

WE AFFIRM THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF GENDER ROLES

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We've touched on this subject a couple of already in the past out of necessity. It is amazing how quickly bad thinking on this subject can infiltrate the church. It seems that, with recent reported abuses in both the #MeToo and resultant #ChurchToo movements, Evangelicalism are more willing to compromise on our foundational principles in an attempt to show grace. So, there are new calls within both the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to "empower" women.

We've been going through the distinctives of Grace Bible Church, and want to understand gender roles because their presence or absence is certainly a distinguishing aspect of churches. To understand the discussion, there are two terms today that you should know. They're ten-dollar words, but once you see them explained, they shouldn't be too confusing. These words are egalitarianism and complementarianism.

Egalitarianism is from the French word *égal*, which means (and sounds a bit like) "equal." An egalitarian would rightly affirm the equality between men and women as bearers of the image of God but would also state that there are no role distinctions based on gender. That is, they believe in non-hierarchical relationships. (Some *feminist* relationships would be more about empowering women *specifically*.) Egalitarian relationships might hold that the sexes somehow complement one another, but would hold that neither party "rules" while the other "submits." It's a flattening of distinctives so that responsibilities can be shared equally between men and women based on ability.

Complementarianism is a relatively new term for a traditional or hierarchical view of the genders. It was coined by John Piper to move away from loaded terms like patriarchy (which we'll discuss in a little while). It's descriptive term capturing the relationship between men and women; *we're equal image bearers* but have *complementary* roles forming a complete unit. In other words, the sexes are equal in *essence* or *being* but distinct in *function* in both marriage and in the church.

There's quite a bit both camps can agree on. We can agree about our equality in Christ. We can also agree that the Bible exalted the view of women in the ancient world, affording them with rights and status absent in the Ancient Near East. Sadly, some rabbis and Christian leaders adopted the worldly views of women, a reminder of why Scripture should inform our views.

However, when we speak of roles, we're not speaking of essence but function. Some of these realities are apparent just from considering design – women can have babies, and men are better designed for hard work and defense. This speaks of a uniqueness between femininity and masculinity – one that, at least within marriage and the church, indicates respective roles of submission and of headship.

Understanding these two positions will help you interpret passages like the one we just read. We can then see what gender roles may exist in the church, in creation, and in the covenant of marriage. We will allow the flow of

this passage to take us to others, and then we'll even look at an overapplication of this teaching. Let's get started with the first two verses.

GENDER ROLES IN THE CHURCH (VV. 11-12)

A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

This is within the context of the local church, and Paul will go on to describe the qualifications of church leadership that we studied a few weeks ago. In the previous two verses, Paul speaks directly to women, directing them to modesty and good works. So, this passage should be considered in the context of Christian feminine virtue within the church.

As such, the instruction isn't for all times, as though women should be like servants who never speak up to a man. Paul is saying that she should receive instruction rather than give it, to submit under the authority of the elders (which the whole church is commanded to do in Hebrews 13:17). And if the language of v. 11 isn't clear, Paul specifically outlines two negative commands in regards to men in the church – women are not allowed to teach men *or* to exercise authority over them.

So, women must be excluded from the pulpit ministry, whether they would have been there pastorally or as teachers. Implicitly, this means that men bear the responsibility to step up and fulfill this role. In fact, this passage leads chapter three where, again, we read the description of church leadership. Notably, v. 2 says that an overseer or an elder must be “the husband of one wife,” i. e., a man. Not just any man can be a pastor, but neither can a woman.

As we might expect, egalitarianism would argue against this interpretation. “Consider the creation in Genesis 1,” someone might say. God commands both sexes to have dominion over the earth (v. 28) – so why draw a line now? We'd say that, just because there's no mention of role distinctions in Genesis 1, that doesn't mean that there aren't any (and we'll see in a minute what Paul sees the order of creation).

Still, the egalitarian would ask us to consider all the women in leadership roles throughout Scripture. Miriam was a prophetess, revealing God's Word (Ex 3:15). In Judges 4, we read about Deborah who is both a prophetess and a judge, giving orders to the Barak. Later, we read of Huldah, another prophetess (2 Chr 34:22ff). In the New Testament, the Lord's Spirit is poured out on both male and female (Acts 2:16). In Acts 18:24-26, you might remember a husband-wife team teaches Apollos, with the wife's name listed first (v. 26). In the greetings of Romans 16:1-15, Paul lists several women, which may indicate that they had positions of prominence or even leadership in the church. And, as a cherry on top, Galatians 3:28 says that there's neither male or female in Christ.

