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ON GENDER



WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS
ABOUT MEN AND
WOMEN—AND WHY
IT MATTERS

RENÉE SPROLES

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On Gender: What the Bible Says About Men and Women—and Why It Matters
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RENEW

RENEWING THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS
TO FUEL DISCIPLE MAKING



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Statement on Gender

We believe both men and women were created by God to equally reflect, in gendered ways, the nature and character of God in the world. In marriage, husbands and wives are to submit to one another, yet there are gender specific expressions: husbands model themselves in relationship with their wives after Jesus' sacrificial love for the church, and wives model themselves in relationship with their husbands after the church's willingness to follow Jesus. In the church, men and women serve as partners in the use of their gifts in ministry, while seeking to uphold New Testament norms, which teach that the Lead Pastor role in the gathered church and the elder role are for qualified men. The vision of the Bible is an equal partnership of men and women: in creation, in marriage, in salvation, in the gifts of the Spirit, and in the ministries of the church. These gifts are exercised in ways that honor gender as it's described in the Bible.

Preface

Gender is one of the most controversial topics in the church and our culture today, so writing a theological statement on such a hot-button issue can only be done with much fear and trembling. Because Renew.org desires to equip churches to find a third way, leaving the dead-end paths of traditionalism *and* theological liberalism, gender must be addressed. Both camps, the traditionalist and theologically liberal, have misused Scripture with regard to gender. Traditionalists wrongly apply Scripture and over-emphasize authority and submission, distorting the beautiful complementarianism God designed. On the other hand, theological liberals deny the perfection and authority of Scripture,¹ denying that “male and female personhood, with some corresponding role distinctions, is rooted in creation,” claiming the trajectory of Scripture is toward leveling gender-based distinctions.² Thus, for these reasons, I’ve written this book.

To be sure we’re all on the same page, let me define both positions:

- **Complementarianism:** Men and women are equal in the image of God while maintaining complementary differences in their roles in marriage and the church.
- **Egalitarianism:** Men and women are equal in the image of God and the standard for fulfilling a role in marriage and the church is gifting, not gender.

I uphold Renew.org's statement on gender and had the privilege of being one of the voices that helped craft it. What follows in this book is my perspective and my voice as I seek to faithfully and rightly explain what God tells us about gender in His Word.

—RENEE SPROLES

Laying the Groundwork

Before I begin, I'd like to lay the groundwork for this discussion.

Kingdom vs. Democracy

When I decide to trust and follow Jesus, I enter a *kingdom*, God's kingdom, not a democratic republic.³ The American Heritage Dictionary defines a republic as "a political order in which the supreme power lies in a body of citizens who are entitled to vote for officers and representatives responsible to them," while a democracy is "government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives." A kingdom, by contrast, is a "political or territorial unit ruled by a sovereign."⁴

A temptation for many Western Christians is to approach Scripture, as well as trusting and following Jesus, with a worldview informed by a lifetime of democracy: of holding those in power responsible and answerable to the people. But Jesus invites us to a kingdom, not a democratic republic. When I receive salvation, I willingly submit to the divine rule of God,

the father, and Jesus, his son.⁵ As a citizen of this heavenly kingdom, I must obey “the perfect law that gives freedom” (James 1:22-25) and can do so with the counsel of the Holy Spirit who lives inside of me (Rom. 8:5-11) and a continued posture of repentance when I sin (1 John 1:8-10). What is revealed in Scripture overrides my opinion, my inclinations, or what I wish were so. I don’t get to sing like Elsa in the popular children’s cartoon *Frozen*, “No right, no wrong, no rules for me, I’m free.”

Actually, Jesus asserts the opposite of Elsa’s claims. If we obey his teachings *then* we will know the truth *and* be free (John 8:31-32). The discipline of obedience precedes understanding and freedom. This includes obedience regarding sex and gender.

Biblical Theology

I have some friends who call themselves “Red-Letter Christians.” Like diners at a yummy buffet, they scan the books of the New Testament (no need for that bloody, warlike Old Testament full of rules and judgment) and craft a self-inspired theology from their favorite parts, mostly the words of Jesus (except for the times he talks about repentance or Hell). Although I love my friends and want God’s best for them, I disagree with this smorgasbord approach to theology. Because of the claims the Bible makes, I must take all of it as true and inspired or leave it.

Simply put, I believe that the Bible is the ultimate source of truth for salvation and holiness. I believe it contains a consistent and coherent theology in its various genera of works. As Christians, we must, in addition to using the Bible for praise, for moral instruction, for worldview framing, and for

comfort, use the Bible to build a theology. A mentor of mine once told me that biblical theology is simply the attempt to make sense of all of the parts of the Bible, like a puzzle, without leaving out any of the pieces or trimming them to make them to fit. Most people don't go to the Bible for theology, he said. Instead, their *practice* is their theology. That's why so many churchy people get upset when something in their worship service or favorite ministry changes. Although they cannot articulate it, by changing a practice, we're messing with their theology, that is, their ability to make sense of the full revelation of Scripture.

When I read the Bible, I find an innate coherency and cogency among the inspired authors. Indeed, the Bible often says things about itself that indicate its authors believe they are writing a coherent biblical theology (2 Tim. 3:15-16; Psa. 19:7ff). Therefore, the Bible is the best explanation for itself. To be clear, the New Testament regularly sees itself as interpreting the Old Testament (hundreds of times). The New Testament writers even compare themselves with other writers (2 Pet. 3:15). And the writers of the Bible claim to be quoting the words of the same God, hundreds and hundreds of times, indicating that, at least in some sense, they believe that they are all speaking of the same truths.⁶

Nature of Identity

Now, I'll move to the nature of identity. Tim Keller, author of *Making Sense of God*, says "to have an identity is to have something sustained that is true of you in every setting."⁷ All cultures participate in identity formation. To simplify, in ancient cultures and in many non-Western cultures today, identity is crafted by predominantly looking outward to fam-

ily, community, and even the spiritual realm. That is, identity is discovering who you are in relation to the whole. In modern Western secular cultures, the opposite is emphasized. We are told to look inward to discover our true selves, using our feelings as guides, detaching from our family, community, and religion if needed (à la Disney's *Mulan*). That is, identity is discovering who you are by affirming yourself.

Gospel and Identity

The Bible also speaks about our identity. It gives us the bad news before delivering the good news. Following the rebellion of Adam and Eve, the rippling consequences of sin are evident. “The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time” (Gen. 6:5). Later, Jeremiah chimes in, “The heart is deceitful above all else and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9) And the apostle Paul gives even more bad news. We “suppress the truth by our wickedness” and our thinking becomes “futile” (Rom. 1:18, 21).

If all my inclinations are evil, if my heart is deceitful, if my mind suppresses the truth, and if I think futile thoughts, how can I possibly look within myself for my true identity? How can I look to others for my identity since their hearts and minds are in the same condition? As an image bearer of God who is alienated from him, I am in dire straits. I need a new heart, a new spirit, *and* a new mind (Ezek. 36:26; Rom. 12:2).

