

THE JOURNAL FOR BIBLICAL  
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MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD

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*R. Albert Mohler*

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*John Piper*

**An Overlooked Help: Church Disciplines and the Protection of Women**

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**A Review of William and Aida Spencer and Steve and Celestia Tracy,**

*Marriage at the Crossroads*

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**THE JOURNAL FOR  
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## Pope Benedict's Final Address to the Roman Curia and the Decline of Western Civilization

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The Pope's annual address to the Roman Curia has been dubbed "The State of the Union" for the Roman Catholic Church. These speeches are not necessarily big media events, but Pope Benedict XVI's final address turned out to be a headline-grabbing speech—for all the right reasons.

News reports and punditry focused most of their attention on the speech's implications for gay marriage—namely that the Pope opposes same-sex unions of any kind. Nevertheless, the focus on the legal question of gay marriage is a rather shallow analysis of the speech. Make no mistake. The Pope's words are nothing less than a broadside against any notion of same-sex marriage. But what he said actually goes much deeper than that.

He argues that there is a "crisis" threatening the very foundations of the family in the western world. The crisis is not merely about a particular social construct, but about what it means to be "authentically human." The family is in crisis

because mankind in the Western world has forgotten what it means to be created in the image of God as male and female. The Pope takes on not merely homosexual marriage, but the entire foundation of modern gender theory—the idea that gender is something that you choose, not something that you are. I think it's worth quoting him at length on this point:

The very notion of being—of what being human really means—is being called into question... According to this philosophy, sex is no longer a given element of nature, that man has to accept and personally make sense of: it is a social role that we choose for ourselves, while in the past it was chosen for us by society. The profound falsehood of this theory and of the anthropological revolution contained within it is obvious. People dispute the idea that they have a nature,

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given by their bodily identity, that serves as a defining element of the human being. They deny their nature and decide that it is not something previously given to them, but that they make it for themselves. According to the biblical creation account, being created by God as male and female pertains to the essence of the human creature. This duality is an essential aspect of what being human is all about, as ordained by God. This very duality as something previously given is what is now disputed. The words of the creation account: “male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27) no longer apply.<sup>1</sup>

Amen. Few people—and I fear far too few Christians—realize that what the Pope is talking about here is at the leading edge of the conflict between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. The secular West has given up on God as the maker in whose image man is created. Our culture has given up on the idea that men and women are different and that they are so by God’s design. In the West, male and female are not creation categories. They are simply identities that we learn from culture or that we choose to inhabit.

It would be easy to blame this devolution on feminism or queer theory,<sup>2</sup> but that would be too superficial. For both modern feminism and queer theory derive from the secular spirit of the age which denies that we are as God has made us. It is not the Spirit of God, but another spirit altogether that says that male and female are completely interchangeable, not only at the level of social roles but also at the level of sexual practice. The feminists and the queer theorists hold such basic assumptions in common, and that is why their alliance in the larger culture has been so unbreakable.<sup>3</sup>

Many secular responses to the Pope’s speech focused almost entirely on the question of gay marriage and the perception that the Pope is against “gay rights.” This secular narrative defines this discussion exclusively in terms of the march of human progress and equality. It is able to do that because it has already accepted—perhaps uncritically—the notion that gender is something you learn, not something that you are. If those assumptions about gender turn

out to be false—and Scripture tells us that they are indeed false—then the narrative of equality that is built upon them crumbles. Those advancing the “equality” narrative may not realize this, but they have built their entire house on shifting sand. That house will be washed away in due time.

As a Protestant and a Baptist, I have many serious differences with the former Pope. But when it comes to the ethics of gender and sexuality and the rot that is eating away at Western culture, I find that we have much in common. Pope Benedict rings true on this because he is agreeing with Gen 1:27: “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” God did in fact make us male and female. To deny this is to deny what it means to be human. On this, the Pope Benedict was profoundly right.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Pope Benedict XVI, “Pope: Address to the Roman Curia” [December 21, 2012], accessed online, <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-address-to-the-roman-curia>.

<sup>2</sup>Queer theory is the cross-disciplinary intellectual movement that questions the validity of sexual identity categories. Queer theorists typically hold that not only are gender roles socially constructed, but so is biological gender. Categories such as male, female, gay, lesbian, transgender, etc., are purely conventional and have no stable definition. As we shall see, Judith Butler is one of the crucial progenitors of this movement. For an introduction to queer theory, see Gust A. Yep, Karen E. Lovaas, and John P. Elia, “Introduction: Queering Communication: Starting the Conversation,” in *Queer Theory and Communication: From Disciplining Queers to Queering the Discipline(s)* (ed. Gust A. Yep, Karen E. Lovaas, and John P. Elia; Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park, 2003), 2ff.

<sup>3</sup>Laurel C. Schneider, “Homosexuality, Queer Theory, and Christian Theology,” *Religious Studies Review* 26, no. 1 (2000): 5-6: “Whether queer theory is something really separate from feminism is not at all clear.... Where queer theory diverges from feminism is ... only where feminist theory is falsely limited to essentialist, even ontological claims about women, nature, and sexuality.”

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# Odds & Ends

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## Welcome to Owen Strachan as New Executive Director of CBMW

In January of 2013, Owen Strachan was named executive director of CBMW. Strachan is a theology professor at Boyce College of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been deeply invested in the cause of biblical manhood and womanhood over the years and is already providing visionary leadership for the organization. After his appointment, Strachan released a statement on [cbmw.org](http://cbmw.org), and here is an excerpt of what he said:

We will undertake this work with charity, good cheer, and optimism. Even as we debate issues with fellow evangelicals, we intend to exemplify a godly and gracious spirit. We have no reason for defensiveness, after all; we believe God's Word is perspicacious, and we are grateful for that. I am personally friends with a number of believers who differ with me on the issues at hand. This is good for me, and I hope for them; I want to persist and indeed to grow in such friendship. I once heard D. A. Carson say that he was merely, in view of God's grandeur, an "unprofitable servant." That stuck with me, as with so many things Carson said and did. That's all I am: an unprofitable servant. That's all any of us are. But I am asking a great God to work through CBMW, an organization he has used to tremendous effect in the past, because if we are to know health, God is the one who must give it.

— Denny Burk

## When It Costs To Be Complementarian

*World* magazine reported last November about Daniel Harman, the leader of the University of Louisville chapter of Cru (formerly known as Campus Crusade). Cru relieved Harman of his duties because of his complementarian approach to campus ministry. He has been with Cru for 11 years,

8 of which were on the mission field in Eastern Europe. Since 2009, he's been directing the ministry on the University of Louisville's campus. His complementarian views were no problem overseas, but they became more of an issue since he returned to America. It all came to a head recently when the leadership of Cru learned that he was not allowing female leaders to teach men in Cru weekly meetings. Thomas Kidd reports for *World*:

This fall, however, one of Louisville's female Cru staff members asked Harman for clarification about whether women could teach the Bible in mixed-gender Cru meetings, and Harman said they could not. The exchange came to the attention of regional Cru officials, who met with Harman and reiterated Cru's policy of "men and women leading together." They gave Harman three weeks to reconsider his position, and said that if he remained "dogmatic" about the issue, he could no longer serve as Missional Team Leader. Harman decided that he would not change the practice, and Cru demoted him.

As campus director at Louisville, Harman has permitted female staff to speak in front of mixed-gender audiences on a number of ministry-related topics, and to assume numerous leadership roles relative to both female and male students. But Harman contends that Scripture prohibits women teaching the Bible to adult men (including those of college age), based on passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-12, in which Paul says, "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet." [Thomas Kidd, "Campus ministry conflict" *World* magazine online (November 30 2012): [http://www.worldmag.com/2012/11/campus\\_ministry\\_conflict](http://www.worldmag.com/2012/11/campus_ministry_conflict)]

I commend Daniel for standing upon the truth of God's Word even at great personal cost. This conflict threatens not just his ministry but his livelihood. This is not the kind of disruption that a man with a young family needs. I'm sure it would have been easier simply to let it go and revise his personal beliefs in order to protect his position. He didn't do that, and I am grateful for the stand he has taken.

A Cru spokesman told *World* that this incident amounted to a disagreement over policy not over theology. That is nonsense. Cru's policy represents an egalitarian view of ministry roles, and that stance is irreducibly theological. Daniel was demoted because of theological conviction, not because of an arcane dispute about Cru's bureaucracy. Certainly Cru has the right to set their own policies. I hope their constituency knows that it excludes consistent complementarians.

From time to time, I will hear people argue that complementarianism only applies to the church and should not be applied to parachurch groups. This has never been a compelling argument to me. It is true that parachurch groups are not the church. They cannot baptize or administer the Lord's Supper. There is a worthwhile discussion to be had about the existence and role of parachurch organizations in relation to local churches. At the very least, I think everyone should agree that parachurch organizations should never adopt ministry practices which would undermine the teaching and discipline of actual churches. For that reason, the complementarian/egalitarian issue cannot be skirted by groups like Cru.

I'm grateful for the great work that Cru has done over the decades. I have had many friends who have been deeply involved in this ministry. But this latest story is a sad one. I hope they reconsider their views on this. Daniel Harman is a good man and a faithful brother. Cru could use more like him, not less.

— Denny Burk

### **Feminism and the 40th Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade***

January 22, 2013, marked the 40th anniversary

of the infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion-on-demand in the United States. Since that time, 55 million children have been killed legally in America. A milestone like this one invites us to take a long, hard look at the culture of death to see the ugliness for what it is. Much of it is driven by feminist dogma. Feminism teaches that women must not be held back from equality with men by having to care for children. Thus feminism insists that women must be set free from the consequences of their own fertility. That is why abortion rights are sacrosanct to feminists. It is much more important for women to be free than to be encumbered by a pregnancy they do not want.

In a 2010 article for *The Times* of London, Antonia Senior argued this case in spades (Antonia Senior, "Yes, Abortion is Killing. But It's the Lesser Evil," *The Times* [June 30, 2010]: accessed online, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/antoniasenior/article2579786.ece>). She contended for a woman's fundamental right to kill her unborn child in order to further the feminist cause. You almost have to read it to believe it, but it is what she wrote. You might think it a joke or a hoax, but it's not.

Here's her argument in a nutshell. As a pro-choice feminist, Senior says she had always believed that an unborn child was not a life but a *potential* life. That was her belief until she finally had her own child. After giving birth to her own little girl, her view of the personhood of the unborn changed. In her own words:

What seems increasingly clear to me is that, in the absence of an objective definition, a fetus is a life by any subjective measure. My daughter was formed at conception, and all the barely understood alchemy that turned the happy accident of that particular sperm meeting that particular egg into my darling, personality-packed toddler took place at that moment. She is so unmistakably herself, her own person—forged in my womb, not by my mothering.

Any other conclusion is a convenient lie that we on the pro-choice side of the debate tell ourselves to make us

feel better about the action of taking a life. That little seahorse shape floating in a willing womb is a growing miracle of life. In a resentful womb it is not a life, but a fetus—and thus killable.

Astonishingly, even though she concedes that an unborn baby is a human life, she says that killing a baby is sometimes the lesser of two evils. Feminism's commitment to reproductive freedom and "fertility control" is more important than an unborn baby's life. It would be more evil to surrender feminism than to kill a human life. In her own words: "The answer lies in choosing the lesser evil. The nearly 200,000 aborted babies in the UK each year are the lesser evil, no matter how you define life, or death, for that matter. If you are willing to die for a cause, you must be prepared to kill for it, too."

If you don't think that this is the logical consequence of third wave feminist ideology, then you don't understand feminism. Such feminists on both sides of the pond believe that a woman's "right to choose" is more important than another person's right to life. This is the logic of death, and it is in part what has led to the killing of 55 million unborn babies since 1973. "Consider it, take counsel and speak up!" (Judges 19:30)

— Denny Burk

### Tom Wright and Ordination in the Church of England

Late last year, Tom Wright wrote an op-ed for *The Times* of London commenting on the Anglican decision not to ordain women as bishops ("It's about the Bible, not fake ideas of progress," *The Times* [November 23, 2012]: accessed online at <http://www.thetimes.co.uk>). Wright's article is a response in large part to Prime Minister David Cameron's admonition to the church to "get with the program." Wright thinks Cameron oversteps his bounds in telling the church what it ought to do. Perhaps I'm not the only one who would note the irony of an Anglican church leader complaining about the state chiming-in on church matters. But that is not what I am mainly concerned about here.

