



Complementarianism

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:27)

I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. (1 Tim 2:12-14)

THESIS: We believe that God has created men and women in His image to reflect His glory to the world. As equal image bearers, God has intended that men and women would show forth His glory in unique ways in their relationships to one another in the church and home, with leadership in those areas being entrusted uniquely to men. Ultimately and most gloriously, this is a reflection of God's relationship to Himself, where the Son, equal with Father, submits Himself to the Father. This position has traditionally been called "complementarianism," indicating that men and women are designed by God to complement one another and affirming the goodness of our differences.

WHAT IS AT STAKE: When we rigorously defend the *equality* of men and women we uphold the goodness of God's creation and treat both men and women alike as joint heirs of the grace of life. When we rigorously defend the God-ordained *differences* of men and women, we help the body of Christ and home to function the way God intends them to, reflecting God's glory to a watching world.

From the very outset we must affirm the equality and inter-dependence of men and women, both in creation in general and in the Church in particular. The account of God creating men and women is clear that they are both bearers of God's image (Gen 1:27); likewise, the first problem recorded in scripture is that Adam is alone, and God's solution is to provide Eve (Gen 2:18-15). This interdependence of men and women is also affirmed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12. The equality of men and women is further displayed within the Church (Gal 3:28).

However, the equality and inter-dependence of men and women does not mean there are no differences between them. In particular, scripture teaches that both within the church (1 Tim 2:11-3:7; Titus 1:5-9) and within the home (1 Cor 11:7-10; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Pet 3:1-7),

men and husbands are to bear the authority of leading. Further, these differences are part of the goodness of God's original, pre-fall created order, as 1 Timothy 2:13 makes clear.

In the church, leadership is particularly focused on teaching and shepherding the flock. It is to be a group of men who are responsible before God for the health of a local congregation and who are charged with the task of preaching and teaching God's Word, correcting, exhorting, and rebuking (2 Tim 4:1-5). In a more general sense, it could be said that elders, husbands, and fathers are uniquely charged by God for the spiritual welfare of those within the church and the home. In both the church and home, the leadership God has given to men is to be modeled after Christ: self-sacrificing love for the good of those entrusted to their care (Eph 5:25-32; 1 Pet 5:1-4).

These texts, which speak of submission in the church and home, must not be diluted, but it is necessary to remind ourselves that submission is neither a bad thing nor a sign of inequality. Three points should be kept in mind to help us understand this truth rightly. First, the role of elder within the church, which we believe is limited to men, is not better than any other role in the church. It is not just women who submit to men in the church, but men who submit to men (1 Pet 5:1-4; Heb 13:17). One of the great disservices we do within the church is to exalt a particular role, namely the pastor-elder, as being greater than others. This is clearly contrary to Scripture (1 Cor 12:4-7, 12-31; Eph 4:1-16).

Second, that men bear the authority of leading in the home and the church does not mean that women cannot be gifted as leaders and teachers, but that they will use those gifts in different roles. We rejoice in the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:4-10) and the gifting of all believers (1 Cor 12:4-11, 27-31). While women should not serve as pastors and elders, or be responsible for teaching or exercising spiritual oversight over men, the church should affirm and encourage women whom God has gifted to teach and lead, particularly in ministering to other women (Titus 2:3-5).

Third, and most importantly, it is precisely in this area that men and women together reflect the glory of God in a way that we cannot do apart. The equality and submission that exists between men and women is a reflection of God Himself, the Triune God, who eternally exists in three persons. The Son, true God of true God, equal to the Father, nevertheless submits to Him (John 1:1-4, 18; 4:34; 5:18-19, 36; 10:37-38; 14:10-11; 17:4; 1 Cor 15:24-28; Heb 1:3; 5:7-8). Paul explicitly draws this connection in 1 Corinthians 11:3. Complementarianism then, rather than diminishing women or exalting men, affirms that the two together, in our unique roles, show forth God's glory. Men and women alike, who all submit to God, learn of the glory of submission and the high calling of leadership as we see how God loves Himself (John 3:35; 5:19-23; 17:4-5) and His Church (Eph 5:22-33).

SO WHAT: At First Boynton it is our desire to help women and men glorify God by using the gifts that He has given them for the edification of the body. We believe that the best and most God-honoring way to do that, as God has revealed in Scripture and as a reflection of His nature, is when men lead within the church as elders and in the home as husbands and fathers, caring for those God has given them. We desire to see men trained up in the word of God who view serving as an elder to be a noble task and are challenged to step forward as leaders; who love their wives sacrificially and wash them in the word; who point their children to Christ in everything they do; and who help demonstrate that submission is a task every Christian is called to in various areas of our lives. Likewise, we desire to see women who are equipped to serve the church according to how God has gifted them; who are examples to younger women of what it means to be godly wives and mothers; and who rejoice in modeling Christ as they submit to their husbands and elders.

RECOMMENDED READING: Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, p. 51-66

Wayne Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*

John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*