And this is where the good news of the Gospel looks really good. Jesus can transform my life from my identity to my destiny. This radical identity transformation, which Scripture

calls righteousness, is by faith in Jesus from first to last (Rom. 1:17). The first act of faith is my repentance, and repentance, if it is anything at all, is a death. At baptism, I die to myself and rise again to live for Christ. I'm part of Jesus' kingdom now, and he has the right, as king, to tell me what is true and what is not. This Jesus saves me from a false and deadly identity and gives me a new one.⁸ This is very important to remember for a study on gender, since I found truths that, at first glance, made me cringe. (Yes, I admit that for many years I physically flinched at the reading of 1 Timothy 2!) Don't wait as long as I did. Wrestle with the truth God reveals about men and women. In Christ, gender relations are redeemed, and this is good news.

Contradicting Culture

If you will indulge me for just a bit more groundwork before we dig in, I'd like to show you a birds-eye view of the Bible entering various cultures, because God's word will inevitably clash at some points with *all* cultures. The clash for our moment in history in the West just happens to be gender and sex.

The kingdom of God and "the perfect law that gives freedom" have been at odds with cultural norms throughout all of history. For if culture is making something out of nothing, assigning meaning to things, then sinful humanity stamped with the image of God will get some things right and some things wrong. The right and the wrong will be different from culture to culture, so Scripture will affirm different truths and contradict different lies in each one. Yet, this is why Scripture is so compelling, so timeless. It is able to teach, instruct, contradict, and correct all people in all ages (2 Tim. 3:16).

Jana is one of my best friends from childhood, and she works tirelessly among Chinese university students in the United States, holding simple discovery Bible studies several nights a week, hosting meals in her home, and helping students acclimate to their new country for the next two years. Coming from an honor-shame culture, these Chinese students find the Bible's teaching on honesty very difficult to believe or obey. Paul's straightforward instructions to stop lying in Colossians 3:8-10 seem an unreasonable request when a simple lie could save face. Many students who put their faith in Jesus fail to stop lying right away, using their own reasoning to justify their behavior instead of submitting to God's truth. Besides, habits are hard to break.

Or consider the Middle East where the Bible's teaching on forgiveness seems ridiculous, even dishonorable. When Naseem Faheem, a guard at St. Mark's Cathedral in Egypt, died in a terrorist bomb attack while saving dozens of lives, his widow, a Coptic Christian, publicly offered forgiveness to the attacker. "I'm not angry at the one who did this. I'm telling him, 'May God forgive you, and we also forgive you.'" Twelve seconds of silence followed as TV anchor, Amr Adeeb, struggled to find words. "How great is this forgiveness you have! If it were my father, I could never say this." Forgiveness in this culture is a radical concept, but we Americans just love it along with the biblical concepts of grace and mercy.

So, when I find myself in modern Western culture where sex is considered everything on the one hand (you can't live a full life without it) and nothing on the other (it's just an appetite to be sated, like hunger), where equality for men and women means sameness, where marriage is disposable, and divorce ravages families, I should not be surprised that the Bible's teaching on sex, marriage, and gender relations seems

outdated, odd, irrelevant, or worse. This is one of my culture's idols, and the Bible contradicts the teaching I receive through TV, movies, magazines, and social media. If the Bible is all it claims, though, I am in mortal danger if I do not listen and obey.

Working Definitions

One last note before I begin. I want to provide some clarity around the words *sex* and *gender*. For years these two words were interchangeable. The 1828 edition of Webster's Dictionary defined gender as "a sex, male or female."¹⁰ Now, however, the working definitions in our culture have changed. A recent Stanford Medicine article on sex and gender makes the distinction that "sex is a biological trait that is determined by the specific sex chromosomes inherited from one's parents." While "gender, on the other hand, is socially, culturally and personally defined. It includes how individuals see themselves (gender identity), how others perceive them and expect them to behave (gender norms), and the interactions (gender relations) that they have with others."¹¹

If the Bible is all it claims to be (and it is), then it can tell us about our sex *and* our identity (gender or otherwise). The Bible is eminently practical. The Gospel of Jesus Christ clearly tells us who we are as dearly beloved children of God, but it doesn't stop there. It shows us how things should have been between men and women and points the way forward for gender relations in ways that promote human flourishing.

For the purposes of this book, I am using *sex* and *gender* interchangeably to describe the chromosome makeup, not cultural ideology, because Scripture does not make the distinctions that our culture does between the two.

With this in mind, let's take a journey through Scripture and see what it has to say about gender.

Introduction

I thought I was an egalitarian.

For all of my life, I have lived in two different worlds. The culture at my church, my Christian school, and my university, was what I would now describe as a rigid complementarianism. I grew up hearing things like “Men are the head of the home,” and “Men are supposed to lead women.” I never saw a single woman pray, read Scripture, or even speak in gatherings where men were present at church. Only male teachers or boys were allowed to participate in chapel at school, and a female teacher couldn’t pray aloud with another male in the room. As a child and even as a young adult, I lived in these worlds without question.

However, life inside my family was vastly different. A high-functioning team, my mom and dad started their own business out of their garage while raising three kids. My grandparents lived behind us on their farm, and they, too, complemented one another in ways that made them thrive. My mom and my grandmother became my mentors; to this day, they are some of the strongest women I have ever known. My predominant memories of my dad are of him empowering me, challenging me, and telling me again and again that I was smart, capable, and very, very loved.

At twenty-one I married a man who loves me to this day with a self-sacrificial fierceness and loyalty that is hard to

describe. He, too, has ministered to me with words of affirmation and backed them up with attention and action. Our mutual submission made us a high-functioning team, and we quickly found our rhythm as newlyweds, settling into a life of reciprocal admiration and devotion.

By my mid-twenties, the dissonance between my church life and my home life began to grow, and my list of questions grew too. *Why does my church believe that women can't read Scripture or pray with men around? Why are men the only ones baptizing people? Why are female teachers relegated to the children's ministry or women's ministry?* I fumed. I had been loved and empowered at home and insulted at church. Slowly, the resentment began to build. *If that is what complementarianism is, I thought, then I'm not that.*

Five years ago, I began working at the church where I was raised. Things hadn't changed much since I was ten years old, so this issue was bound to arise. Sure enough, when the question of whether or not a father could sit in the auditorium and hear his daughter participate in the fifth and sixth grade girls' annual worship service, I made my pronouncement amidst waves of resentment and anger: I'm an egalitarian.

Instead of instantly correcting or contradicting me, the senior minister at the church asked if he and I could have some conversations on gender. *Perfect, I thought. I'm happy to speak truth to power.* I began to really dig into what God tells us about gender in the Bible.

What I learned surprised me. I wasn't an egalitarian after all. I was using that word in response to the heavy-handed complementarianism in my schools and my church. Because the Bible is the Word of God and has unique and absolute authority in our lives, I had to take what I found and try my best to obey it. I couldn't conclude that Genesis 1-3 was

wrong; I couldn't conclude that Paul was wrong; I couldn't conclude that cultural changes superseded Scripture, and I couldn't conclude that my experience or anyone else's was more important than Scripture.

So what could I conclude? First of all, I could conclude that "the Lord's word is flawless" (Psa. 18:30). I could conclude that God designed gender with complementary beauty and power from the beginning. I could conclude that, when obeyed as described in Scripture, God's word on gender relationships and responsibilities is great news for both men *and* women. I could conclude that in my childhood home and in my marriage, what I had experienced was something I hadn't heard explained very often at all. It's what Scripture calls "headship" and "strong help."

This book is a summary of my study on gender. It isn't comprehensive, but it *will* cover some of the most important passages about women and men in the Bible. Within this book I use these basic principles to interpret Scripture.