At the end of the article, Wright tries to make a biblical case for egalitarianism in the appoint-

ment of bishops. There's nothing new here, and I'm not going to rehearse all the arguments for and against the issue. But one paragraph in particular is telling and really does serve to highlight the difference between egalitarians and complementarians in our approach to Scripture. Wright writes,

The other lie to nail is that people who "believe in the Bible" or who "take it literally" will oppose women's ordination. Rubbish. Yes, I Timothy ii is usually taken as refusing to allow women to teach men. But serious scholars disagree on the actual meaning, as the key Greek words occur nowhere else. That, in any case, is not where to start.

The verse that Wright alludes to is 1 Tim 2:12, "I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." This is the verse in which the issue of women serving as pastors is discussed more directly and explicitly than any other text in Scripture. And yet somehow Wright believes that this text is "not where to start" in trying to understand what the Bible says about these things. This is an incredible claim. It would be like saying that the Bill of Rights is *not where to start* in understanding human rights in American culture.

The triumph of egalitarianism in many sectors of the church and of biblical scholarship lies in this: It is now possible to declare the most relevant biblical texts to be the most irrelevant in settling the issue. Through a variety of subversive hermeneutical sleights of hand, egalitarians deftly set aside texts like 1 Tim 2:12 and 1 Cor 11:3. In effect, they have told us, "Nothing to see here, move along."

Well, in spite of Wright's protestations otherwise, there is something for Christians to see in 1 Tim 2:12. It really does teach that Paul only intends qualified males to be pastors. It bears directly on the question of ordination in the Church of England and every other church making a claim to be Christian, but I doubt that many readers of *The Times* of London know that. Unfortunately, Wright doesn't clarify the point but only obscures it.

— Denny Burk



# Can Christians Use Birth Control?

**R. Albert Mohler**

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The effective separation of sex from procreation may be one of the most important defining marks of our age—and one of the most ominous. This awareness is spreading among American evangelicals, and it threatens to set loose a firestorm.<sup>1</sup>

Most evangelical Protestants greeted the advent of modern birth control technologies with applause and relief. Lacking any substantial theology of marriage, sex, or the family, evangelicals welcomed the development of “The Pill” much as the world celebrated the discovery of penicillin—as one more milestone in the inevitable march of human progress, and the conquest of nature.

At the same time, evangelicals overcame their traditional reticence in matters of sexuality, and produced a growth industry in books, seminars, and even sermon series celebrating sexual ecstasy as one of God’s blessings to married Christians. Once reluctant to admit the very existence of sexuality, evangelicals emerged from the 1960s ready to dish out the latest sexual advice without blushing. As one of the best-selling evangelical sex manuals proclaims, marital sex is *Intended for Pleasure*. Many evangelicals seem to have forgotten that it was intended for something else as well.

For many evangelical Christians, birth control has been an issue of concern only for Catholics. When Pope Paul VI released his famous encyclical outlawing artificial birth control, *Humanae Vitae*, most evangelicals responded with disregard—perhaps thankful that evangelicals had no pope who could hand down a similar edict. Evangelical couples became devoted users of birth control technol-

ogies ranging from the Pill to barrier methods and Intrauterine Devices [IUDs]. That is all changing, and a new generation of evangelical couples is asking new questions.

A growing number of evangelicals are rethinking the issue of birth control—and facing the hard questions posed by reproductive technologies. Several developments contributed to this reconsideration, but the most important of these is the abortion revolution. The early evangelical response to legalized abortion was woefully inadequate. Some of the largest evangelical denominations at first accepted at least some version of abortion on demand.

The evangelical conscience was awakened in the late 1970s, when the murderous reality of abortion could not be denied. A massive realignment of evangelical conviction was evident by the 1980 presidential election, when abortion functioned as the fuse for a political explosion. Conservative Protestants emerged as major players in the pro-life movement, standing side-by-side with Catholics in the defense of the unborn.

The reality of abortion forced a reconsideration of other issues in turn. Affirming that human life must be recognized and protected from the moment of conception, evangelicals increasingly recognized IUDs as abortifacients, and rejected any birth control with any abortifacient design or result. This conviction is now casting a cloud over the Pill as well.

Thus, in an ironic turn, American evangelicals are rethinking birth control even as a majority of the nation’s Roman Catholics indicate a rejection



of their Church's teaching. How should evangelicals think about the birth control question?

First, we must start with a rejection of the contraceptive mentality that sees pregnancy and children as impositions to be avoided rather than as gifts to be received, loved, and nurtured. This contraceptive mentality is an insidious attack upon God's glory in creation, and the Creator's gift of procreation to the married couple.

Second, we must affirm that God gave us the gift of sex for several specific purposes, and one of those purposes is procreation. Marriage represents a perfect network of divine gifts, including sexual pleasure, emotional bonding, mutual support, procreation, and parenthood. We are not to sever these "goods" of marriage and choose only those we may desire for ourselves. Every marriage must be open to the gift of children. Even where the ability to conceive and bear children may be absent, the will to receive children must be present. To demand sexual pleasure without openness to children is to violate a sacred trust.

Third, we should look closely at the Catholic moral argument as found in *Humanae Vitae*. Evangelicals will find themselves in surprising agreement with much of the encyclical's argument. As the Pope warned, widespread use of the Pill has led to "serious consequences" including marital infidelity and rampant sexual immorality. In reality, the Pill allowed a near-total abandonment of Christian sexual morality in the larger culture. Once the sex act was severed from the likelihood of childbearing, the traditional structure of sexual morality collapsed.

For most evangelicals, the major break with Catholic teaching comes at the insistence that "it is necessary that each conjugal act remain ordained in itself to the procreating of human life." That is, that every act of marital intercourse must be fully and equally open to the gift of children. This claims too much, and places inordinate importance on individual acts of sexual intercourse, rather than the larger integrity of the conjugal bond.

The focus on "each and every act" of sexual intercourse within a faithful marriage that is open to the gift of children goes beyond the biblical demand. Since the encyclical does not reject all

family planning, this focus requires the distinction between "natural" and "artificial" methods of birth control. To the evangelical mind, this is a rather strange and fabricated distinction. Looking at the Catholic position helps, but evangelicals must also think for themselves, reasoning from the Scriptures in a careful consideration.

Fourth, Christian couples are not ordered by Scripture to maximize the largest number of children that could be conceived. Given our general state of health in advanced societies, a couple who marries in their early twenties and has a healthy and regular sex life could well produce over fifteen offspring before the wife passes her early forties. Such families should be rightly honored, but this level of reproduction is certainly not mandated by the Bible.

Fifth, with all this in view, evangelical couples may, at times, choose to use contraceptives in order to plan their families and enjoy the pleasures of the marital bed. The couple must consider all these issues with care, and must be truly open to the gift of children. The moral justification for using contraceptives must be clear in the couple's mind, and fully consistent with the couple's Christian commitments.

Sixth, Christian couples must ensure that the methods chosen are really contraceptive in effect, and not abortifacient. Not all birth control is contraception, for some technologies and methods do not prevent the sperm from fertilizing the egg, but instead prevent the fertilized egg from successfully implanting itself in the lining of the womb. Such methods involve nothing less than an early abortion. This is true of all IUDs and some hormonal technologies. A raging debate now surrounds the question of whether at least some forms of the Pill may also work through abortifacient effect, rather than preventing ovulation. Christian couples must exercise due care in choosing a form of birth control that is unquestionably contraceptive, rather than abortifacient.

The birth control revolution has literally changed the world. Today's couples rarely ponder the fact that the availability of effective contraceptives is a very recent phenomenon in world history.

This revolution has set loose a firestorm of sexual promiscuity and much human misery. At the same time, it has also offered thoughtful and careful couples an opportunity to enjoy the joys and fulfillments of the marital act without remaining at all times equally open to pregnancy.

Therefore, Christians may make careful and discriminating use of proper technologies, but must never buy into the contraceptive mentality. We can never see children as problems to be avoided, but always as gifts to be welcomed and received.

For evangelicals, much work remains to be done. We must build and nurture a new tradition of moral theology, drawn from Holy Scripture and enriched by the theological heritage of the church. Until we do, many evangelical couples will not even know where to begin the process of thinking about birth control in a fully Christian frame. It is high time evangelicals answered this call.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This article originally appear at [AlbertMohler.com](http://AlbertMohler.com) on May 8, 2006. It appears here with permission.

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# Clarifying Words on Wife Abuse

**John Piper**

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Several years ago, I was asked in an online Q&A, “What should a wife’s submission to her husband look like if he’s an abuser?” One of the criticisms of my answer has been that I did not mention the recourse that a wife has to law enforcement for protection. So let me clarify with seven biblical observations.<sup>1</sup>

1. Every Christian is called to submit to various authorities and to each other: children to parents (Eph 6:1), citizens to government (Rom 13:1), wives to husbands (Eph 5:22), employees to employers (2 Thess 3:10), church members to elders (Heb 13:17), all Christians to each other (Eph 5:21), all believers to Christ (Luke 6:46).

This puts the submission of wives and husbands into the wider context of submission to Jesus, to the civil authorities, to each other, and to the church. This means that the rightness or wrongness of any act of submission is discerned by taking into account all the relevant relationships. We are all responsible to Jesus first, and then, under him, to various other persons and offices. Discerning the path of love and obedience when two or more of these submissive relationships collide is a call to humble, Bible-saturated, spiritual wisdom.

2. Husbands are commanded, “Love your wives, and do not be harsh with them” (Col 3:19). They are told to “love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it” (Eph 5:28–29). The focus of a husband’s Christlikeness in loving his wife is “love your wives, as Christ loved the church and *gave himself up for her*” (Eph 5:25).

Christian husbands are not Christ. They are finite, fallible, forgiven sinners. They do not stand

in the place of Christ. Their wives relate directly to Christ (Heb 4:16; 11:6), not merely through their husbands. Husbands do not have the wisdom or the power or the rights of Christ. Their likeness to Christ in leading their wives is limited and focused by these words: *He gave himself up for her . . . nourishing and cherishing . . . not harsh with them.*

Therefore, an abusive husband is breaking God’s law. He is disobeying Christ. He is not to be indulged but disciplined by the church. The wife is not insubordinate to ask the church for help. A Christian woman should not feel that the only help available to her is the police. That would be a biblical failure of her church.

3. But recourse to civil authorities may be the right thing for an abused wife to do. Threatening or intentionally inflicting bodily harm against a spouse (or other family members) is a misdemeanor in Minnesota, punishable by fines, short-term imprisonment, or both. This means that a husband who threatens and intentionally injures his wife is not only breaking God’s moral law, but also the state’s civil law. In expecting his wife to quietly accept his threats and injuries, he is asking her to participate in his breaking of both God’s moral law and the state’s civil law.

God himself has put law enforcement officers in place for the protection of the innocent. “If you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer” (Rom 13:4). A wife’s submission to the authority of civil law, for Christ’s sake, may, therefore, overrule her submission to a husband’s demand that she endure his injuries. This legitimate recourse to civil protection may be done in a spirit that does not contra-



dict the spirit of love and submission to her husband, for a wife may take this recourse with a heavy and humble heart that longs for her husband's repentance and the restoration of his nurturing leadership.

4. The church should not harbor an abusive man or woman whom the civil authorities would punish if they knew what the church knows. We are called to mercy. "Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). But there are times when mercy to one demands justice for another. This is often the case with criminal abuse. Moreover, there are many ways to show mercy toward a guilty person who must pay fines or go to jail. We are seldom in a position where the choice is simply mercy or no mercy.