Convinced? Well, complementarians really have no problem with strong or influential women. We should note, though, that for all those examples, that there's still not one instance in Scripture where a woman is a pastor or elder (or even one of Christ's apostles). All that the Romans 16 list tells us is that Paul wants to send greetings to both men and women – and besides, it's heavy on the masculine mentions. And a fair reading of Galatians 3 teaches us about Christian salvation and justification, not church government.

If this was all we had in Scripture, perhaps we could honestly say the discussion could go either way. But Paul is abundantly clear here. “I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man.” He’s not just saying this for the sake of Ephesus; in 1 Corinthians 14:34, he says, “The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak.” His principle expressed a universal application – women were not allowed to teach or hold authority in Christian churches.

Some egalitarian might say, “Ah! But Paul did seem to allow a woman both to pray and to prophesy in church in 1 Corinthians 11:5!” In part, that verse says, “But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head.” But wait – is that as clear a repudiation as it first seems? Paul never actually gives permission in that chapter for women to speak in church; he doesn’t even mention gathering together until v. 20, when he’s talking about a different subject (the Lord’s Supper). His complaint is that women are doing this with their heads uncovered *like the men of their day would*, and says, “Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head” (v. 10). This was a cultural expression, but Paul calls them to obey it. Besides, as we saw, Paul clearly says just a few pages later “women are to keep silent in the churches.” A slam-dunk this is not.

In application, though, this might leave you wondering what a woman can *do* in church. I don’t know if it’s a mischaracterization, but some churches apparently tell woman that they can only serve in the nursery – obviously not correct. I was listening to a recent Q & A with Phil Johnson, and he stated it well: A woman can serve in any ministry within the church that a man can, with the exception of teaching or having authority over men. Of course, for those still not satisfied with this answer, he went on to say that a lot of men don’t belong in the pulpit ministry, either. In any event, on the whole, women (along with the other men in the congregation) should submit and receive God’s Word.

GENDER ROLES IN CREATION (VV. 13–14)

For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

Egalitarians will point to the fact that gender roles are the *result* of the curse. Again, Genesis 1:27 says God made both Adam and Eve in His image. In Genesis 2:18, God made woman to be a “helper” to man, but since that same word appears in Psalm 30:10 to speak of God as man’s “helper,” it doesn’t imply subservience. Moreover, since man and woman become one flesh in Genesis 2:22, it seems that there’s a lack of distinction in either being or role. It’s not until the Fall and the Genesis 3:16 curse that there’s any talk of man ruling over woman, so Christians should get back to the created order and drop role distinctions.

How does the Bible interpret Gn 1:26–28? We see here that Paul makes a specific appeal to the original, pre-fall creation. He notes a simple but profound reality: Adam “was first created, and then Eve.”

Paul uses the same argumentation that he uses in 1 Cor 11. In v.8, he writes, “For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man.” He’s not saying that man is superior to woman, because in vv. 11–12, he writes, “However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.”

Men and women are equal at creation, but they also had complementary roles. These two thoughts are present in v. 3, where Paul writes, “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.” The Son and the Father are clearly equal in essence but the Son is submissive (cf. Phil 2:5-11) and will be eternally subject to the Father (1 Cor 15:25-28). Just because a hierarchy existed in Adam and Eve’s relationship doesn’t mean that they were unequal or ununited.

Those roles were present at creation. God told Adam to eat of all the trees except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gn 2:16-17); Adam must have told Eve (3:2-3). When Adam and Eve fell, God came looking for Adam first (v. 8). Man was created to lead his family spiritually, and God seeks the man first in the end.

With that understanding, the problem indicated by Paul in 1 Timothy 2 wasn’t that Adam “was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression” (v. 14). In other words, she left from her place in the created order to engage the serpent’s lies, deciding on her own to eat and disobey God. Sometimes, pastors lay all the blame at Adam’s feet (and he bears much blame), but Eve chose to be in a vulnerable situation.

That is the background to her curse. In Genesis 3:16, we read “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” No one questions the first half of the curse, as it seems self-evident. Notice now, because she stepped out on her own, her desire will now be for her husband – the same terminology found a chapter later in Genesis 4:7, where sin’s “desire is for” Cain.

She will desire to take her husband’s role, but he will rule over her. What follows in human history is the drama of marriage. Men complain that their wives won’t submit. Wives complain that their husbands are domineering. We all want what God originally designed in marriage, but because of sin, we experience a lot of fighting. Thankfully, God calls us to a better way in Christ.

GENDER ROLES IN THE COVENANT OF MARRIAGE (V. 15)

But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

This verse has several interpretations from the past two millennia. Perhaps this was among those verses that Peter referenced in 2 Peter 3:16; in Paul’s letters are “some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.” We shouldn’t conclude, though, that the verse is unimportant or undiscernible.