- **Principle #1:** Figure out what Scripture meant to the original readers.¹² Historical and cultural context matters when understanding Scripture.
- **Principle #2:** Let the Bible explain itself. Scripture says things about itself that indicate the authors believe they are writing a coherent biblical theology,¹³ and the New Testament regularly interprets the Old Testament, which will be very helpful in this study.
- **Principle #3:** Figure out how I can obey it.¹⁴ Any time I ask, "Did God really say..." (Gen. 3:1) to wriggle out of obedience, I actively participate in Satan's tactics and in Adam and Eve's sin, elevating my own will over God's.¹⁵

We can have assurance in this task because if God can speak the heavens into existence, if he can breathe the stars into place, if he can gather the waters of the sea into jars (Psa. 33:6-7), then God can clearly communicate his will for us in a collection of writings by many authors over thousands of years. Not only this, but as followers of Jesus, the Holy Spirit teaches us, instructs us, and counsels us as we wrestle with understanding and obedience.

What follows in this book can be summarized this way:

Male and female reflect the image of God in complementary ways in life, in marriage, and in the Christian community.

Gender Reflects the Image of God in Life: The creation account shows male and female reflecting the image of God in similar *and* complementary ways, while the Old Testament gives hints about an order for relating to one another that is explained in the New Testament.

Gender Reflects the Image of God in Marriage: Mutual submission in the context of headship is a powerful testimony to the world about Christ and the church. When husbands serve as submissive heads who love their wives, nurture them, treat them with the honor due them as joint-heirs, and gently wash them in the purifying water of the Word, it is beautiful, true, and powerful. When women respect and love their husbands, act as their ally and strong help, and submissively help them navigate the thorns and thistles of the world, it is beautiful, true, and powerful.

Gender Reflects the Image of God in the Christian Community: When women serve in ministry, pray, teach, lead, and fellowship in ways that honor men and acknowledge their

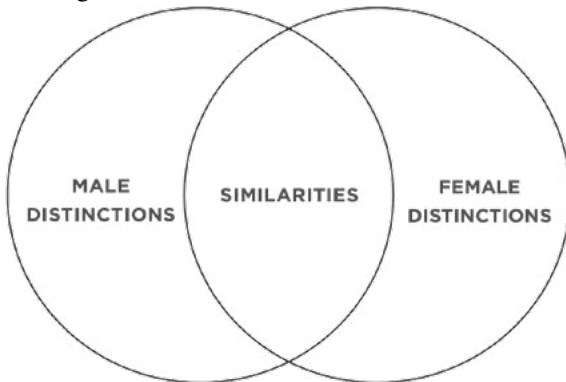
God-given responsibilities, it is beautiful, true, and powerful. In the same way, when men submissively serve in ways that honor women, when they acknowledge women's God-given gifts, when they exercise their God-given authority with Christ-like humility, the church becomes the most beautiful and loving place on earth for women. This, too, is beautiful, true, and powerful.

More than just a study on gender, though, this book is also an appeal. It's an appeal to let Scripture tell us who we are. Let God's Word surprise you, annoy you, correct you, or anger you. But don't dismiss it. Trust the eternal relevance and application available to us. Man is the head of woman. Woman is his strong help. When done right, such complementarianism is not only good for men and women, it is good for the world. It's our testimony, an in-the-flesh picture of Christ and the church, on display for all of the world to see.

Chapter 1

Gender Reflects the Image of God in Life

When I read Genesis 1-3, I see that gender matters to God. He could have made one gender to represent himself, but he didn't. He made two. We, male *and* female, are made in his image. I also find within this epic story that our imaging is like a Venn diagram: male and female reflect God's image in many of the same ways, and yet there are also distinctions between the genders that uniquely reflect the image of God.



Sadly, when sin enters the world, the relationship between the genders is broken. The image bearers of God find themselves in conflict from this point forward, struggling to represent God's nature as they are saddled by sin.

In this chapter, we'll explore Genesis to discover what it says about similarities and complementary differences in men and women. Then we'll look at how God deals with our sin, creating unique consequences for us.

- Filling and Subduing: Similarity in Gender
 - Both genders reflect the image of God by filling and subduing the earth.
- Relationship and Responsibility: Complementarity in Gender
 - The Genesis account gives hints about distinctions in authority and about our interdependence in relationship and responsibility.
- Sin and Consequences: Conflict in Gender
 - Because of sin, both genders experience lasting consequences in their unique spheres of influence as image bearers of God.

As the creation account in Genesis unfolds, expectation builds. From light and sky, to land and sea, from sun, moon, and stars, to animals, each adds to the world that the triune God is making for us. Finally, the culminating moment occurs. God creates humans. Genesis 1 gives an overview of the creation of males and females, while Genesis 2, like turning the page of a pop-up book, enlarges the story and gives us more details. In Genesis 3, we see the consequences of sin not only break man and woman's relationship with God, but also damage how they relate to one another.¹⁶

Filling and Subduing: Similarity in Gender

In our modern Western culture where men and women are considered equivalent, not just equal, Genesis 1 is an easy pill to swallow. The commission that God gives to both the man and the woman is the same. We are to bring order to God's good creation.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen. 1:26-28).

Both Genders Fill and Rule

One of the first things to notice here is the Hebrew words *tselem* and *demuth*, which are translated in most English Bibles as "image" and "likeness." It is not only mentioned here. The principle that men and women are made to reflect God is stated *five times* in the opening chapters of Genesis (1:26, 27; 5:1; 9:6).

The second thing to notice is the use of the word “they.” Both man *and* woman were made to do the things that reflect God’s image.

- Procreating
- Subduing the earth
- Ruling every living creature

So, “image” and “likeness” language is associated with humanity’s rule, male and female, over creation on God’s behalf. God made sure we’d need each other to fully represent him to the world. Both genders are required to “fill the earth” and create new life. Both genders are commissioned to subdue the earth and rule over all God’s creatures. We do this well when we tend God’s good creation in every way that builds up, honors, and fulfills his purpose for making it in the first place. We fill the earth through families. We create culture; we work; we build just governments and righteous nations. Every time we do these things, in big ways and small, we reflect the image of our good God.

Relationship and Responsibility: Complementarity in Gender

While the commission to fill, subdue, and rule in Genesis 1 highlights the similarities of male and female, further reading of Genesis will expose differences between the sexes. Chapter 2 reveals that male and female are not *interchangeable* in how they reflect the image of God.

The following sentence will be very unpopular in our modern Western culture, but Scripture affirms this truth again and again: There *are* differences between the sexes, and there *is* an order for how we relate to one another. This order emerges

in more detail as Scripture unfolds (its headship and strong help), but it starts here in Genesis. When we acknowledge our differences and fulfill our responsibilities to the opposite sex and the world, we reflect the image of God as he intended.

When someone asks if women are weaker than men, or smarter than men, or more easily frightened than men, or something like that, perhaps the best way to answer is this: women are weaker in some ways and men are weaker in some ways.

It is dangerous to put negative values on the so-called weaknesses that each of us has. God intends for all the “weaknesses” that characteristically belong to man to call forth and highlight woman’s strengths. And God intends for all the “weaknesses” that characteristically belong to woman to call forth and highlight man’s strengths.

Boasting in either sex as superior to the other is folly. Men and women, as God created us, are different in hundreds of ways.