5. For many women, the thought of a husband going to jail and losing his job and being publicly shamed is so undesirable that they often endure much sin before becoming desperate enough to turn to the authorities. What I want to stress is that long before they reach a point of desperation—or harm—the women of the church should know that there are spiritual men and women in the church to whom they can turn for help. By way of caution and lament, I cannot promise that every church has such spiritual, gifted, and compassionate men and women available for help. But many do. The intervention of these mature brothers and sisters may bring the husband to repentance and reconciliation. Or they may determine that laws have been broken and the civil authorities should or must be notified. In either case, no Christian woman (or man) should have to face abuse alone.

6. When Jesus commands his disciples, "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt 5:39), he is describing one way of love: the testimony that Jesus is so sufficient to me that I do not need revenge. This was the way Christ loved us at the end: "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (1 Pet 2:22–23).

But this is not the only path of love open to those who are persecuted. The Bible warrants fleeing. John Bunyan wrestled with these two strands in the Bible of how to deal with persecution:

He that flies, has warrant to do so; he that stands, has warrant to do so. Yea, the same man may both fly and stand, as the call and working of God with his heart may be. Moses fled, Ex. 2:15; Moses stood, Heb. 11:27. David fled, 1 Sam. 19:12; David stood, 24:8. Jeremiah fled, Jer. 37:11–12; Jeremiah stood, 38:17. Christ withdrew himself, Luke 19:10; Christ stood, John 18:1–8. Paul fled, 2 Cor. 11:33; Paul stood, Acts 20:22–23. . . . Do not fly out of a slavish fear, but rather because flying is an ordinance of God, opening a door for the escape of some, which door is opened by God's providence, and the escape countenanced by God's Word, Matt. 10:23 (*Seasonable Counsels, or Advice to Sufferers, in The Works of John Bunyan*, vol. 2, p. 726).

7. When the Bible says, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction" (Jas 1:27), it implies that Christians with means and strength take initiatives for the weaker. The "visitation" in this text is not for nothing. It is for help—for provision and protection. The point is this: when Jesus commands his disciples, "Turn to him the other cheek also" (Matt 5:39), he does not mean that, if I can do something about it, I should allow you to be slapped again. Again, it is the camaraderie in the body of Christ that breaks the cycle of injustice.

My closing plea is to all Christian men, and in particular to the leaders of churches: herald a beautiful vision of complementarian marriage that calls men to bear the responsibility not only for their own courage and gentleness but also for the gentleness of the other men as well. Make it part of the culture of manhood in the church that the men will not tolerate the abuse of any of its women.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This article originally appeared at [DesiringGod.org](http://DesiringGod.org), and it appears here with permission.

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# An Overlooked Help: Church Discipline and the Protection of Women

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Church discipline and complementarianism—having either one of these items on your church’s statement of faith will pretty much guarantee someone will label you authoritarian, but having both will make you seem downright medieval. If you mention either doctrine to people on the street, they may conclude you are part of a cult that monitored its members and allowed men to dominate their wives. Both church discipline and complementarianism are tender subjects because they highlight *authority* in particularly unsubtle ways, ways that make it easy for the mind to jump to its abuses. And to be fair, we have seen all too clearly the way authority can be so easily abused. History is rife with examples of it; contemporary fiction shows our great sensitivity to it; and many of us have experienced it directly. So this makes us nervous about any situation in which one person or group has the right to direct another person or group. Our impulse is to prefer what we think of as personal freedom.

But if we understand godly authority as the responsibility to direct those under it through self-emptying service, then we will practice church discipline in such a way that protects women from the abuse of ungodly authority. The godly authority of church leadership should, by powerful contrast, crush any ungodly authority by men in the church. No abuser will be comfortable in the kind of church that exercises godly authority.

I would like to contrast these two opposing versions of authority in order to demonstrate how

consistent complementarianism and church discipline work together for the protection of women, children, and anyone who may be placed under ungodly authority in the church.

## **The Ungodly Authority of Men**

“I’m not sure I want you to rake our leaves. It might make my son mad.”

I was in our church’s neighborhood, standing on the front porch of an elderly woman. A group of us was walking the streets with our leaf bags and old rakes, knocking on doors. I respectfully told the elderly woman I didn’t understand what she meant.

“Shh. He might hear you,” she said with a tenuous glance over her shoulder. “Oh, alright. I think it’ll save him an afternoon of work.” So we got busy raking and bagging.

I was bent over stuffing a bag when I heard a human explosion. “What do you think you’re doing?” I turned to see on the porch a lumbering middle aged man, wearing sweats and a very red face. Before I could answer, the man was cruising on a 70 mph tirade about property rights, his personal plans to rake that afternoon, and other loosely related topics. But then the conversation got a bit more personal. He asked who we were.

“Aren’t you that church up the road that hates women?” I thought about responding with some counter-ridiculousness, “Well, not officially.” But he continued too quickly, “Get your authoritarian garbage out of our neighborhood. No one wants you here. Now get out.” All the while, the mother

was behind him, halfway behind the door, wringing her hands with her head down. After trying unsuccessfully to gain a hearing, I asked his pardon and kept our group going down the street. The two of them receded into the front room, his yelling still audible from the street.

For all this man's blustering about how women should have equal authority to men, if that episode was indicative of how that household ran, our church would have disciplined this man. The functional authority of that home was that man's angry passion, and it showed in his mother's fear of him. This display is the exact opposite of the servant-hearted authority of Jesus, the kind of authority he demands his followers imitate. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:25–28).

When a man's authority is not derived from God's self-emptying authority, it is always twisted into something satanic. Men will use their physical strength to intimidate or outright assault women and children. They will manipulate by withholding affection or provision to get what they want out of those under their care. No matter how sinister what they're wanting is, their warped sense of entitlement justifies it. They use their authority not to serve, but to be served in sick ways—from sexual abuse and battery to more subtle cruelty, like creating a caustic and unpredictable home in which wives and children live in constant fear and apprehension.

God hates this mockery of his authority, where men are given authority for the purpose of giving of themselves for those under their care but instead use it to please themselves. Of the leaders of Israel in Ezekiel's day, God railed "Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.... Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will

require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them" (Ezekiel 34:2–3, 10). In speaking to the leaders of ancient Israel, the Lord displays his timeless view of how human authority should work: to reflect his servant-hearted grace. Any other kind of authority he is *against*.

Pastors who claim to be shepherding their church in ways pleasing to the Lord must be equally against such wickedness. Conservative evangelical churches must be willing to take the responsibility for disciplining unrepentant members for sins that might be easier to overlook. We are more aware of the fact that we cannot overlook a man abandoning his spouse for another lover, a woman leaving her family for a lifestyle of addiction, or a person denying the deity of Jesus Christ. But are we as aware that to overlook ungodly authority being exercised in our church is just as heinous to God?

Sadly, such ungodly authority occurs all the time in the homes of men who sit with their families in the front section and catechize their children as well as in the homes of those marginal folks whose names are on the roll of the church but their faces are rarely seen. Godly church leadership will not tolerate such ungodly authority in either one.

### **The Godly Authority of Church Leadership**

This Ezekiel passage continues with the promise of a second David who would come as the good Shepherd, who would exercise his authority for the good of those under his care: "I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken" (Ezek 34:22–24). Jesus is the paradigm of godly authority—one that feeds and protects the sheep from what threatens them, including sickness (v. 4), their own wandering hearts (v. 4), wild beasts (vv. 5, 8), and even false



shepherds (vv. 18–19). Jesus stood up against each at great personal cost to himself.

And church leadership must imitate such authority. Jesus gave of his authority to the church to guard his gospel (Matt 16:17–18) and his people (Heb 13:17) by putting out those who are mere pretenders (Matt 18:16–17) so as not to harm others through their corruption (1 Cor 5:9–13). This is church discipline. And it is a tool to be wielded for the protection of the helpless, like a shepherd's rod. I would like to propose three practical ways by which godly authority can wield the rod of church discipline against ungodly authority.

First, church leadership should promote a culture of safety for oppressed people in the congregation by being pastorally engaged and available. This must begin with the general awareness that ungodly authority is more prevalent than we'd like to think. Hopefully, the majority of Christian husbands are imperfectly struggling to imitate Jesus and will only need the regular help of seeing how servant-hearted authority translates into directing his home. But others will be hardened ogres at home, even if they are nice guys publicly. Unless God brings an unusual season of conviction for sin, they will not be the ones to seek a pastor out. This is why wives, and even children, should be encouraged to seek safety under godly authority.

I can think of at least two ways to do this: (1) In keeping with a culture of discipleship that acknowledges the need for one another to have victory over personal sin (Heb 3:12–13), wives should be reminded that by remaining quiet about abusive husbands they insulate them from the loving correction they need to save their souls from destruction. It is not loving to hide domestic abuse; it will only bring destruction. To the victim as well as the perpetrator. No matter how many times an abuser feels guilty and promises not to continue, without help from others, the pattern will continue. (2) Wives and children should then be given avenues of contact with pastors who will care for them. While the pastor should not promise absolute confidentiality, he should nevertheless promise to be a guiding presence through whatever consequences will come from exposing the abuse. People generally

know the avenues of contacting leadership—email, phone numbers, etc.—but in publicly framing those avenues as safe means of reaching out on this particular issue, you increase the likelihood of an abused woman or child following through.

Second, church leadership should exercise authority by unyielding accountability. In the case of violence or sexual abuse, this must involve governing authorities. Many well-meaning pastors may, in the attempt to show grace, treat violence as “church family business.” This is both illegal and foolish. Part of godly authority is exacting the consequences of a man's actions on him. An abuser must be accountable to the law, regardless of the state of his repentance.

This will mean some hard conversations for the pastor. With the wife, the pastor will have to comfort her as she dreads the fallout she will undoubtedly face in her lifestyle, in her marital relationship, and with the children. This is hard enough. But the real test of a shepherd's resolve will be with the husband. The pastor will often have to be the one who explains how the abuse came to the light, why it was right to do so, and what the consequences will be. These consequences include reporting to the authorities and, in many cases, removing the wife and children from the home and placing them with a family from the church temporarily. The pastor should make clear to the man that safety is not found in hiding such behavior, but exposing it. The pastor should also unapologetically state to the abuser that not only will he report the current situation, he will cooperate fully with any investigation of the crime.

In regard to church discipline, the public nature of the crime makes it a matter of public address before the congregation. What form this address takes is largely dependent on the disposition of this man toward his sin. If he is angry at being exposed and is threatening toward those under his thumb, the man should be brought before the congregation for excommunication. Godly authority cannot allow a man to claim Christ and behave like Satan toward his family. If, on the other hand, he is broken and repentant, then the congregation can be briefed on it as a matter of pastoral care, so that

they can forgive, pray, and seek the family with practical help.

In the case of non-criminal physical intimidation or emotional bullying, the public authorities do not get involved. But church authorities must. Often, families corrode away for years under harsh and dissatisfied men who use outbursts of anger, verbal threats, and abusive talk to manipulate those under their care. Pastors should confront such sin with no less resolve. In fact, this type of abuse is often more difficult to awaken a man to, since it falls under the legal alarms. But church leaders must insist that such a self-centered and manipulative lifestyle is indicative of a heart that does not know the grace of Christ (Eph 4:31–32). The same steps of church discipline would apply here—confrontation that, if not met with repentance, leads to public discipline. If it is met with repentance, then the matter does not need to be reported publicly, but rather privately with a team of men and women who will maintain vigilant accountability over the home.

In either case, whether outright abuse or corrosive intimidation, godly authority demands that church leaders protect and love those under their care. God often uses this very thing to display to oppressed people what true authority looks like. Pastors and church leaders have the privilege of displaying the kind of leadership that both directs and serves people for their protection.

And, for what it's worth, it demonstrates that complementarians, in all their talk about self-sacrificial authority, are trying to be consistent. Tackling such a problem, not to mention leading a congregation faithfully through it, is no easy thing. There is a lot of risk and personal cost involved. Pastors will face sleepless nights, angry threats, full guestrooms, phone calls to authorities, questioned motives, and unnerving conversations in the practice of church discipline on this matter. And by doing so, they get to display that puzzling authority of Jesus, who served those under his command.

