



**A Review of Andreas and Margaret Köstenberger.
*God's Design for Man and Woman:
A Biblical-Theological Survey.*
Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. 380 pp. \$22.99.**

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God has given me two compelling reasons to explore Andreas and Margaret Köstenberger's new book on biblical complementarianism: Emma and Sam. My children are too young to shape directly, but it's not too early for mommy and daddy to start praying and preparing. What will daddy say when Sam asks why girls are so different? What will mommy say when Emma asks about the two boys holding hands in school? What counsel will we give Emma when a young man is looking to date her, or when Sam prepares to propose?

Today the modern church lives in two-fold confusion. First, the evangelical church is confused about what the Bible teaches on manhood and womanhood. Some have strong convictions—one way or the other—while many avoid the topic for fear of entering into another divisive debate. But what are the consequences of punting on this? What happens when boys and girls, men and women within churches are confused about who they are as male and female? Second, the broader culture is confused, sometimes violently, on masculinity and femininity. Will the idea of gender be eventually deleted from our societal vocabulary? And if so, at what cost?

A UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION

Thankfully, in *God's Design for Man and Woman* Andreas and Margaret Köstenberger serve up the fresh, life-giving truth from the Word of God. They have written this book because they are convinced “it's vital to wrestle with our identity as men and women for the sake of healthy marriages, families, and churches, but more importantly, for the true expression of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the world” (14).

God's Design for Man and Woman is a unique contribution to the conversation in that its approach is biblical-theological. This means it traces the theme of manhood and womanhood across the canon,

from Genesis to Revelation. Many other important works, such as John Piper and Wayne Grudem's classic *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* address the topic from other angles (e.g., exegetical, theological/historical, and practical). But no book-length study before this one maps out Scripture's overarching pattern related to masculinity and femininity.

To be brief, the book is divided into eight chapters:

- God's Original Design and Its Corruption (Genesis 1-3)
- Patriarchs, Kings, Priests, and Prophets (Old Testament)
- What did Jesus do? (Gospels)
- What did the Early Church do? (Acts)
- Paul's Message to the Churches (First Ten Letters)
- Paul's Legacy (Letters to Timothy and Titus)
- The Rest of the Story (Other New Testament teaching)
- God's Design Lived Out Today

Each chapter is carefully organized, providing key points of summary at the outset, tables (55 in all) that highlight patterns, application and implication sections, and finally a resource list for further study. The book closes with three appendices that address the three waves of feminism, biblical hermeneutics, and special issues in interpreting gender passages.

CONTINUITY, DEVELOPMENT, AND APPLICATION

The Köstenbergers main argument is that the biblical narrative contains “a continuing thread pertaining to God's plan for man and woman” and that “this plan is beautiful, consistent, and good” (258). It's not like the Old Testament introduced teaching that was later trumped by the New Testament. While there is development, the New Testament continues and fulfills the traditions of the Old in the life and ministry of Jesus and his church.

So what is this “continuing thread” that is woven through the pages of scripture? Mining the first three chapters of Genesis leads us to two initial truths. First, man and woman are created in God's image, to be partners in subduing the earth and filling it with more image-bearers. And second, in this unique partnership God has designed man to lead and be ultimately responsible, while the woman is called to be his collaborator and supporter—what the Bible calls his “helper” (Gen 2:18, 20).

The Köstenbergers believe this two-fold complementarian confession is consistently upheld throughout the biblical story. Sin not only damaged God's image in humanity but put a curse upon the partnership between man and woman. The rest of the Old Testament documents how humanity's sin leads to polygamy, divorce, homosexuality, adultery, and the general misuse and abuse of gender roles. Still, in the face of sin's effect, the biblical pattern of male leadership continues with male kings and priests as the institutional and authoritative leaders of Israel.

God's Design for Man and Woman then examines the life and ministry of Jesus. God's Son clearly holds women in high regard. He taught, healed, freely interacted with, and received support from both men and women. Women were even the first witnesses of his resurrection. All this was certainly

stunning in a broader culture that deemed women as inferior! Still, Jesus affirmed the same husband-wife relationship taught in the Old Testament and appointed only men as apostles, the institutional and authoritative leaders of the Church. The Apostles continued the traditions of the Old Testament and Jesus, fleshing out what biblical manhood and womanhood look like within Christian marriage and the church.

My favorite part of *God's Design for Man and Woman* is the closing application chapter. In the midst of messy lives and sinful people, many wrestle with how this captivating vision of manhood and womanhood actually plays out. What does it look like in the nitty-gritty, day-to-day life of a Christian? The Köstenbergers give us keen wisdom and practical guidance without pulling punches or pressing beyond the text.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

My father-in-law recently commented on a sermon we heard together: "I liked what he said and I liked the way he said it!" The Köstenbergers get this right as well. They tackle this touchy subject with both exegetical rigor and a humble, irenic tone. They even say this is one of their goals in the introduction: "We're committed to go about exploring the topic with an open mind and to reach out in love and ministry while doing so" (14). How I wish more of our books, sermons, and conversations would be like this!

I enthusiastically commend this book for three reasons. First, it is a fresh study of a neglected topic within the evangelical world. Second, applying its teachings will help grow healthy families and churches. And third, Christian marriages and churches that embrace biblical complementarianism display the gospel more clearly to a watching world. Read, digest, teach, and most importantly apply this book!