Being created equally in the image of God means at least this: that when the so-called weakness and strength columns for manhood and for womanhood are added up, the value at the bottom is going to be the same for each. And when you take those two columns and put them on top of each other, God intends them to be the perfect complement to each other.¹⁷

The following complementary distinctions are found in Genesis 2. These distinctions sometimes indicate authority and sometimes indicate our interdependence. In other words, Genesis is much more than a story about who’s in charge or

Gender Reflects the Image of God in Life

who sins first; it's about how men and women were meant to work together to reflect God's image to the world within the order he established.

- God creates man from soil and woman comes from man.
- Man tends the garden and woman is strong help.
- God instructs man who instructs woman.
- Man names the animals and, later, woman.

God Creates Man from Soil and Woman Comes from Man

Noticeably, a male was made first from dust. (Insert joke here.) Just kidding! This is called primogeniture, which is a word describing the special rights and responsibilities of the firstborn.

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being...

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God

made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man,
and he brought her to the man.

The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is
united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no
shame. (Gen. 2:4-7, 20b-25)

“In the modern world in which egalitarian notions of humanity dominate, the order of creation would seem to make little difference for social roles. But that wouldn't have been the case for the original readers of Genesis, for whom primogeniture was a common feature of family life.”¹⁸ Remember, figuring out what Scripture meant to the original readers is principle #1 of interpretation. These ancient people would have seen man, not woman, as bearing the special rights and responsibilities of the firstborn.

Moving along to principle #2, the Bible explains itself further. In the Torah, God recognizes primogeniture, which requires fathers to give their firstborn sons a double portion of the inheritance, even if the son is by a wife the father doesn't love (Deut. 21:15-17). Centuries later, Paul notes that creation order still matters in the family of God. In his letter to the Corinthians he uses primogeniture to explain why women need a sign of authority on their heads to prophesy, writing that “...man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Cor. 11:8-9). And again, in his letter to Timothy,

Paul emphasizes creation order when giving instructions for appropriate conduct in worship. “For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim. 2:13). So creation order matters in gender roles and in our responsibilities.¹⁹

Woman being made from man also indicates an interdependence and connection between the sexes. How do we know this? Adam’s tribute to the woman in verse 23 is one hint: “Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” Even more insight is gained when I look to the New Testament for further explanation. Paul notes that even though woman came from man “...in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God” (1 Cor. 11:11-12). The authority of primogeniture is not one of disconnected power. God, the originator of all things, uses creation order to forever connect the sexes in relationship and responsibility.

Moving to principle #3, we have to figure out how to obey this teaching. I’ll get to that in chapters two and three.

Man Tends the Garden and Woman is Strong Help

The story unfolds as man tends the Garden of Eden. The work that he does reflects the image of God.

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it... The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him’” (Gen. 2:15, 18).

Man’s strength, care, and management of the garden reflect the image of God. Notice that in tending the garden, man was “to work it *and* take care of it” (emphasis mine).

Because almost no one in modern America farms anymore, we need a vivid picture of what it's like to tend a garden if we want to fully appreciate the implications of the first man's work. Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of the *Little House* series, wrote a regular column for a Missouri farm paper under the byline of her husband's name. Her description of how she and her husband tended their apple orchard really helped me understand the combination of strength, gentleness, and attention to detail needed to tend a piece of land so that it thrives.

I cleared enough land that winter on which to set out the trees from the nursery, broke it the next spring, and put in the trees after I had worked it as smooth as I could. The trees already set out were 25 feet apart in the rows and 32 feet between the rows, so I set the others the same way. I dug the holes for the trees large and deep, making the dirt fine in the bottom and mixing some wood ashes with it.

I handled the trees very carefully so as not to injure the roots and spread the roots out as nearly as possible in a natural manner when setting the trees. Fine dirt was put over the roots at first and pressed down firmly, then the dirt was shoveled in to fill the hole. Some more wood ashes were mixed with the dirt when it was being shoveled in. I did not hill the dirt up around the tree but left it a little cupping for conserving moisture. All trash was raked away, leaving it clean and smooth, and again I used some wood ashes, scattering them around the tree, but being careful that none touched it to injure the bark.

As I never allowed hunting on the farm, the quail were thick in the orchard and used to wallow and dust them-

selves like chickens in this fine dirt close to the tree. I wish this fact to be particularly noted in connection with the other fact that I had no borers in my trees for years.

I think that one thing that has made my orchard a success is that I took individual care of each tree. What that particular tree needed it got. Wife and I were so well acquainted with the trees that if I wished to mention one to her, I would say “that tree with the large branch to the south,” or “the tree that leans to the north,” etc. The tree that leaned was gently taught to stand straight so that the sun would not burn the bark.²⁰

Many men struggle to reflect the image of God by maintaining the balance between work and care. Having been a stay-at-home mom for 15 years, I was shocked when I entered the workforce in 2012. Many of the men around me worked 65, 75, even 90 hours a week, leaving precious little time for their families. Godly men reflect the image of God in their careers and their families. The Genesis account of man strikes a beautiful balance between work and care. Think about it. Preparation of the soil requires strength. Handling of the roots requires gentleness. Working the orchard season after season requires perseverance. Caring individually for each tree requires attention. Far from creating a gender stereotype of a manly man, the first man reflects the image of God in strength (work) *and* gentleness (care). Yet God says that it was not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). He needed help.

Now that we have a clearer picture of how man’s work of tending a garden reflects the image of God, we’ll turn to the words that God uses to describe woman: suitable helper. Using principles #1 and #2, I will define a couple of words, try to figure out what the original readers understood, and

look further in the Bible for explanation to unpack the idea of a “helper suitable for him.”

Suitable. The Hebrew word here is *kenegdo*.

The verbal form of *neged* means something like “to be face to face,” so as a noun the term means “something that is face-to-face with something else.” In Genesis 21:16 we find a form of *neged* when Hagar is described as going some distance away and sitting down “opposite” her son (Gen. 21:16).

The prefix *k* means “like” and the suffix *o* means “him” or “his.” Putting all of this together, the phrase means something akin to “like his opposite” or “over against him.”

Helper. This sounds like such a generic term. It brings to mind images of a maid, waitress, secretary, or even servant. But, if I let the Bible explain itself, I get a very different vision of what it means to be a woman. Far from the gender stereotype of a “girly girl,” Genesis shows us that woman is a complementary strength and help for man.

Ezer, the Hebrew word translated “helper,” is a noun that actually appears twenty-one times in the Old Testament. Here is the tally of its usage:

- Two times in reference to the first woman (Gen. 2:18, 10).
- Three times in reference to nations to whom Israel appealed for military support (Isa. 30:5; Ezek. 12:14; Dan. 11:34).
- Sixteen times in reference to God as our help (Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29; Psa. 20:2; 33:20, 70:5, 89:19, 115:9-11, 121:1-2, 124:8, 146:5; Hosea 13:9).

So, most of the time in Scripture, *ezer* is used to describe God as a helper. This is the same word used of the first woman (Gen. 2:18). This has startling implications for the intend-

ed relationship between men and women. Let's look at some of these *ezer* descriptions of God to better understand what kind of help is being described.