# God's Judgment on His Blessing: How Genesis 1:28 Informs the Punishments on Adam and Eve

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### Introduction

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their punishments brought disruption to manhood and womanhood. These punishments, recorded in Gen 3:16–19, were not randomly chosen but instead reflect and affect the blessing God declared in 1:28.<sup>1</sup>

This article will demonstrate that the creation commission in Gen 1:28 is the necessary backdrop to understand the nature of the judgments meted out to the man and woman after the Fall. When the first couple disobeyed, God did not rescind his blessing. He did not nullify the mandate to multiply and have dominion, but his punishments ensured that the mandate would manifest in pain, frustration, and difficulty.

After Gen 3:16–19 God's blessing now also bears his judgment.

### The Creation Commission

In the creation account of Gen 1:1–2:3 there are two statements of God's blessing. On the fifth day he blesses animals (1:22), and on the sixth day he blesses his image-bearers (1:28). The latter blessing is the most important one because God's commission (or mandate) is stated clearly for the first couple and helps explain what functioning as God's image-bearers will involve: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds

of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."<sup>2</sup>

There are multiple actions commended in that blessing, and they can be divided into two large ideas. The verbs *be fruitful*, *multiply*, and *fill* denote population by procreation, and the verbs *subdue* and *have dominion* express the rule to be exercised by the image-bearers over what God has made. The creation commission, then, is twofold: have offspring and have dominion.<sup>3</sup>

With the pre-Fall mandate of Gen 1:28 now before us, we are ready to look at the judgments.

### The Context of the Judgments

The disobedient couple hears the sound of God's presence in the garden, and with it comes the sound of judgment. Hidden among the trees from his presence, they have previously clothed themselves in shame with coverings, and when confronted by God they pass responsibility onto someone else (Gen 3:7–8, 12–13).

When the punishments begin, God first addresses the other character in the scene, the serpent that deceived Eve and remained in the garden to watch this travesty unfold. The pericope of God's judgments, therefore, includes the curse on and promised defeat of Satan (Gen 3:14–15). God next speaks to the woman (3:16) and last to the man (3:17).



The order of punishments is significant because the final one is the longest and is reserved for Adam. God created him first (Gen 2:7) as the representative head of the human race (cf. Rom 5:12ff.), who was to work and guard the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). Only Adam heard God issue the prohibition about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17), and though he evidently conveyed God's command to Eve (cf. 3:3), he failed to act righteously when the decisive moment of eating occurred, for he was there with her and joined in the disobedience (3:6).

The punishments of Gen 3:14–19 are introduced in the same order as the characters appear in 3:1–6. First the crafty serpent appears (3:1), then the woman engages in the conversation it initiates (3:1–5), and finally the man takes the fruit his wife gives to him (3:6).

Although the judgments begin with the serpent (Gen 3:14–15), the following sections will address only God's words to the man and woman (3:16–19).

### **Echoes of Genesis 1:28 in 3:16**

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

This verse divides into two judgments that affect two important areas of womanhood: being a mother and being a wife. As Sailhamer put it, "What was to be the woman's source of blessing—to be a marriage partner and have children—is now tainted by the curse."<sup>4</sup>

### ***Pain in Childbearing***

First, God's judgment affects childbearing. The opening line of Gen 3:16 speaks about pain in that experience, and the next line is a parallel saying the same thing. But what about the promise to *multiply* pain? In our English translations it might seem that childbearing would have had pain prior to the Fall but will now be intensified. After all, you can't multiply what doesn't exist in some form, right?

But any implication about pre-Fall pain in childbearing is grammatically unwarranted. The

verb רבה means to have great pain and makes no comment about previous pain.<sup>5</sup> The second and parallel line ("in pain you shall bring forth children") restates the point clearly. A natural reading of the narrative in context implies that pain is introduced after her disobedience, not something present in a more microcosmic way beforehand.

Echoes of Gen 1:28 are discernible already. There the couple receives the command to have offspring, and in 3:16 the woman learns she will still bring forth children. In fact, she could have concluded as much from hearing the previous judgment on the serpent, words that promised enmity between its offspring and *hers* (3:15). The garden sin, therefore, did not nullify the creation commission to have offspring.<sup>6</sup> In 1:28 God told his two image-bearers to be fruitful and multiply (also רבה), and now he multiplies the woman's pain in childbirth. God's blessing bears his judgment.

It is easy to list examples of the pain associated with bearing children. A common theme in Genesis is barrenness, and that condition persists in many women today. Add to that the tragedies of miscarriages, stillbirths, and even the occasional death of the mother during delivery, and we can see that childbearing can be full of pain indeed.

The experience of pregnancy and degree of difficulty vary from woman to woman, but it remains true that those nine months are no small and simple endeavor. The timeframe of labor itself consists of climaxing pain. When Paul was thinking of a comparison for the groans of creation, he spoke of "the pains of childbirth" (Rom 8:22), and that analogy is apt as it states a truth universally recognized.

There is pain in childbearing, and no one can circumvent that punishment. Every child came into this world outside the garden, so not even Eve experienced what pre-Fall childbirth would have been like. Every woman who has borne a child did so through this judgment in Gen 3:16. In the fullness of time the virgin Mary herself gave birth to the promised Seed through the pain divinely decreed on the first mother (3:15; Luke 2:7; Gal 4:4).

### ***Domination in Marriage***

Second, God's judgment affects the marriage

relationship. In the second half of Gen 3:16, Eve learns that her “desire” will be for her husband, and he will rule over her. The “desire” here is not sexual because intercourse was indispensable for procreation before the Fall. The context of this verse is one of punishment, so the desire in view is bad. What kind of desire, then, is this?

The reader of Genesis is helped in the next chapter where the words “desire” and “rule” appear again in tandem. God tells Cain that sin’s “desire is for you, but you must rule over it” (Gen 4:7). The desire is a ruling one, a dominating one. Most likely, then, in 3:16 the desire of the woman toward her husband is a desire to overcome him. The author intended 3:16 and 4:7 to be read together because the latter clarifies the former.<sup>7</sup>

Genesis 1:28 informs this aspect of the judgment on the woman. God told her and Adam to subdue the earth and have dominion over its creatures. The woman, as an image-bearer like Adam (1:27), was to rule over what God made, but the objects of her dominion did not include her husband. God’s words in 3:16, therefore, indicate a distortion in the created design for marriage. The covenant couple, once naked and not ashamed (2:25), now face marital difficulty.

Earlier in Genesis 3 the woman had failed to rule over the serpent that in turn overcame her (3:4–6). When that creature successfully exercised dominion over an image-bearer, it was subverting God’s good and wise design. The woman *should* have ruled over the creature, and now, as part of God’s punishment on her disobedience, she will desire to rule over someone she *shouldn’t*. When wives want to usurp their husbands and rule over male headship, that desire is the outworking of God’s words to Eve and, by extension, to all women.

The final words of God to the woman in Gen 3:16 refer to her husband: “and he shall rule over you.” This phrase could be interpreted in two plausible ways, one that views this rule as bad and the other that views this rule as good. Wenham admits it is more difficult here to grasp the authorial intent.<sup>8</sup>

If the “rule” is negative (like the woman’s “desire”), then surely an authoritarian kind of rule is meant.<sup>9</sup> In that case, both actions in Gen 3:16 would

be a misuse of dominion aimed at an image-bearer: she will want to usurp his headship, and he will try to dominate her—a two-way street with two dead ends. “The two who once reigned as one attempt to rule each other.”<sup>10</sup> Such authoritarian rule by the man contradicts true biblical headship comprised of sacrificial service and humble leadership. The husband must not be a dictator who rules his spouse.

But if the “rule” is positive, then the husband’s action (“he shall rule over you”) is the proper response to her insubordination. The meaning would not denote domination but would be another way of saying that the man is to act as the head and leader of the human family. Despite her desire for domination, he should hold fast his God-given authority as a husband. His role is not one that subjugates the woman at all. Before the Fall she was God’s answer to the search of a “helper fit for” the man (Gen 2:20). God made her from the man and brought her to him (2:21–22), and the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (2:23a). After the judgments God administered, Adam named her Eve (4:20), an act that reinforced his headship.

Another reason the “rule” in Gen 3:16 may be positive is the connection in 4:7 with the terms “desire” and “rule”: the former was bad; the latter was good.<sup>11</sup> When God warned Cain about sin’s “desire” to rule him, he told Cain, “but you must rule over it.” That kind of “rule” is a good thing, a response to dominion that shouldn’t be exercised. Collins contends, “If we apply this to 3:16, we conclude that God describes a condition of human marriages that is all too familiar, namely, competition for control. The proper remedy is a return to the creational pattern of the man’s leadership—loving, not dominating.”<sup>12</sup>

If a good “rule” in Gen 3:16 is meant, then it is in response to the wife attempting to rule over her husband. Adam’s responsive “rule” would then be the righteous exercise of and adherence to his God-given role and responsibility as the husband. The woman may desire it, but he must not abdicate it. His rule, like that of the sun and the moon (1:18), upholds God’s good and wise design, keeping everything in proper orbit.

### Echoes of Genesis 1:28 in 3:17–19

To the man God said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:17–19).

Adam’s sentence is the fullest of the judgments, probably because he bore the greatest responsibility in heeding his wife’s advice instead of obeying God’s prior instructions.<sup>13</sup>

In God’s words to Adam we will see the promises of toilsome labor and eventual death.

#### *Toilsome Work*

After God made Adam from the ground (Gen 2:7), he put him in the garden to work it and keep it (2:15). In addition to Adam’s responsibilities there was a prohibition: every tree in the garden was for food except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:16–17).

In the judgments God pronounced, he reminded Adam that he substituted the voice of his wife for the divine command (Gen 3:17), thus “cursed is the ground because of you.” Adam’s responsibility to work was not rescinded, but the environment would be different, and the conditions would make the work toilsome. God sent Adam out of the garden to work the ground (3:23), and it would bring forth thorns and thistles (3:18a). Unlike the garden, the conditions outside Eden would not be the fruitful abundance he had once known. He would eat the plants of the field (3:18b), but he would eat them *in pain* (3:17). Since his offense involved eating, his punishment relates to eating as well.<sup>14</sup>

The aspect of pain is a link to the woman’s punishment. She would experience pain in childbearing, and he would experience pain in working the ground. Labor pains, then, are pronounced on both the man and woman in their respective responsibilities.

How does Gen 1:28 inform God’s words to

Adam and the curse on the ground? The ground is part of the realm the image-bearers were to rule. God blessed them and said to “subdue” the earth (1:28).<sup>15</sup> He explained that every seed-yielding plant was theirs for food (1:29). Adam, therefore, was to work the ground because such work was an exercise of dominion, and working the ground would yield food for sustenance. But now, after 3:17–19, the land resists man’s rule, evident by the thorns and thistles (3:18). Eating comes only after pain and toil and sweat (3:17b, 19a).

Generations later, Lamech held out hope that God would deliver his people from the pain associated with Adam’s disobedience (Gen 5:29). Without ever possessing a copy of Genesis, the generations between Adam and Lamech apparently passed down knowledge of God’s judgment on Adam. Lamech’s hope wasn’t that work would cease but that God would grant relief from its toilsome nature. “By disrupting the man’s relationship with the ground God ensured that humanity was not able to enjoy, like their creator, rest from labour.”<sup>16</sup>

We can contemplate the depth (even the desperation) of Lamech’s hope when we consider that he lived 777 years (Gen 5:31). More so, Adam lived 930 years (5:5). Their toilsome labor didn’t last for mere decades but for *centuries*. Adam (and the rest of those in the genealogy of Genesis 5) must have felt sometimes like their sweat would never stop, like their bodies would never drop.

