregnancy guarantees a less-than-worldly-perfect body. "The struggle to keep our heads above water and avoid drowning in a sea of either self-loathing or self-worship is constant" (23). This may just be the toughest area of perfectionism for most women in a society filled with media, art, movies, and clothing stores that cater to the "perfect size."

In chapters 5–7, Spiegel makes us stop and think about who makes the rules for our lives, who guarantees our acceptance based on what we do or don't do, and how we measure up to everyone else's expectations. We spend our lives looking to everyone else and comparing our lives to theirs. Yet, this is not how God designed us to live. One way Spiegel encourages us in these chapters is by asking, "How can we accept and encourage one another rather than trying to impose our own standards on others?" (61). We are called as believers to live in authentic community with each other not to impose our measured perfection on ourselves and others.

In light of this authentic community, chapters 8–9 speak directly into our relationships with parents, friends, boyfriends, husbands, children—



or that person to whom we want to measure up, just so we can be better off than where we are. She encourages women at every point in their relationships with others to find their ultimate satisfaction in their relationship with Jesus and not to let earthly relationships determine their mindset.

Finally, in chapters 10–13 Spiegel offers powerful lessons on how to interact with society. Even though we are believers, we don't live all of life in a spiritual bubble. We must learn how to live on mission with unbelieving friends, educational choices, books and television, and more. While society will impact our lives, women can also impact society as they serve and live before God. "If we all consider ourselves as missionaries, called to bring the Gospel to those around us, then our lives will reflect the differences of the cultures to which we are called" (133).

Not often do I read a book where I regularly find something I feel was written especially for me at that exact moment, but this was one of those books. Spiegel's fearless authenticity is refreshing, and her ability to speak from her heart to reach the hearts of her readers can help women let go of their grip on perfection and trust in the God whose way is perfect (Ps 18:30).

# THE DANVERS STATEMENT

BASED ON OUR UNDERSTANDING OF BIBLICAL TEACHINGS, WE AFFIRM THE FOLLOWING:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:18).

2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen. 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor. 11:7-9; 1 Tim. 2:12-14).

3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen. 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor. 11:7-9).

4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen. 3:1-7, 12, 16).

- In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.

- In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.

5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal. 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen. 2:18; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).

6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.

- In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; Tit. 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

- In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).

7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission—domestic, religious, or civil—ever

implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan. 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet. 3:1-2).

8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim. 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9). Rather, biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.

9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor. 12:7-21).

10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.



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