- Moses names one of his sons Eliezer because “My Father’s God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh” (Exod. 18:4).
- “We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield” (Psa. 33:20).
- David asks for help. “But as for me, I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; Lord, do not delay” (Psa. 70:5).
- God as our help is a refrain of a song. “All you Israelites, trust in the Lord—He is their help and shield...” (Psa. 115:9-11).
- God as *ezer* is the well-known first line of a psalm. “I lift up my eyes to the mountains—Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth” (Psa. 121:1-2).
- God indicts Israel because they turned against him, their help. “You are destroyed, Israel, because you are against me, against your helper” (Hosea 13:9).

In the Bible God, as *ezer*, helps Israel in many ways. He defends them from their enemies again and again. He shields and protects them from foreign armies and plagues. He sends his angel armies to fight for them. He empowers them to fight. He rescues them from danger, comforts them when they are weary, and helps the orphan, widow, and oppressed. Frankly, I was surprised this word was chosen for woman, not man, until I put the other word, *kenegdo*, alongside it.

Looking at the Scriptures and the Hebrew definitions, the phrase *ezer kenegdo* means something like “a strong helper

corresponding to or opposite of him.” Eve was made for Adam as a strong helper *opposite* him. The sexes have complementary strengths. Can women be shields? Swords? Deliverers? Of course! Every woman who takes up the shield of faith, speaking God’s promises to her husband, praying for him, and looking to Christ, helps extinguish Satan’s fiery arrows of self-doubt, world-weariness, and fear of failure. Every mother who buckles up the belt of truth and wields the sword of the Spirit (the Word) can powerfully disciple her children, speak truth to her husband, and empower them to grow strong and bold in the Lord. *Ezer* women wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. We know the word, pray the word, and speak the word in love to our husbands, children, and friends. While Satan determines to devour the people in our lives, wise women buckle up those belts of truth, stay alert, and keep on praying.²¹ Open your Bibles and get inspired to live out the image of God, *ezer* women! With the shield of faith in place, we can obey God in holy fear like Noah, follow God into unknown cities like Abraham, face ridicule, shelter the alien, and believe God for all things for our children, including miracles, to name a few.²²

God Instructs Man Who Instructs Woman

This section of the Genesis account deals with delegated authority. God instructs the man who instructs the woman. Looking in Scripture, I find that creation order matters for who instructs, how they instruct, and what they instruct.

And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” ...The woman said

to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die’” (Gen. 2:16-17, 3:3).

Throughout Scripture God delegates the authority of instruction. While this authority is not an exclusively male task in the Bible, there are some noticeable gender distinctions. Priests in the Old Testament were responsible for instruction, and they were exclusively male.²³ The original readers likely would have seen man in this role.

For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction—because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty (Mal. 2:7).

Prophets, however, also instructed rulers and people with authority and accountability, and they were male *and* female.²⁴ Some female prophets of note are Miriam the sister of Moses (Exod. 15:20), Deborah the warrior and judge (Judg. 4:4), Huldah the prophet (2 Kings 22:14), “the prophetess” (Isa. 8:3), and Nehemiah’s nemesis Noadiah (Neh. 6:14).

Looking to the New Testament, we see men *and* women prophesying, praying, *and* teaching. Creation order doesn’t eliminate women from all teaching in the church. When both men and women are prophesying in the Corinthian church, Paul doesn’t tell the women to stop altogether. Instead, he corrects them on how women pray and prophesy and then tells them why: women must have a sign of authority on their heads, he says, because of Genesis 2; it reflects the creation order. Man was not created for woman, but woman was created for man. (1 Cor 11:7-12) We also see women prohibited from a certain kind of instruction in 1 Timothy: it’s what

Paul calls “authoritative.” Paul’s reasoning for this prohibition also comes from the creation order (1 Tim 2:11-15). We’ll use the principles of interpretation in Chapter 3 to see what this meant to the original churches and how we can obey it today. For now, it’s enough to recognize that delegated authority applies to men and women.

Delegated authority carries with it accountability. Let me tell you a story to help explain what I mean. My husband, David, and I occasionally delegated the authority of instruction to our daughter Emma. When she was about 12 years old, we began to leave her and her younger brother, Houston, home alone for an hour or two, seeing how they’d do without a sitter. Before leaving, David and I would talk to Emma, clearly delegating responsibility to her and teaching her the house rules that were to be enforced while we were away. She had to be sure her younger brother knew (and followed!) what was expected of them. If they disobeyed us, both would be guilty, but Emma would be doubly guilty. Why? Because she not only broke the house rules, but she also failed to help her brother understand and follow them.

This delegated responsibility is reflected after the man and woman sin, when God holds *Adam* particularly responsible for what both he and Eve did. Again, let me emphasize that the accountability that accompanies Adam’s delegated authority does not mean that Eve could have none. Indeed, the commission to fill, subdue and rule the earth, as well as 1 Corinthians and other New Testament passages confirm otherwise. However, there is a clear order of authority in the Genesis 2 passage that should be recognized and obeyed.

Man Names the Animals and Woman

When we found out we were expecting our daughter in 1997, David and I promptly drove to Barnes and Noble to buy a baby name book. The responsibility of naming another human washed over us like a wave day after day. I was giddy with the anticipation and privilege of it all. Considering the name Emma Jane, Emma because we liked it and Jane after my mom, a friend from Nigeria told me that in his country the name Emma meant “the one who is loved.” From that point forward, we were hooked. “Emma” would reflect our love for this child and “Jane Sproles” would reflect our family relationships. Names matter.

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals (Gen. 2:18-20a).

In this portion of the creation story, we see Adam gets the privilege and responsibility of naming the animals. Again, the Genesis story is subtle, and using Scripture as the best commentary on itself, we have to look elsewhere in Scripture to discover the importance of naming.

- God told Hagar to name her son Ishmael. (Gen. 16:11)
- Hagar then named God, “You are the God who sees me.” (Gen. 16:13)

- Isaac and Rebekah named their firstborn son Esau. (Gen. 25:25)
- Pharaoh's daughter named the rescued baby Moses. (Exod. 2:10)
- Samson's mother, though nameless in the Bible, named Samson. (Judg. 13:24)
- Hannah named her son Samuel because God answered her prayer. (1 Sam. 1:20)

In these verses and others, we see fathers, mothers, and God all naming people, so this part of the Genesis account seems less about the authority of who's in charge and more about the *relationship and responsibility* between the namer and the one named. Naming has meaning and importance, so much so that Jacob gets his name changed to Israel when God is about to create a nation for himself (Gen. 35:9-13). Because naming is unique to Adam in Genesis 1-3, we see that Adam has a distinctive relationship and responsibility to creation and his wife.

What is this unique relationship and responsibility? It's one of great intimacy, for marriage unites a man and woman socially, emotionally, physically, financially, and spiritually. Woman is called bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh (Gen. 2:23). "In the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman" (1 Cor. 11:11). She is a fundamental part of him, and her name reflects that: "...she shall be called 'woman' for she was taken out of man" (Gen. 2:23b). Theirs will be what Scripture calls a mystery: a one-flesh relationship, uniting the two distinct genders in marriage, eventually reflecting Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32).

Summary

Similarity: Both genders were created to fill the earth and subdue it.

Complementarity: God uses the work of tending a garden and caring for animals to illustrate man's responsibilities. This requires a combination of strength and gentleness. Alternatively, God uses *ezer* (strong help) to describe Eve's responsibilities. She is his complementary strength and help to fill and subdue the earth.