The Preacher in Ecclesiastes expresses the vanity of wearisome work: “What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity” (Eccl 2:22–23). When God judged the blessing of labor, the words Adam heard extended to us all.

#### *Death in the Dust*

God told Adam that toilsome work would persist “all the days of your life” (Gen 3:17b). This confirms Adam’s mortal existence and prepares for the promise of its end. No matter how long we labor, the inevitable outcome is articulated in

God's last words to him: "for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (3:19b).

In one sense, death is a mercy because labor in a fallen world finally ceases. On the other hand, physical death is part of the promise in Gen 2:17 ("you shall surely die"). Death is judgment, and no amount of work, no degree of toil, can deliver us from the dust that awaits our return.

God's closing words of punishment are ironic when we recall the creation commission in Gen 1:28. Adam was to subdue the ground, but at the end of his mortal life the ground would overcome him. The dust is given dominion over the image-bearers.

No statement about death is spoken to Eve, but Adam acting as her (and our) representative ensures that her life will end in dust as well. Interestingly, Adam returns to the dust from which God made him, but Eve does not return to where she came from—Adam's side (cf. Gen 2:21–22). How would such a return even be possible? At death Adam's origin became his earthly destiny and that of all other image-bearers as well.

### Implications for Readers of Genesis

When Moses recorded the Torah for the Israelites, the punishments outlined in Gen 3:16–19 would be significant for understanding the frustrations experienced in the realms of childbearing, marriage, and work. This pericope in Scripture explains why difficulty and pain characterize the lives of subsequent generations, and it tells us why we die.

The readers of Genesis would see not only the punishments God pronounced, they would see how Gen 3:16–19 related to the blessing in 1:28. It would be clear that God did not undo his blessing when Adam and Eve sinned. Even after the flood destroyed all life on earth except those in the ark, God blessed Noah and his sons and said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (9:1).

But between the blessing's appearances in Gen 1:28 and 9:1, we see a scene in the garden and hear God's judgment on his blessing. The blessing is not dissolved, but it faces serious disruption. To the degree that God's blessing is realized, it will be in a broken world full of broken people.

### Conclusion

A theology of manhood and womanhood begins in Genesis. God blessed his image-bearers in Gen 1:28 and judged them in 3:16–19. In order to understand the nature of those judgments we must discern the echoes of the creation commission.<sup>17</sup> God's blessing now bears his judgment, which means our God-given roles and responsibilities are lived out in a post-Fall world, and they will not be fully manifested untainted by sin. "Adam's descendants...fail. Failure would continue until there arose a 'last Adam' who finally fulfilled the commission on behalf of humanity."<sup>18</sup>

Through the pains of childbirth the promised seed of the woman came into the world, he was steadfast in the ways the first Adam stumbled; he died with a crown of thorns on his head as a picture of the curse, and his resurrection proved that dust would not have dominion over him. He received the name above every name, and he possesses universal authority and rule. The restoration of all things has begun, and that is good news for manhood and womanhood.

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Greg Beale highlights the importance of Gen 1:28 when he says it "has more intertextual connections with the rest of Genesis and the remaining OT books than any other text in Gen. 1–11, and this is an initial pointer to it being the most formal thread from that initial section of Genesis being developed elsewhere in the OT" (*A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the New Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 58).

<sup>2</sup>According to Beale, "This functional aspect is likely the focus of what it means that Adam and Eve were created in God's image. Such a functional view of the image is suggested by images of gods in the ancient Near East, which neither represented the actual form of the god nor indicated primarily the attributes of the god (though this sometimes was included) but rather were the place through which the god manifested his presence and conveyed his blessings" (ibid., 30).

<sup>3</sup>Victor Hamilton summarizes the verbs like this: "God gives two assignments to the male and the female: procreation and dominion" (*The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* [New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 139).

<sup>4</sup>John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis* (Expositor's Bible Commentary; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 92.

<sup>5</sup>C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2006), 159 n 36.

<sup>6</sup>T. D. Alexander notes that Gen 3:16 affects the blessing in 1:28, but he says the "pronouncement reverses in part God's blessing that human beings should be fruitful and increase in number" (*From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* [2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002], 117). The



word “reverse” may give the wrong idea, however, since 6:1 records the multiplication of people and 9:1 reiterates the mandate to be fruitful and multiply. The blessing does not appear to be reversed, but it must now manifest in a broken world through broken people. Disruption rather than reversal appears to be the point.

<sup>7</sup>Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 93.

<sup>8</sup>Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (Word Biblical Commentary; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 81.

<sup>9</sup>Viewing the “rule” in Genesis as negative seems to be the standard interpretation of commentators. Examples are Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 93; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 201–02.

<sup>10</sup>Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 202.

<sup>11</sup>Collins points out that “rule over” does not in itself have the negative connotations of “dominate,” and that if “dominate” is the meaning, then it must be demonstrated from the context in which the word appears (*Genesis 1–4*, 159). Collins thinks the standard interpretation among commentators should be rejected in this case.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 160. Of Gen 4:7 Collins writes, “The ‘ruling’ is not a punishment but the necessary remedy” (160). When the words “desire” and “rule” in 4:7 are used to illuminate the use of “desire” and “rule” in 3:16, the parallel would seem to suggest that “rule” in 3:16 is the remedy and not an abuse of authority.

<sup>13</sup>Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>15</sup>Victor Hamilton suggests that “subdue” designates settlement and agriculture and is a semantic parallel to “till and keep the land” in 2:5, 15 (*The Book of Genesis*, 140).

<sup>16</sup>Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 117.

<sup>17</sup>For an argument showing how the blessing of Abraham answers point-by-point the curses pronounced in Gen 3:14–19, see James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 80–82; *idem*, “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 58 (2007): 253–73.

<sup>18</sup>Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 46.

## GENDER STUDIES IN REVIEW

**A Review of Claire Smith. *God's Good Design: What the Bible Really Says about Men and Women*. Kingsford, Australia: Mathias Media, 2012.**

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There are a host of books that exist on the topic of men and women's roles in the home and church. Some are written with the purpose of wrestling with difficult texts and dissecting biblical passages in the original languages. Some are written to answer more pragmatic questions, such as, "How are men and women to relate to each other in the home?" or "Can a woman work outside the home if she has children?" It is rare, though, to find a succinct resource that engages both of these discussions well.

One of the dangers in the dialogue of God's design for gender in the home and church is to divide the theological from the practical. In *God's Good Design*, Claire Smith lays down theological soil from which practical directives for gender roles and responsibilities spring forth. The book begins with a quick glance at "The Fine Dust of Feminism" (chapter 1). Graciously, Smith states, "I do not think that feminism is to blame for everything that is wrong with the world." This is a powerful statement, and one that allows for honest discussion between those on both sides of the gender debate. This book is not a treatise on who's to blame, but, rather, on how to live obediently in light of biblical directives.

Tackling a few of the most hotly debated and criticized texts on these issues, the first section of the book (chapters 2–4) centers upon what God's design for women within the church *should* reflect. With the example of Adam and Eve's fall into sin as a framework, the reader is able to trace how God's design, when thwarted, provides a slippery slope of role reversal. She points out that "the bat-

tle for women in our day is to accept wisdom in this [God's design] and be content with it, when our entire culture has taught us not to be" (37). Ultimately, a woman's obedience in issues of submission revolves around whether or not she believes that God's design really is better: better when culture says it's not, better when one's husband isn't leading well, and better when that woman's desire to lead is strong. Simply put, this is less a debate about Greek and Hebrew nuances and ultimately a matter of trust in God's wisdom.

In section II, Smith discusses complementary roles within the home. These chapters provide the bulk of the book's content, with Ephesians 5 as the starting point. She explains how the relationship between Christ and his bride is a compelling motivator for submission in that "Jesus Christ has taken a filthy naked, shameful social outcast, and washed her and clothed her and taken her in as His cherished bride" (113). When properly understood, the redemptive way Christ relates to his bride provides a compelling example—an example that can be mirrored within marriage itself.

Chapter 6, entitled "Won without a word," provides the reader with an astounding view of how submission in marriage, properly lived out, has far-reaching gospel impact. With 1 Peter 3 as the foundation, Smith explains that submission is not a mindless, robotic lifestyle or a license for slavery—both misunderstandings that can weave themselves into this discussion. Rather, "ordered relationships in marriage are not based on merit or status. They are based on God's good design for His equally

loved and equally adopted children” (146).

The reader then enters into a beautiful and helpful discussion in chapter 7 of the original man and woman as created in God’s image and how the order of creation displays a pattern for male headship. Then, recounting the fall of mankind into sin, Smith shows how God’s order for leadership was reversed (175–76). This picture of distorted leadership provides the framework for chapter 8, “The ultimate distortion” of abuse—a sad reality in our broken world, which is far from the sacrificial and loving example of Jesus Christ.

Smith ends section II with a picture of the “ideal” wife as portrayed in Proverbs 31 (chapter 9) and concludes the book with a final question: “But does it work?” (chapter 10). This latter question speaks to the practical concerns that many people have. Can sacrificial leadership and submissive spirits really, truly “work” these days? Can a marriage really be enriched and the gospel really be displayed by following these directives? According to Smith, the answer is yes, not because it is easy or always even a delight, but because faith in the goodness of God’s design should tame a woman’s desire to lead in ways she has not been created to lead. She summarizes: “It is an outworking of my belief that the canonical Scriptures are the Spirit-inspired word of God in which God reveals all we need to know for salvation and to know and please Him, and that therefore his written word has priority in deciding all matters of faith and life” (217). The beauty of *God’s Good Design* is not just that it deals with the honest issues of gender roles and marriage, not just that it is theologically rich and well written, although both of these things are true. The beauty of this resource, I believe, is that women at all stages of biblical understanding can benefit from its discussion. This resource would be well placed in the hands of a woman new to Christianity and hungry for a desire to understand her role in marriage. It would provide a theologically rich benefit to the woman who does not agree that God’s design is, in fact, good. And finally, it would be an excellent academic resource for students hungry to delve into these passages deeply. *God’s Good Design* is well researched and written,

thoroughly undergirded by Scripture, and gracious in discussing controversial topics.

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**A Review of Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen. *A Sword between the Sexes?*  
*C. S. Lewis and the Gender Debates*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010.**

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The September 8, 1947, issue of *TIME* magazine ran a cover story on C. S. Lewis—one he judged to be “ghastly,” mainly because it said he disliked women. He retorted that he never disliked any group of people *per se*, commenting, “I wouldn’t hang a dog on a journalist’s evidence myself.”<sup>1</sup>

Journalists aside, feminist Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen is prepared to hang the early Lewis as a misogynist on the evidence of his writings—particularly *That Hideous Strength*, where the Christ figure urges a woman to choose motherhood over an academic career, and *Mere Christianity*, where the husband is declared the better party to execute the family’s “foreign policy”:

[H]e always ought to be, and usually is, much more just to outsiders. A woman is primarily fighting for her own children against the rest of the world.... She is the special trustee of their interests. The function of the husband is to see that this natural preference is not given its head. He has the last word in order to protect other people from the intense family patriotism of the wife (29).

These and other passages drive Van Leeuwen to join Dorothy Sayers in the judgment that Lewis has written “‘shocking nonsense’ about women” (127). His sin, by Van Leeuwen’s account, is that he was an essentialist and a hierarchicalist; he said that men and women had significantly different natures and that the difference better suited the men to lead.

But Van Leeuwen is pleased to contend that Lewis “repudiated” this stance in later years, and

that, throughout his professional life, in his dealing with female students, colleagues, and visitors to his home, he was “a better man than his theories.” Even when he opposed the ordination of Anglican women on grounds of dissonance with God’s masculinity (“Priestesses in the Church?”), he granted that women were “no less capable than men of piety, zeal, learning, and whatever seem[ed] necessary for the pastoral office,” for a woman was not “necessarily or even probably less holy or less charitable or stupider than a man” (48).