The best way to interpret Scripture is by reading it in context. We must read it in its grammatical context, how it fits into the flow of the passage. We must also read it in its biblical context, allowing the doctrine of Scripture to supply meaning.

Andreas Köstenberger wrote an excellent article on this verse where he takes all of that into account. He writes that “all will be well with women who, unlike Eve, adhere to the domain assigned to them by God. Women, on the

other hand, who depart from their God-ordained roles in their lives become vulnerable to Satan, particularly if they assume permanent teaching or ruling functions in the local assembly.”¹

Consider this with what Paul writes in a couple of chapters. When dealing with the question of what to do about widows, Paul instructs Timothy in what women should do. He writes, “Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach” (5:14). (BTW, feminists hate this verse, as you might imagine.) The verse isn’t saying that a woman isn’t “fulfilled” until she’s married, popping out kids, or working inside home—but obviously, a woman is specially designed to bear kids and to feed them when they’re hungry, meaning that she’ll often need to be at home. When a woman is within her God-ordained role, she’s not vulnerable like Eve was. (We’ll talk about overapplication of this teaching in a moment.)

When we follow God-ordained roles in marriage, we’re overturning the Genesis 3:16 curse. Scripture says that wives are specifically called to be subject to their husbands (Eph 5:21), while husbands are told to sacrificially love their wives (v. 25). No more will the wife desire to usurp her husband, nor will he seek to domineer her. In fact, the wife is a picture of the church’s submission to Christ (v. 24)—and should submit “to their husbands in everything.” Similarly, rather than exercising an iron-fisted tyranny, men should be willing to serve their wives, like Christ bent down to wash His disciples’ feet.

If you think Paul is just a misogynist and therefore unreliable on the subject, you have a bigger problem than identifying gender roles. Even so, notice that Peter also commands wives to “be submissive to your own husbands” (1 Pt 3:1). In fact, her submission should be practiced to even unbelieving husbands! He looks later in Genesis, holding up Sarah as an example to godly women by saying, “Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord” (v. 6). Of course, rather than abuse this privilege, he says men should treat their wives as the weaker vessel (v. 7).

All of this can obviously be abused, which brings me to the final point.

GENDER ROLES INCORRECTLY APPLIED

Some women might wonder if this means that they are relegated to servant status. Feminism aside, there really are those men who think their wives should be quiet and making them a sandwich. Men misread Scripture and abuse their leadership roles.

Most of the books in my library frame the debate as being between egalitarian versus complementarian views. There is a third view emerging, however—**patriarchalism**. You may recognize the term *patriarchs*, as that is what we call Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because it’s descriptive of a man’s responsibility to his family, most of the books and journals I looked at this week, including *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* by Piper and Grudem, use the terms complementarianism and patriarchalism synonymously. That’s why, if you’ve ever gotten into a discussion on gender with an egalitarian or a feminist, you might have been called *patriarchal*.

¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, “[Ascertaining Women’s God-Ordained Roles: An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,](#)” ed. Craig A. Evans, *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, Vol. 7 (1997): 142-143.

Now, I said it was an emerging term because it *seems* to be taking on a different meaning today. Again, I'm not seeing many resources refer to it in this way, so I'm hesitant to give you a hard-and-fast definition. Even so, there are those who prefer the label *patriarchalism* or *biblical patriarchy* over the term complementarianism, and they do so to create a purposeful distinction.

I've seen the distinction described as two-point vs. three-point patriarchy. All our discussion until now has covered the points of church and family, but what some refer to as biblical patriarchy would say that gender roles even extend into the realm of government. Thus, because certain secular offices require the exercise of authority over men, a woman shouldn't in law enforcement, for instance.

This movement is small but wide-reaching. You'll find these views most commonly in churches with homeschoolers and family-integrated churches, a group that Doug Phillips and Doug Wilson started. I've found examples in Arminian and Calvinistic circles, Charismatic and Reformed churches, Presbyterian and Baptist pastors. Some of these teachers I'd still recommend with caution as they are less involved, while others I'd caution you to keep your distance.

For instance, one of the biggest names is Bill Gothard (ATI, IBLP), a mainstay in patriarchal circles for decades, until recent revelations of several inappropriate relationships became news. Another is Doug Phillips and Vision Forum, something you may have run across if you are homeschooling (Phillips' organization dissolved after he confessed to marital infidelity). Another author (and wife) popular in some otherwise solid churches are Michael and Debi Pearl, who wrote *To Train Up a Child-Child Training for the 21st Century*—a book advocating the breaking of a child's will and linked to fatal child abuse cases. We'll talk about other male authors in a moment.