Order: We find an order emerging in Genesis, which will be explained later in Scripture. God creates Adam first, gives him the command, and gives him the privilege of naming the animals and his wife. However, the word "rule" which is used a lot in churches to describe Adam's relationship to Eve (and hierarchy in marriage and the church), is used only to describe how man and woman rule over the earth (Gen. 1:26).

Sin and Consequences: Conflict in Gender

Ideally, men and women like Adam and Eve would have continued their lives in paradise, loving and helping one another care for creation while living in communion with God. The genders would each perfectly reflect parts of God's nature, just as all creation points to God (Rom. 1). Just imagine what the world could have looked like without sin: men and women thriving in highly functioning teams, complementing one another with their strengths and, therefore, mitigating one another's weaknesses. Unfortunately, the temptation to be like God is too much for them, and sin enters the world, sabotaging gender relations from that day forward.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (Gen. 3:1-7)

Man's Sin

Adam, as Eve's husband, should have spoken up. He violated the image of God when he was *with Eve* and said nothing about God's command. Instead of loving Eve by telling her the truth, he remained silent (Gen 3:17). Echoes of this are in Ephesians 5 where Paul explains that Christ loved the church and washed us “with water through the word.” We also see in John 17 that Jesus prays for the sanctification of his disciples by the truth of God's word. Instead of loving her and

preserving her with the truth, Adam let the serpent and his lies deceive her. Either from passivity or pure rebellion, Adam participated in this treason against God and violated his “one flesh” union with his wife. Many men still exhibit these sins of Adam.

Woman's Sin

Eve, as Adam's *ezer kenegdo*, should have been his strong ally. Instead of coming alongside him in strength, she made him vulnerable to sin. Instead of empowering him, she weakened him. Instead of rescuing him from danger, she brought danger right to his doorstep, so to speak, handing him the fruit. From deceit and pride, she also violates their “one flesh” union. Many women still exhibit these sins of Eve.

Let the Blame-Shifting Begin

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Gen. 3:8-13).

Like dominoes lined up in a row, sin begins a chain reaction of deceit, rebellion, and blame shifting. When my husband and I were raising our two kids, we told them again and again that no one sins in a vacuum. Choices, good and bad, have consequences, often far-reaching ones, affecting people and things you'd never imagine. This principle is vividly illustrated in the Garden of Eden. Ever since man and woman violated God's one command, the relationship between the sexes has been strained. All of us feel the consequences of their sin. As the story unfolds, we find that men and women will have trouble from this point forward.

Consequences of Sin for Genders

My family has been a sounding board in the writing of this book, indulging me in conversation at all hours of the day and night. One Saturday morning my son, Houston, said something to me that resonated with Genesis 3. “Good consequences hit you where it hurts.” That's a brilliant summary of the consequences God gives to man and woman, in my opinion. When Houston was a toddler, if he didn't pick up his toys when I asked, I didn't make him eat broccoli as a punishment or consequence. I would pick up those scattered treasures, store them in a box, and tuck them up on his closet shelf where he could see them. The pain of losing his toys and the visual reminder of the box on a shelf spurred him to do better next time. As humans, we fail to offer the correct

consequences each time our children disobey: sometimes we overreact and sometimes we underreact. God, the perfect father, however, uses just the right consequences to “hit each gender where it hurts” in relationships and in work.

What God Says to Woman

To the woman he said,
“I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
with painful labor you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you” (Gen. 3:16).

Woman's Consequences

The consequences of painful labor and a husband's rule hit women where it hurts: relationships. Now, before you get irritated or think I'm promoting gender stereotypes, hear me out. Scripture does not prescribe a traditional division of labor (with women cooking and raising babies while the men are working and mowing the yard), but it does highlight, again and again, that a woman's primary sphere of activity is in relationships. Andreas Köstenberger notes, “There is flexibility within the basic framework [for husband and wife], and each couple has unique circumstances in which to work out God's design and plan for them personally, both leader and partner. The biblical pattern is loving, self-sacrificial complementarity where the couple partners in conscious pursuit of God's mission.”²⁵

Women's brains and bodies reflect our skill in relationships. The structural elements in a woman's brain are able to “absorb more sensorial and emotive information than males... [and women have] verbal centers on both sides of

the brain...” Males, on the other hand, “tend to have verbal centers on only the left hemisphere... but also, often, have less connectivity between their word centers and their memories or feelings.”²⁶ Biologically, a woman’s body is specially designed to carry a child and give birth. Like that box of toys on a shelf, every time we note the painful toil of childbirth, we’re reminded of the consequence of sin.

As Paul Harvey would say, thus begins “the rest of the story.” God tells woman that the reality of her relationship with her husband will be characterized by her “desire” and his “rule.” This consequence also hits women where it hurts. We’ll gain more insight and understanding by defining the words “desire” and “rule” and seeing how they play out in marriages today.

Desire. The Hebrew word *teshuqah* means “desire” and is used again in the very next chapter of Genesis as well as Song of Solomon.

- “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it” (Gen. 4:7).
- The husband’s desire is for his wife. “I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me” (Song of Sol. 7:10).

Bible scholars with much more experience and education than I are divided as to whether this *teshuqah* means a “morbid longing for” or the want to “possess, control, and dominate.” In either understanding, the desire is disordered and sinful. Wendy Alsup explains morbid longing like this: “The woman’s root problem is that, even though childbirth is painful and the man rules her, she still has a morbid craving for him, looking to him in completely unhealthy ways that

do not reflect her status as image bearer of God. The woman wants something from the man that he was never intended to provide her, that he even on his best day is not equipped to provide. He becomes her idol.”²⁷ And Claire Smith explains that to possess or control “...fits with the *sentence as a whole*—as the woman's action finds a reciprocal action from her husband. She desires to possess or control him, and he instead will rule over her.”²⁸

I see both sins in marriages today. In my twenties, God graciously and gently convicted me of idolizing my husband. My primary identity was as his wife, not a child of God. I expected David to spend the most (if not all) of his free time with me, I panicked at the thought of him getting sick or dying. He was my true north, giving my life meaning. My repentance not only freed me from that sin, it freed my husband from a role he could never fulfill. By rightly ordering my desire, I gave David the freedom to be my head as he submitted to Christ (Eph. 5), and God gained primacy in my heart and affection. However, I have seen other women who dominate and control their husbands. These women take the *ezer* (strength) part of reflecting God to the extreme while abandoning the *kenegdo* (opposite) aspect of her relationship to man. These women disrespect husbands, manipulate family decisions, and generally make them feel inadequate or resentful.

Whether women idolize or try to control their husbands by “desire,” the response by men is the same: rule. This reality of husbands “ruling” their wives is connected to the now-sinful nature of humanity. (We’ll come to another word in the next chapter that does indicate an order for genders relating to one another. Hint: the word is not authority or leadership or rule.) Let’s look at how this word “rule” is used.

Rule. Found many times in the Old Testament, this word *mashal* means someone who is in charge or has authority over someone else (Exod. 21:8; Judg. 8:23 (twice); Prov. 17:2, 22:7; and Isa. 19:4). God uses a similar word *radah* earlier in Genesis 2 when he is explaining the relationship that the first man and woman are to have to creation, ruling (*radah*) over the fish, birds, livestock, and every creeping thing. But in Genesis 2, God doesn't mention this kind of word in their relationship to one another. As a matter of fact, in Genesis 1, he specifically notes that male and female were created to *radah* creation, not each other.