But the smoking gun that showed he’d done in his old “misogynist” self appeared in *A Grief Observed*, after the loss of his spouse to cancer:

A good wife contains so many persons in herself.... What was [Joy] not to me? She was my daughter and my mother, my pupil and my teacher, my subject and my sovereign, and always, holding all these in solution, my trusty comrade, friend, shipmate, fellow soldier. My mistress, but at the same time all that any man friend (and I have had good ones) has ever been to me. Solomon calls his bride Sister. Could a woman be a complete wife unless, for a moment, in one particular mood, a man felt almost inclined to call her Brother? (10).

This poetic reflection accords nicely with an observation he offered in *The Discarded Image*: “There is, hidden or flaunted, a sword between the sexes [cf. the reviewed book’s title] till an entire marriage reconciles them” (56). Thus we see Lewis freed from his “previous tendencies toward



misogyny as a crude cover for the scars of an early-wounded, and in some ways insecure, man" (56), or so concludes Van Leeuwen, whose "formal training is in academic psychology" (13).

How did such a remarkable man as C. S. Lewis become so broken and confused in the first place? Van Leeuwen advances a variety of factors—the loss of his mother when he was nine, which, according to friend Ruth Pitter, "must have seemed like a black betrayal" (103); his youth in Edwardian times, an age which groomed girls "for adornment and domesticity, rather than economic self-sufficiency" (91); the contentiousness of Janie Moore, for whom he became a "lifelong fictive son" after the death of her real son in WWI (99, 102).

It was not surprising then that he got gender concepts wrong, especially since he was a bachelor into his 50s, working within the predominately male world of elite academic leisure. (You can hear the echo of those who claim the Pope has no business "pontificating" on contraception or the unmarried Bill Gothard on child-raising.) But his heart and language became more tender through the years as his understanding of and appreciation for women grew.

Van Leeuwen would have been wise to leave it at something like that, happy to get on base with a walk or a single. But she insists on swinging for the fences—and fails.

For one thing, she's determined to show that the findings of empirical psychology can trump traditional readings of the Bible, and she uses Lewis as a foil. The poor man was leery of the social sciences, regarding much of what they offered as "either intellectually vacuous or potentially dehumanizing" (164). Though he shows traces of Freud and Jung in his thinking (30), his bondage to Cartesian dualism kept him from appreciating the sort of "bell curve" and "standard deviation from the mean" work that Van Leeuwen favors. He just couldn't let go of the conviction that soul and body were radically different entities and that it was absurd to attach equally the label "science" both to the study of thoughts and synapses.

To help matters, Van Leeuwen devotes a chapter ("Men Are from Earth, Women Are from

Earth") to show how her science works effectively to embarrass the gender essentialists. She cites studies, traces refinements of those studies, and offers critiques of various studies to block whatever strategies the traditionalists might use to differentiate the sexes psychologically—whether through talk of averages, optimality, or thresholds. But the complexities she rehearses are dismaying, and the contradictory tides of thought she tracks can strengthen the impression that the social sciences are a very messy affair, in a different league from those disciplines served by Bernoulli and Mendel, Watson and Crick.

Granted, the table she supplies ("Some Effect Sizes ... from Various Meta-Analyses of Studies of Sex Difference") is mathematically crisp, with men at a 2.18 standard deviation over women on "throwing velocity" and at .87 on "desires many sex partners." I suppose those are simple enough to measure: Just watch men and women hurl baseballs and ask them about the promiscuity of their hearts (though even here, they might be prone to tweak their answers to sound good). But when the study comes to "moral reasoning," where women score somewhat higher on "'care' orientation" and men on "'justice' orientation," I have to ask, what counts as "care" and "justice"? (Even the chart puts these words in scare quotes.) Is "tough love" care? Does justice require that you turn your own child in to the police if you catch him shoplifting? Ethicists strive mightily over these notions, and I'm not confident that Van Leeuwen and her psychologist colleagues are equipped to analyze successfully shades of moral reasoning down to the ".28s" and the ".19s" (181).

Then there is the problem of assigning "negligibility" to difference-scores lower than .20. When Van Leeuwen seeks in the next chapter to demonstrate that Lewis was right regarding the evils of divorce, she draws on an even smaller, more negligible, difference between the well being of children from broken and unbroken homes (at least according to one study). But here, we must take the "negligible" difference seriously, for we need to distinguish "statistical significance" from "practical significance" (209–10). Accordingly, she says

that we should ignore “negligible” gender differences because they can be used for discrimination but should respond to the “negligible” child-impact differences because they can be used, like medical data (say, concerning the effects of second-hand smoke in the home), to protect kids from harm.

But what if the shoe were on the other foot? What if we found that grade-school teachers favored girls over boys because of “negligible” differences in their behavior patterns, the boys being slightly more inclined to squirm in the classroom or engage in “rough and tumble” on the playground? Would our anti-discrimination spirit drive us to count respect for that difference “practically significant”? And would our sense of justice reel at the sight of a judge who handled divorcees roughly despite psychologists’s testimony that the impact on their kids was “statistically negligible”? In other words, judgments of “negligibility” and “significance” can be more ideological than clinical, and Van Leeuwen’s priorities are clear.

Of course, the standard retort is *tu quoque*—“You, too.” After all, the biblical complementarian has her own priorities, which can color her assessment of the data. But this is not a matter of moral equivalence. For what one makes of the Bible is decisive, and, on this matter, Van Leeuwen falls behind.

She does speak of “biblical wisdom” and notes that, at Pentecost, Peter quotes Joel on women prophesying. But this book sits very lightly on the Bible when at all. And she seems squeamish over biblical inerrancy, which she stereotypes and marginalizes—in mocking the “biblical positivist” who said that “novels are all lies” (26); in assuring us that “the Bible is not primarily a ‘flat book’ of doctrines and rules but a cumulative, God-directed narrative whose successive acts ... comprise a continuing, cosmic drama in which all persons are players” (27); in disparaging a “docetic view of the Bible ... that ignores the human side of its composition and treats its inspiration almost as a matter of divine dictation by God” (257).

When Van Leeuwen does get to textual specifics, the results can be odd, as when she declares, “Lewis made no appeal to the Gospels to defend his theory of gender archetypes and gender hierarchy,

for the simple reason that there is nothing clearly there to draw on.” One would think she would at least take the trouble to comment on Jesus’ stipulation that God be called “Father” in the Lord’s Prayer, as well as on Jesus’ repeated use of the title, “Father” in his own prayer and teaching. But she is impatient with anything that smacks of a “patriarchal reading” (168), so attention to the Gospels’s ubiquitous “Father” talk may be irrelevant in her system.

In that connection, I wish she had also spent time on clearing up the gender “confusions” generated by such passages as 1 Cor 11:14–15 (on the matter of unisex hair styles), 1 Pet 3:7 (concerning the “weaker vessel”), and Proverbs 31 (which describes the ideal wife, not the ideal generic spouse). Of course, feminists have crafted their rejoinders, but it would have been natural and useful to see Van Leeuwen’s treatment of them in a book one endorser calls “magisterial.”

I think it might sharpen our view of her project to use biblical archaeology as an analogue. Biblical inerrantists appreciate the work of archaeologists, many of whom are themselves inerrantists. We celebrate discoveries that help bring the text to life—inscriptions, implements, ash-laden strata, etc. But when the professor returns from his dig to announce that David was a fiction or that nothing horrendous happened at Ai, the believer simply says, “Keep looking, you missed something.” We know the Bible is true, and if a journal article contradicts it, the journal article is wrong. Archaeology is good, but not so good as to put Scripture in doubt.

Similarly, the Christian has no use for psychological, sociological, or anthropological attempts to supplant or to qualify into triviality the biblical teaching on human nature and conduct. When Margaret Mead announced in *Coming of Age in Samoa* that adultery was innocuous and happily accommodated by these gentle islanders, the church didn’t have to rethink its ethic, apologizing for its puritanical hang-ups. The people of God just knew that she was confused and/or devious in her work, both of which proved to be the case with Mead.

On the other hand, when such social scientists as Paul Amato, Bruce Keith, Elizabeth Marquardt, and Andrew Cherlin, all of whom she cites, trace

the baleful effects of divorce on children, the Christian community can nod and say, “Surely they’re on to something.” This isn’t inconsistency; it’s deference to Scripture.

But Van Leeuwen risks the reverse. She thinks she knows what is “statistically significant,” and if the traditional reading of a passage contradicts her social science, then she tells the biblical exegete, “Keep looking, you missed something.” Alternatively, if she finds interpreters who serve her psychological conclusions (such as that gender differences are ephemeral), she will encourage them right along.

For Van Leeuwen, terms like “manliness” and “womanliness” are fingernails on the blackboard, and certainly, as Lewis once observed, talk of a “man’s man” and a “woman’s woman” can be off-putting (164). (After reading this section of the book in the Seoul airport, I saw a newsstand issue of *Esquire* bearing the cover question, “What is a man?” along with an article title, “How to be a Man.” I was frustrated to discover the inside text was in Korean, though I did recognize a photo of Clint Eastwood.) But to suggest that the psychological and expectational distinction between men and women is nothing more than a cultural construct is to cross a bridge too far.

Nevertheless, she storms on across, urging us to use “gender” more as a verb than as a noun; “gendering is something we are responsibly and flexibly called to do more than to be” (70). Furthermore, “God is not ‘for’ androgyny or ‘for’ gender complementarity. God is for just and loving relationships between men and women—and because of this, we may be called to ‘do gender’ differently at different times and in different places” (188).

Van Leeuwen goes on to say this will work itself out variously in different cultures, whether to serve “nomadic herding,” “nineteenth century family farming,” or life in the “twenty-first-century post-industrial city” (188–89).

At this point, she acknowledges that some would find her approach “too loose and relativistic” or susceptible to the “polymorphously perverse,” but she assures us that “experience does not allow us to make too many wrong turnings” (189).

Oh?

Then, she U-turns abruptly to announce, “Empirical social science and biblical wisdom have also begun to converge on other aspects of gender relations” (189)—which prove, in the next chapter, to be divorce and parenting. She made a similar move earlier in the book when she jumped from the awkward topic of Christ-male headship in Ephesians 5 to disputing God’s eternal headship over Christ, a matter she found more congenial.

Back to Van Leeuwen’s flirtation with the “polymorphously perverse.” I think she has set herself up to accommodate homosexuality. Elsewhere, she carefully hedges her language on the topic, as when she writes, “Egalitarians hope to defend themselves against accusations of moving toward what is perceived as an unbiblical acceptance of homosexuality” (170). So is this alleged moving simply a matter of perception? Or is there a properly “biblical acceptance of homosexuality”? What is she saying? And it is fair to ask whether she is really prepared to rebuke those who are “gendering” their way into same-sex relationships.

There is really no way to tell where one will end up when rejecting essentialism. Sartre pictured the possibilities when he cast existentialism against ancient notions of a given human nature, using the now-famous paper-cutter illustration. The tool’s “essence precedes its existence.” That is to say, its design is set before it appears on the office supply store shelf. But, in contrast, man comes into existence before his essence is established. It is his job to shape his nature, and in doing this, he is not answerable to any external guidelines or authorities, neither can he find comfort in them. This makes him responsible, but for what?

This is not a happy philosophical path to take on gender issues. For one thing, it forsakes the clear teaching of Rom 1:26–27, which speaks of *natural*, gender-specific sexuality. For another, it makes Jesus’ apocalyptic title “King of Kings” in Rev 19:16 seem arbitrary, pointlessly offensive, and/or a toss-up. It could have just as easily been “Queen of Queens,” since masculinity and femininity are just what we make of them, with nothing essential to it.

It is interesting to read Van Leeuwen’s episte-

mological caveats, and then follow her performance. She cautions, “Research in neither the biological nor the social sciences can resolve the nature/nurture controversy regarding gender-related psychological traits and behaviors in humans” (171). So “any conclusions about male and female ‘essences’—biological or metaphysical—are purely speculative” (174). Nevertheless, she goes right ahead and rejects essentialism, much as methodological naturalists in the sciences become metaphysical naturalists in their philosophy.