Various women authors have also advocated forms of this view, with varying degrees of biblical accuracy. Mary Pride (*The Way Home: Beyond Feminism, Back to Reality* and various homeschooling resources), Stacey (and James) McDonald (*Your Sacred Calling*), Jennie Chancey (*Beautiful Womanhood/Ladies Against Feminism*), Anna and Elizabeth Botkin (*So Much More*), and Nancy DeMoss (*Revive Our Hearts*). These are a few of the recurring names.

What's wrong with this movement? Primarily, Scripture commands us to "learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other" (1 Cor 4:6). A lot of the principles we're about to see, while perhaps well-meaning on some level, go well beyond what God has commanded. Sometimes, we simply over-define and over-spiritualize. As Solomon says, "Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself?" (Ecc 7:16). If you will allow me to paint with a very broad brush, we will see several troubling pictures emerge.

First, **patriarchalism affirms the man as the absolute authority in both family and society**. Some critics have even taken to calling it patriocentric because of the unwavering authority granted to the husband and father. Phillip Landcaster (who published the now-defunct *Patriarch Magazine*) and (names that might surprise you) Voddie Baucham and RC Sproul Jr. all have compared the father's role to that of Christ as "prophet-priest-king." As such, the father becomes a representative of Christ for the family. This view is fraught with potential theological dangers.

Second, some within **patriarchalism would say that adult children still fall under the authority of the father**. Married male children should still obtain their father's permission on decisions affecting their own families. Grown

daughters must stay at home under the father's rule until their day of marriage. Kevin Swanson (who's since distanced himself from Doug Phillips) was instrumental in starting what's now called the stay-at-home-daughters movement. The Bible might have examples of this, but these are descriptive, not prescriptive texts.

Third, **patriarchalism believes the woman should not work outside the home**, based on Titus 2:5, 1 Tm 5:14. Some even go as far as to say that, just as Eve was Adam's helper, a woman should stay home and do whatever the husband is doing; a woman working outside the home becomes the helper of another man. It's even questionable in some minds as to whether a daughter should be allowed to obtain a college degree.

Now, these passages obviously mean a woman should take care of the home, but Scripture doesn't say that a woman *can't* work outside the home. In fact, several examples demonstrate they do, including the "Proverbs 31 Woman" who buys a field (Pv 31:16). If the kids and home is suffering for a woman's activities outside the home, or a woman is at home but a busybody, constantly on Facebook, she should of course revisit her priorities. Similarly, if the husband is forcing her to work outside the home to maintain a certain lifestyle, he should consider this. But there will be situations where a wife has to earn income, like if her husband is taking classes or is infirmed and unable to work. If there are no kids at home, it doesn't make sense that a woman would always be there. We must not go beyond what is written.

Fourth, **patriarchalism sometimes condemns the use of contraception**. Since Scripture says that God opens and closes the womb, and sending out Christian children into a lost culture can be likened to missions work, woman should joyfully look upon the prospect of years of pregnancy. Some of you may be familiar with the term "quiverfull;" the central passage for this comes from Psalm 127 which talks about the blessing of many children, likening them to a quiver full of arrows for a father's bow. In 1990, Rick and Jan Hess wrote *A Full Quiver: Family Planning and the Lordship of Christ*. Bill Gothard, a part of this movement, influenced the Duggar family (of "19 Kids and Counting" fame) and the Bates family ("Bringing Up Bates"), though they may distance themselves from the label. As you might imagine, this kind of teaching is also popular within the dominionist camp, where Christians believe their mandate to include conquering culture and could do so with a simple majority in numbers. Nowhere does God condemn family planning, however.

Fifth, **patriarchal homes are more authoritative than the local church**. For instance, the pastor is only allowed to address the father of the home (which has some wisdom, but it can be overdone). Families will also sit together for every function and never participate in age-segregated teachings. (Again, we would agree that it's important for the *whole* family to be together in worship, but we would not entirely agree with family-integrated churches.) In some extreme examples, the father of the home distributes communion to his family.

These are broad-brush strokes. Not everyone I've mentioned today holds to every view I mentioned. Still, we must be careful in how we apply these teachings.

CONCLUSION

There will be those who see inconsistency in our distancing ourselves from the modern patriarchal movement while holding to complementarianism. We would say that we are only trying to be biblically consistent, as is the

patriarchal movement, so there's bound to be overlap. Others will claim that, semantics aside, that anything less than an egalitarian position *is* patriarchy, at which point we will have to ask them what standard for knowing truth are they utilizing. We're presenting a counter-cultural proposition, so we're going to have detractors.

Still, Scripture gives us the proper parameters. Christian men shouldn't be ogres, and Christian women are not glorified servants. The Bible gives gender roles a high dignity and the basis for love so we can execute them to the glory of God. May we as a church and as individuals live as God has created us, fulfilling His Word by His grace.