Apart from Christ, women will have pain in their sphere of influence: relationships and partnerships. Our disordered desires will be met with disordered rule. Men will also have pain; let's see what God says to man.

What God Says to Man

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and
ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you,
'You must not eat from it,'
Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat food from it all the
days of your life.
It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return" (Gen. 3:17-19).

Man's Consequences

Although both man and woman are told to fill the earth and rule it in Genesis 1, the gift of work is given to Adam while he is alone in Genesis 2. This does not mean women cannot also work in the world in ways that glorify God. It simply means that God, the good father, gave Adam this responsibility first. So, this consequence hits him where it hurts: work. Painful toil will plague his work until he dies.

Just as Eve's punishment reminds us of two ways women can sin (idolatry or control), Adam's punishment reminds us of two ways men can sin (passivity or rebellion). Adam passively "listened to his wife" instead of speaking up and reminding her of what God said. He also rebelled against God's clear instructions and "ate fruit from the tree" even though God said Adam would "certainly die" if he did.

Both versions of Adam's consequence exist today. With "thorns and thistles" causing "painful toil" in work, some men are lazy, selfish, and uninspired. They lack a drive to succeed or to work with all their heart as working for the Lord (Col. 3:23-24). They "check out" from family life and plop down on the couch at the end of the day, refusing to engage with their kids or help their wives. These men hurt their families by failing to work hard and care. On the other hand, there are men who are workaholics and take Colossians 3, working as unto the Lord, to the point of rebellion and idolatry. These men sacrifice their wives and children on the altar of career and prestige, all the while telling themselves they are fulfilling their calling and loving their wives and kids.

My husband, David, has blessed our family by balancing his work life through the years. About 10 years ago, he got a promotion that moved us from Indiana to North Carolina. The four of us were very excited about this new adventure,

but despite the assurance that there would not be lots of travel involved, his new job took him away from home for three to four days every week. Every Sunday night, as he packed his bags and prepared to leave, the children would mope around the house to the point of tears. For the first few weeks, we kept thinking that they'd get used to the new routine, but they didn't. As a homeschool mom, I was also stressed out teaching our kids and running a household alone.

After several months, we talked and prayed about our options. The kids were 8 and 11 years old, and David decided that he could put off his career advancement for their sake. We knew we only had a few years left with them at home, and so he stepped down a rung on the career ladder and took a pay cut for a position that kept him in town and home at night. Friends and colleagues couldn't believe it. He *willingly* took a demotion and pay cut?! Secretly, men whispered to him that they wished they had done the same thing. Some had considered it, but they admitted that their pride or drive to succeed stopped them. As a father and husband, the decision was easy, but as a competitive man in the workforce, this decision was a blow. David humbled himself for the sake of our family, and we can both say now with confidence (with one child married and one headed off to college next year) that we have no regrets about that decision. None. Not only that, a few years later God honored David's decision and placed him in a job that he loves more than any other he has had. I will be forever grateful for this man who honors God in his work and his family.

One final thought on Adam's consequences. They point to his headship. Whenever God delegates authority, the recipient gains privileges while also shouldering added accountability. This accountability is evident when God confronts Adam

first (Gen. 3:9), even though Eve sinned first. God not only punishes Adam but he also says the ground is cursed *because of Adam* (Gen. 3:17), holding him accountable to a degree he doesn't mention when speaking to Eve. Allowing the Bible to explain itself, we get further clarity from Paul. He uses a shorthand of sorts for the Genesis account when explaining the good news of salvation through Jesus. "For if, by the trespass of the one man, *death reigned through that one man*, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!" (Rom. 5:17). When Adam sinned, we all paid the price: creation was cursed and death was inevitable. The good news is that God delegated authority to one who will never fail us: Jesus. He is "the son of God in power" (Rom 1:4) who provides God's abundant grace and righteousness so that we can once again "reign in life" as God intended.

The Genesis account of creation gives insight into the ideal relationship between men and women. Sin and its consequences explain the constant struggle they have in life and in relationship to one another. But that's not the end of the story, it's just the beginning. In Christ's reconciling work on the cross, we can be reunited with our Father who now guides us with the counsel of the Holy Spirit as we walk in the light. The New Testament has much to say about the relationship between husbands and wives. In Chapter 2, we'll see what redeemed image-bearers can be and do for each other in marriage.

Chapter 2

Gender Reflects the Image of God in Marriage

GENESIS 1-3 IN LIGHT OF 1 TIMOTHY 5,
EPHESIANS 4-6 AND 1 PETER 3

Leader or Authority or Head?

My whole life, I have heard that husbands should “lead” their wives (and homes), while wives are supposed to “submit.” This was always a cringe-worthy and overly simplistic description for me, taking the colors of marriage and fading them to shades of gray. In my parent’s relationship and in my marriage, the men were “heads” and the women were “strong help,” although at the time, I wouldn’t have known to use those words to describe them. The men in my life certainly exercised leadership and

authority, but authority wasn't a thing to be preserved, and leadership was not an end in itself. Authority and leadership were tools, a means to an end for the good of someone else. Leadership and authority are, of course, subsumed in the idea of headship. But when reading what God says about gender and marriage in the Bible, these words are not the primary descriptors of the husband-wife relationship. The more I study, the more I see that "leader" and "authority" fail to fully capture the richness of meaning for men found in Scripture for the biblical word "head." While the constant call for "submission" in women, absent from our identity as "strong help," fails to fully capture what God says about women, too. Not only this, but leadership and authority have been abused for millennia, so if we are to use these loaded terms, we must define them as Jesus and Paul define them. Service, deference, care, gentleness, sacrifice, and selflessness are how *all* Christ-followers exercise leadership and authority.

Let's turn to some New Testament passages where the relationship between husbands and wives, where leadership and authority, are further explained. There are many passages we could explore, but these will be very helpful in understanding how men and women reflect the image of God in marriage:

- Marriage means yielding to one another (1 Cor. 7).
- Wives are the masters of their homes (1 Tim. 5).
- Husbands are the heads of their wives (Eph. 4-6).
- Marriage requires Christ-like submission and understanding (1 Pet. 3).

Genesis in Light of 1 Corinthians 7

Yielding to One Another

In 1 Corinthians, Paul is responding to a previous letter from the church, which contained many questions. This section deals with sex, marriage, singleness, and divorce. Paul's response gives us insight into the mutuality and beauty of the marriage relationship.

Now for the matter you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Cor. 7:1-5).

Husbands and wives have obligations to one another in the marriage relationship, and Paul is saying that sex is one of them. Hierarchy and authority have no standing here. Both genders are to "yield" to one another, and neither husband nor wife has "authority" over their own body. What might be most striking, especially in the social world of Paul, is the command for husbands to yield to their wives. Paul's instruc-

tions to men are liberating to women and affirm Jesus' constant teaching about the Kingdom virtue of submission.

But why is sex so important in marriage that Paul would write about it and carefully explain when husband and wives should stop having sex? Looking back at 1 Corinthians 6, we find some clues. In urging the Corinthians to stop their sexual sin, Paul's reasoning goes back to Genesis. Their bodies are not only part of Jesus, Paul says, but they're also "one flesh" with their sexual partner, whether prostitute or spouse.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit (1 Cor. 6:15-17).