She cautions against the “The Drunk under the Lamp Post” syndrome (he dropped his keys outside the tavern up the block, but he is looking for them under the lamp post “because that’s where the light is”) (191), and argues that Lewis was something of a drunk in searching for the truth on gender in the light cast by classical, medieval, and Renaissance literature. But it is fair to say Van Leeuwen undertakes her own search in light of the feminist agenda and hermeneutic.

In its favor, the book is packed full of information, often in generous footnotes, including one in which Van Leeuwen expresses disappointment at N. T. Wright’s statement that Lewis’s assignment of the family’s “foreign policy” to the husband is “worth pondering deeply” (182). Along the way, the reader picks up such interesting tidbits as that Hannah Moore of the Clapham sect refused to encourage literacy among her poor Sunday School pupils (87); that Dorothy Sayers had a child out of wedlock (96); that Lewis never learned to drive (127), that he shared some of Chesterton’s and Belloc’s fondness of “distributivism”—“a kind of ‘third way’ between capitalism and socialism” (147), and that he was unknowingly indebted to Oxford colleague Helen Gardner for stepping aside when he reconsidered the offer of a chair at Cambridge (128).

The quotes can be arresting, too, as when Lewis observed, “The Greeks [sinned] in owning slaves and [in] their contempt for labor”; when, regarding apologetics, Lewis said, “[W]e expose ourselves to the recoil from our own shots; for if I may trust my personal experience, no doctrine is, for the moment, dimmer to the eye of faith than that which a man has just successfully defended”

(122); when Lewis Smedes explained, “It is simple to make an idol. Just slice one piece of reality off from the whole and expect miracles from it” (28); when Dorothy Sayers wrote (not very inspiringly, in my estimation), “I do not know what women *as* women want, but as human beings they want, my good men, exactly what you want yourselves: interesting occupation, reasonable freedom for their pleasures, and a sufficient emotional outlet” (106).

Van Leeuwen also provides some useful short takes on the philosophical writings of Thomas Kuhn, Karl Popper, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and G. E. M. Anscombe, as well as a look at competing schools of thought in the social sciences (the functionalists vs. the Marxists in sociology; the psychoanalysts vs. the behaviorists vs. the humanists in psychology). Her report on the Anscombe/Lewis Socratic Club debate is instructive.

The book supplies a useful collection of Lewis’s complementarian writings, and Van Leeuwen may unwittingly broaden the Lewis fan base in this connection, encouraging fresh or first-time reading of *The Four Loves*, *That Hideous Strength*, *The Great Divorce*, *Surprised by Joy*, and *Perelandra*, as well as *Mere Christianity*, which she finds particularly galling since it seems to place complementarianism among the Christian basics.

Throughout the book, Van Leeuwen would have done better to shy away from such rhetorical infelicities as false dichotomy (e.g., the consistent complementarian vs. the gentleman); argument from silence (e.g., “Lewis never suggested to her that [continuing to teach after becoming a mother] is an inappropriate choice” (118); and excessive hedging (e.g., “Lewis effectively retracted . . .” [29]; “there is evidence to suggest” [77]; “with a distinct nod toward” [61]).

After all is said and done, it is still not clear that Lewis “repudiated” his earlier complementarian, essentialist, hierarchical views. (John Steinbeck did not become a vegetarian when he wrote on the nutritional wonders of beans in *Tortilla Flat*; and no, I am not comparing women to beans.)

Of course, the big question is not whether Lewis moderated and even rejected his earlier views on women, but whether, if he did so, he did



the right thing. We are all familiar with pastors who became more liberal on one subject or another the older they got, and in some cases the change was disappointing; where they used to stand firm in the truth, they went wobbly. Perhaps a biblical teaching hit too close to home. Perhaps they just tired of conflict. All this is understandable, but it does not impact the truth of things. Neither does Van Leeuwen's biographical and psychological sketch work.

Early on, Van Leeuwen speaks of a colleague who lamented "the 3:16 bait-and-switch." Here, the preacher evangelizes the woman with John 3:16, only to drop Gen 3:16 on her ("your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you") once she is in the fold, victimizing her by his "crude proof texting" (32–33).

From what I read in *A Sword between the Sexes?*, the feminist offense may well extend to 2 Tim 3:16 ("All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness"); to 2 Pet 3:16 (which recognizes scriptural authority in Paul's writings); and perhaps to Jas 3:16 (which warns against envy and selfish ambition).

Hard words? Yes. But Van Leeuwen could use a taste of her own medicine.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This review originally appeared in *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 15, no. 3 (2011): 78–83. Reprinted with permission.

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**A Review of Ronald W. Pierce. *Partners in Marriage and Ministry*.  
Minneapolis: Christians for Biblical Equality, 2011.**

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In *Partners in Marriage and Ministry*, Ronald W. Pierce summarizes his convictions and concerns regarding the roles of men and women in the family and church. Calling for relationships marked by mutual partnership, Pierce hopes to persuade the lay audience at which the book is aimed to rethink the traditional complementarian biblical interpretations that call for male leadership in marriage and ministry. Pierce, longtime Professor of Bible and Theology at Biola University, former board member of Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE), and the co-editor of *Discovering Biblical Equality* (InterVarsity, 2004), has dedicated a significant portion of his academic and ministerial life to the egalitarian cause, and this book represents a brief summary of his thinking on the relevant biblical texts.

### **Summary**

The book is brief and concise and does not advance any new arguments or biblical interpretations. Everything in the book can be found in greater exegetical and explanatory detail in numerous egalitarian works by Pierce and others. Such is the intent of *Partners in Marriage and Ministry*. Pierce's goal is to summarize his theology of the roles of men and women in the church and family. Written for the lay person, and directed toward those who are curious about what the Bible teaches on male and female roles, it reads like a primer on egalitarian theology and biblical interpretation. *Partners in Marriage and Ministry* is comprised of an introduction and three major sections, "Partners from Creation to the Cross," "Partners in Marriage," and "Partners in Ministry." Each section ends with principles for application, and each chapter ends with discussion questions.

In the introduction, Pierce begins with some biography, chronicling his early commitment to male leadership in the home (which he describes as "baggage") before he "began to study the Bible in earnest regarding the topic," where he discovered that he could find "no evidence in Scripture that God intended for only one to lead and the other to follow" (11). His thesis is that "the unity and diversity shared by men and women should be characterized by mutual submission in the body of Christ—in both the church and the home" (11). The rest of the book seeks to advance that thesis.

As I mentioned earlier, the book, by design, does not advance any new theories, interpretations, or models. Rather, it summarizes Pierce's egalitarian interpretations. Since there is nothing new in the book, my summary will be brief.

In the three chapters that comprise the first major section, "Partners from Creation to the Cross," Pierce looks at Genesis 1–3, examples of women who held unique leadership or ministry roles in the Bible, and Galatians 3. In Chapter 1, consistent with egalitarian interpretation, Pierce finds no evidence of differentiation in roles between men and women prior to the fall. Patriarchy arises as the inevitable product of the introduction of sin in the world. Chapter 2 provides a summary of egalitarian appeals to women in Scripture. Pierce covers the examples of Deborah, the women who followed Jesus, and Junia and Adronicus. Each is offered as evidence that women were affirmed in the Bible as holding leadership and ministerial roles that are consistent with Pierce's egalitarian mutual partnership model. Pierce then turns to the egalitarian "Magna Carta," Gal 3:28, in chapter 3: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor

free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” For Pierce, full inclusion in the church and at the “table of fellowship” (42) entails full opportunity with no distinction in roles.

In the second major section, “Partners in Marriage,” Pierce addresses 1 Corinthians 7, Ephesians 5, and 1 Peter 3. In chapter 4, Pierce argues that Paul’s treatment of 1 Corinthians 7 teaches that marriage is to be characterized by “an equal sense of mutuality between men and women” (56). Pierce emphasizes that Paul’s only mention of authority in the context of marriage is when he speaks to issues related to sexual intimacy, namely, that neither spouse has authority over his or her body, but each is to yield that authority to the other. In chapter 5, Pierce believes that Paul’s teaching on the relationship between husband and wife must be understood in the context of Eph 5:28 where Paul calls for unilateral mutual submission. Pierce explains that “headship” in Ephesians 5 is best understood as “source of benefit for” (66). Therefore, Paul’s call on women to submit and his call on men to act as heads actually subverts the cultural understandings that were more authority-laden. In chapter 6, Pierce explains that, though the language of 1 Pet 3:1–7 is gender specific, it is not gender exclusive (73). The language of beauty and attractiveness directed toward wives and the language of treating women as weaker vessels directed toward husbands is to be equally applied by the opposite genders as well. Again, Pierce warns that the mandate for wives to submit to their husbands is to be understood in the context of Paul’s mandate for mutual submission in Ephesians 5.

Finally, in the third and final section, “Partners in Ministry,” Pierce looks at 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2. In chapter 7, Pierce concludes that the “headship” language of 1 Corinthians 11 is best understood as referring to “head” as “source” or “point of origin” (86), and that “praying and prophesying” refers to “leading public worship” and “preaching the gospel” respectively (91). It is true that Eve was made for and from Adam (1 Cor 11:8–9), but all subsequent men come from women so any priority of men over women is negated by that fact. With that in mind, Paul’s teaching in 1

Cor 11:2–16 is best understood to mean that men and women should dress with “appropriate gender markers” (90). Though Pierce is not sure what praying and prophesying with a sign of authority means, he is sure that the important aspect is that women were serving, with apostolic blessing, as preachers and worship leaders in the New Testament church. In chapter 8, Pierce goes into great detail on the religious-pluralistic context of Ephesus during the first century. He concludes that Paul’s prescriptions of men praying and women adorning themselves with love and good deeds, and his proscription of women teaching arise from specific historical issues (namely, the Ephesian men were more interested in arguing than in praying, while the Ephesian women were immodest and taught in a domineering way). The gender specificity is culturally relative. Therefore, Pierce writes that Paul’s prescriptions and proscription are just as apropos for both genders in all cultures—pray, be modest, and do not teach in a domineering manner. He concludes by answering the question of whether women ought to share equally in church leadership with an emphatic “Yes!” (102–03).

### Strengths

Obviously, Pierce had far more to say than what I covered in the preceding summary, but what I wrote captures the heart (I believe) of his arguments. The strength of the book is in its simple and brief presentation of the egalitarian position. It is not overly academic. One could read *Partners in Marriage and Ministry* in a single sitting and understand the egalitarian position and egalitarian interpretations of most contested biblical passages in the complementarian/egalitarian debate.

Further, it is apparent that Ronald Pierce loves Jesus Christ and has a genuine affection for the church. He writes in a gentle and graceful (though not always generous) manner. He recognizes the authority of Scripture and realizes that he must account for all the words of Scripture if he is to live faithfully before God. That does not mean that I believe that all of his interpretations and subsequent applications are faithful or beneficial, but I respect the fact that he tried to account for the

whole counsel of God, even the egalitarian “problem passages,” without resorting to ignoring biblical texts or accusing God’s word of being in error.

### Weaknesses

As I have mentioned, *Partners in Marriage and Ministry* does not advance any new arguments and so the interpretations, applications, logic and conclusions of the book have been critiqued and answered in many books and articles previously published. I would direct the reader to *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Crossway, 1991) and Tom Schreiner’s chapter in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (rev. ed.; Zondervan, 2005) as representative examples of decisive rebuttals of the claims put forward in Pierce’s book. Therefore, I do not feel the need to present an argument-by-argument critique of the book. Rather, I will limit my critique to those aspects of Pierce’s work that are more particular to his book.

First, the strength of the book, its conciseness, is also its greatest weakness. Pierce summarizes his position with minimal explanation and virtually no interaction with alternate treatments of the biblical texts. Each chapter is presented as the most reasonable way to read the biblical text, even though his interpretations are often not straightforward nor the simplest readings of the text (e.g., his teaching that there is no hint of male headship in Genesis 2; his assertion that Gal 3:28 teaches equality of role between male and female in the church, not just equality of redemptive standing; his argument that the authority over a spouse’s body regarding sexual intimacy establishes a paradigm of mutual submission for male-female interaction; etc.). Now I am sure that Pierce believes his interpretations are reasonable and correct. But the reality is that many of his teachings, including virtually all of his explanations of the egalitarian problem passages (e.g., 1 Timothy 2, 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Peter 3, etc.), are contested and do not enjoy the affirmation of church history. They are recent constructions that have only been proposed in the last fifty years. Recent origin does not make a biblical interpretation wrong, but the burden to argue and prove the innovative interpretation ought to lie with the exe-

getical pioneer. Pierce, by intentional design (not duplicity), chose not to bear that burden. Given that his target audience is the church layman, the result is that his readers could believe that the Biola professor has given the definitive word on the subject, when that is certainly not the case.

Second, throughout the book it is assumed that equality of essence mandates sameness of roles. That is, it would be impossible for God both to create male and female as equal image bearers and to designate specific roles based on gender. Authority differentiation and equality of essence are absolutely incompatible. But this is simply untrue. During his first advent the Son willingly submitted to the Father and will one day subject all things (including himself) to the Father (1 Cor 15:28). Yet he did so, does so, and will continue to do so as one who is absolutely equal to God in nature and essence. So, contrary to egalitarian assertions, subordination of roles is compatible with equality of essence. It is also an implicit and explicit assertion of the book that role differentiation inevitably leads to power struggles and strife. Pierce notes that the power struggle between men and women first appeared after the fall (23). No complementarian would disagree with this. Of course there were not coercive power struggles when sin was totally absent. Where Pierce errs is in his conclusion that since power struggles first occurred after the fall, then differentiation likewise first occurred after the fall. But this conclusion does not necessarily follow, the biblical text does not affirm the conclusion, and there is plenty of evidence for God-designed role differentiation prior to the fall (e.g., order of creation, Eve being made from and for Adam, Adam naming Eve, Adam being confronted for the sin of the first couple, etc.).

Finally, throughout his book, Pierce speaks of and celebrates the God-designed diversity between men and women (e.g., 17–20, 45–47). He denies that part of that diversity includes the God-ordained differentiation of roles and the created constitution and gifts to best fulfill those roles. Pierce offers little in the way of explanation of where the diversity actually lies, though he is quick to suggest that physical abuse of women and mari-



tal conflict is the result of male headship or patriarchy (e.g., 72, 80–81). One is left to wonder what it is that defines a man as a man and a woman as a woman (aside from man's unique ability to bring discord, I suppose). This is a critical issue given Pierce's thesis of mutual partnership. What is it that men bring as men and women bring as women to this mutual partnership? In one strange discussion of 1 Pet 3:7, where wives are described as the "weaker vessel," Pierce dismisses the passage with a silly anecdote demonstrating how women are, at least in one instance, stronger than men (74–75). What, then, did Peter mean? The passage has to mean something, yet Pierce offers only denials of female weakness on the basis of cultural relativity and particularity (i.e., men usually enjoyed positions of greater authority and power). Is there such a thing as masculinity and femininity? If so, what are they? Is there anything that a man is uniquely gifted and constructed to be and to do? Pierce offers no guidance on this. I do not think his thesis can bear the weight of the answer.

The book's title, *Partners in Marriage and Ministry*, promises much, for it is a biblical and crucial truth that God designed men and women for meaningful and complementary partnership in both the home and church. A vital and necessary aspect of that design includes male headship. This design is good and ought to be celebrated, for it is within that context that men can thrive as men of God and women can thrive as women of God to the glory of Christ and the multiplication and edification of Christ's church. But Pierce's book is based upon a denial of such design. For that reason, and the others that I have outlined, I can only recommend the book to a well-informed audience as a quick primer on egalitarian theology and biblical interpretations. But for those who are seriously wondering what the Bible has to say about male and female roles in marriage and ministry, they would be better served to look elsewhere.

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**A Review of Jim Henderson. *The Resignation of Eve:  
What if Adam's Rib Is No Longer Willing to Be the Church's Backbone?*  
Ventura, CA: Barna Books, 2012.**

**Courtney Reissig**

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We're often reminded that women make up more than half of those who attend church regularly. This is not surprising as women often outnumber men today in places like academia and other professional settings. So why doesn't the church reflect these numbers by advancing women in leadership positions? Even some of the more liberal Protestant denominations have fewer women than men filling the pulpits of larger congregations. Speaker, author, and producer Jim Henderson sees this as a big problem.<sup>1</sup>

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

### **Three Faces of Resignation**

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

Each chapter introduces a new woman on

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

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

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

### **Stories Over Scripture**

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

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

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

### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup>This review originally appeared on the Gospel Coalition website at [http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-reviews/review/the\\_resignation\\_of\\_eve](http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-reviews/review/the_resignation_of_eve). Reprinted with permission.

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**A Review of William and Aida Spencer and Steve and Celestia Tracy.**  
***Marriage at the Crossroads: Couples in Conversation about***  
***Discipleship, Gender Roles, Decisions Making and Intimacy.*** Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009.

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*Marriage at the Crossroads* by William and Aida Spencer and Steve and Celestia Tracy is well-described by its thorough subtitle as “Couples in Conversation About Discipleship, Gender Roles, Decision Making and Intimacy.” The book is an effort to take those topics and discuss them from the vantage points of two separate perspectives in the gender debate. The Spencers write on those topics from an egalitarian perspective, and the Tracys write from a, so-called, “soft complementarian” perspective (51).

The couples take turns providing their perspective on the issues listed in the sub-title above, and then they collaborate on an interactive review of each other’s treatment where they discuss areas of agreement and disagreement. The goal of such a dialogue is to “leave the polemics behind and strive to be fair, reasonable and irenic with each other’s view” (12). I love that spirit of fairness, reasonableness, and irenicism and so will try to replicate the format of agreement and disagreement used by the book’s authors.

With regard to agreement, there is much to celebrate in *Marriage at the Crossroads*. First, both couples agree that marriage is not about marriage, but about growing together as disciples of Jesus Christ. Some disagreement exists between the authors (and will exist between both sets of authors and complementarians) about how this truth gets fleshed out, but there is consensus that Jesus is the priority for marriage. This joint commitment is represented well by the Tracys, “Jesus jolts us by teaching us that the highest good isn’t our marital bliss, self-actualization, or happiness, but being a

faithful follower of Christ” (38).

Second, both couples make lengthy arguments about the importance of relational intimacy preceding sexual intimacy in a couple’s physical relationship. The authors note how strikingly similar were their respective treatments in this regard (182). In a sex-saturated culture where even Christians can be obsessed with the erotic, it is a happy reality that the Spencers and Tracys paint a beautiful picture of the sexual delights of marriage on the larger canvas of a close relationship outside the bedroom.

A final area of agreement and commendation is the beautiful accounts of marital affection that are sprinkled throughout the book. Both couples shared tender moments from their marriages that would leave any Christian rejoicing in the care demonstrated in those relationships, and eager to implement many of the things the Spencers and Tracys do in marriage to love and serve one another. Many important things are at stake in the church’s ongoing gender debate, but the glimpses of marriage from these two “non-complementarians” demonstrate that one of those issues is *not* the call to extend selfless care in the context of marriage. I read this book and repeatedly thanked God for the blessing of these two obviously happy couples.

In spite of these strengths, the book has numerous critical weaknesses, most of which are related to the couples’ understanding of authority in marriage. If I had more space I would mention four or five. Since I do not, I’ll point out two.

First, while there are some differences in the understanding of headship and authority that exist between the Tracys and Spencers (which will be



discussed below) both couples eschew any understanding of leadership that includes authority. In their combined reflections on the issue all four agree, “The husband and wife rule together as equals ([A principle which sets] the Tracys apart from many hierarchical nonegalitarians.) While there were obviously significant areas of disagreement regarding specific marital roles, both couples agreed that when roles are defined most broadly, they are identical for men and women” (138). Both couples are comfortable with leadership so long as it is of the passive variety (the Tracys talk of an “authority to love”), and when that leadership is shared between spouses. Whenever leadership becomes authoritative, and is centered on the husband, it is bad. Such an understanding of leadership is dismissed as “an authority of power,” “power-intensive,” “top-down,” “rigidly hierarchical,” “patriarchal,” and others of the usual suspects. This issue makes one wonder how much of a “crossroads” is really happening in the book. A truly complementarian marriage is not represented in this work. At the end of the book the authors invite three other couples to respond briefly to their chapters. Each of these couples shared broad agreement with the Spencers and Tracys on the nature of headship and authority. I find it truly fascinating (and frustrating!) that the authors did not want to include a single complementarian perspective in the book. It would have been very illuminating to have an authentically complementarian marriage represented—that is, a marriage full of service and self-sacrifice which also embraces an understanding of authority located in a husband’s role.

A second problem with the book concerns the puzzling treatment of headship provided by the Tracys. The Spencers’ understanding of headship is the typical treatment that egalitarians have served up for decades. Complementarians rightly disagree with their treatment of biblical texts, but at least their position is coherent. It is truly regrettable that the same cannot be said for the Tracys’ utterly confusing presentation of authority in marriage. For example, they say with the Spencers above, that couples share “rule” in the home, and they also argue that when headship focuses on a husband’s

authority a central aspect of the Trinity is lost (71) because the authority of the Father over the Son is not the “top-down hierarchical authority that is assumed and asserted by many Christian writers” (65). The Tracys believe that headship is not an “authority of power,” but an “authority of love” (66).

The problem arises when—sometimes on the same page as these assertions—the Tracys insist that active authority is taught in the Bible. For example they concede, with a great deal of nuance, that the Greek word for “head” typically denotes authority (64). They admit that the Father does have authority over the Son because Christ does nothing on his own authority, but only what his Father commands (65). The reason this kind of authority is not the kind the Tracys disapprove is because, in the case of the former example, *kephale* (“head”) has to do, not only with authority, but also protection (64). In the case of the latter example, the Father is not only in authority over the Son but empowers and honors him (65).

The confusing irony of the Tracys’ position is that in dealing with the concepts of authority and self-sacrifice in the biblical picture of headship they are just as wrong as any male chauvinist, but in equal and opposite ways. Chauvinists place more weight on the authority end of the continuum and are uncomfortable with giving honor to one under authority. The Tracys prioritize the call to honor those under authority and are uncomfortable with an exercise of authority for those called to lead. It is complementarians who have tried to occupy the balanced middle and argue that neither piece of biblical data is at odds with other. Instead they hold each in tension. Those in authority are called to exercise that authority and are also called to love, honor, and serve those under their authority. The Tracys’ “soft complementarianism” is more culturally acceptable, but is just as distorted as chauvinism. Both need to moderate their views and move towards complementarity.

When this is understood it demonstrates why another aspect of the Tracys’ work is so confusing. On the one hand, they critique complementarians throughout the chapter and seem, at times, to conflate that project with chauvinists who demean

women (e.g., 58–59, 61, 65). On the other hand, as they describe some elements of their own marriage it sounds every bit as complementarian as any board member of CBMW: Steve Tracy demonstrates tender sacrificial care to his wife (67, 68–69, 70), listens to his wife’s correction and input (132, note 43), takes responsibility to make the final decision when they disagree (132), and Celeste Tracy submits to this loving leadership (74, 132–33).

I honestly do not know if the Tracys are unaware of the well-documented complementarian call for husbands to possess benevolent authority, if (like more typical egalitarians) they do not believe such a position exists, if this is an overreaction to an unbiblical approach to headship in their own marriage (45), or if they are so concerned about abuses of headship that they adopt an unbiblical view in an attempt to correct it. Since the Tracys do not explain their motivations I shall not try to discern them. What I can say is that, apart from the strengths mentioned above, the true crossroads in this marriage book is an intersection of unbiblical and confusing notions of headship. The muddled picture that emerges ultimately fails to add biblical faithfulness and clarity to the church’s conversation about gender and 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 lifestyle 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 biblical 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.

# 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; Titus 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; Titus 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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