One flesh. In these verses, the complementary nature of marriage, first mentioned in Genesis 2, is further explained. From the very beginning of his word, God says that man and woman are united in marriage "and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

Sex is much more rich, beautiful, and important than our American culture teaches in its movies, books, and TV shows. It's more than just a physical appetite like hunger that we satisfy when we feel like it, but it's less than a necessary component of a fully human existence. It's a ritual that is meant to secure two people in a covenantal relationship.

The Christian idea of marriage is based on Christ's words that a man and wife are to be regarded as a single organism – for that is what the words 'one flesh' would be in

modern English. And the Christians believe that when He said this He was not expressing a sentiment but stating a fact – just as one is stating a fact when one says that a lock and its key are one mechanism... the monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside of marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one union (sexual) from all other kinds of union, which are meant to go along with it and make up the total union. The Christian attitude doesn't mean that there is anything wrong about sexual pleasure... It means that you mustn't isolate that pleasure and try to get it by itself, anymore than you ought to try to get the pleasure of taste without swallowing and digesting, by chewing things and spitting them out again...²⁹

When we have sex with someone outside of marriage, it's creating one kind of union (physical) while ignoring other kinds of union (emotional, social, spiritual). Sex is "the physical reenactment of the inseparable oneness... created by the marriage covenant. Sex renews and revitalizes the marriage covenant." (Keller) But there is no lasting renewal or revitalization for us when we have sex with someone outside of marriage. This powerful act is harmful and hurts. But within a marriage, sex creates stability.

When viewed as a sacred act, it makes sense why Paul would be so specific in his instructions for the "hows" and "whens" of sex in marriage.

In the Bible oneness is not simply a matter of emotion but is always the creation of a covenant... The Bible is full of covenant renewal ceremonies. When God enters into a personal relationship with someone, he is not so unrealistic as to think that mere emotion can serve as the basis for it. He knows that human emotions come and go

and that there needs to be something binding to provide consistency and endurance... But that is not enough. He regularly gets his people together to reread the terms of the covenant, remember the history of his acts of grace in their lives, and recommit themselves through renewal of the covenant. The ultimate covenant renewal ceremony is the Lord's Supper... In the same way, marriage is a covenant... The covenant will grow stale unless we continually revisit and reenact it.³⁰

The Bible is so practical about our human nature. God knows that we are fickle creatures. We tend to believe that what we feel at any given moment is our full reality, a compass for our decisions. God uses this to his advantage (and ours), for when performed within the covenant of marriage, sex creates feelings that remind us that we are committed to this person for life. Not only this, but the act itself is a physical reminder that we are in this together. We're a team. We're one. To stop having sex with your spouse is to cease a vital covenant renewal, so it must be temporary, says Paul. In marriage, our bodies belong to one another, so we yield to one another in this "one flesh" union. He revisits this "one flesh" concept in Ephesians 5, imploring husbands to treat their wives as well as they'd treat their own bodies. Why? Because, in marriage the image bearers of God are imaging another relationship as well: Christ and the church. We'll get to that soon, but first let's look at what Paul says to Timothy.

Genesis in Light of 1 Timothy 5

Because we see the man having particular responsibilities toward the woman in Genesis, it is worth our while to see

what Paul tells Timothy about women and their delegated authority.

Wives are the Masters of the Home

In this letter, Paul is writing to Timothy, urging him to stay in Ephesus to combat the false teachings that were disrupting the church. In Chapter 5, tucked away in a passage on dealing with widows, Paul says that young wives should be the masters of their homes. In churchy circles, one phrase for husbands I hear a lot is they're the "head of the home." Could it be that this shorthand, while not intentionally misleading, is missing an important nuance found in Scripture?

Servant or Master?

"So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander" (1 Tim. 5:14).

The phrase translated "manage their homes" is also translated "keep house" in the New American Standard and "guide the house" in the King James Version. It is actually the Greek word *oikodespotein* and comes from two Greek words: *oikos* and *despotes*. *Oikos* means "house," and you can probably guess what *despotes* means because it's the same word in English: despot, that is, lord or master. Just to be sure, let's see how *despotes* is translated elsewhere in Scripture:

- Simeon, upon meeting the infant Jesus, declares, "Sovereign Lord (despota), as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace" (Luke 2:19).

- When Peter and John are released from prison, the believers praised God in prayer, “Sovereign Lord (despota), you made the heavens and the earth...” (Acts 4:24).
- In the letter we are now considering, 1 Timothy, Paul says, “All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters (despotas) worthy of full respect... those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect...” (1 Tim. 6:1).
- See 2 Tim. 2:20-21, 1 Pet. 2:18, 2 Pet. 2:1, Jude 4, and Rev. 6:10, which also use “lord” and “master.”

Paul names the wife, not the husband, as the master of the home. She’s not the servant. She’s not even the manager. She’s the “master.” Proverbs 31 comes to mind when I think about a woman being the master of her home.

This wife has noble character. She brings her husband good, not harm, all his life. She works hard, getting up early to provide for her family and servants. She buys property. She farms. She trades and works into the night. She is generous to the poor. She plans ahead. She sells her handmade goods. She is clothed with strength and honor. (Remember this as we continue our study!) She is wise and can teach others. She is diligent, not idle. And, most importantly, she fears the Lord.

Most women I know cringe at these verses. They tell me it’s too intimidating, too high of a standard, too much. But if I look at the Bible as a cohesive, coherent whole, I see this description going hand-in-hand with Paul’s description for young wives. In Proverbs, I see a woman who, indeed, is the master of her home. I see a strong helper (*ezer kenegdo*) who is competent to run a household and a business, while caring for her family and others. It turns the common phrase, “Behind every successful man, there’s a woman” on its head, because this successful woman has a husband who “has full confidence

in her,” who gains respect “at the city gate” because of her, and who “praises her” (Prov. 31:11, 23, 28).

My grandfathers, my dad, and my husband all had full confidence in me and praised me, which is a rare experience for many women. They encouraged me to be strong, to learn, and be brave, trying hard things without fear of rejection if I failed. Sometimes we don’t understand passages like Proverbs 31 or 1 Timothy 5 because we don’t actually do what they say. When men treat their granddaughters, daughters, sisters, and wives well and understand who God says they are, we each gain understanding and are blessed.

So we see that husbands and wives yield to one another in the covenant renewal ceremony of sex. We see that wives, not husbands, are the masters of their homes. Next, let’s turn to Ephesians where Paul explains that the man is not the head of the home, rather he’s the head of the woman.

Genesis in Light of Ephesians 4-6

Husbands are the Head of Wives

Ephesians can be divided into two parts. Chapters 1-3 are a thorough explanation of the Gospel, while chapters 4-6 are instructions for Christian living.

Paul ends his theological summary in chapter 3 with an inspirational tribute to God. “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:20-21). This doxology is perfectly placed, because what follows in chapters 4-6 are high standards for Christian living. If we’re going to be able to “live a life worthy of the calling [we] have received,” (Eph. 4:1)

then these commands should be lived out, day by day, in the context of our marriages.

Commands for Christian Living

Paul jumps right into chapter 4 of Ephesians and “insists... in the Lord” that both men and women live completely humbly and gently with one another. Be patient. Be unified in the Holy Spirit through peace. Serve one another. Put off our old selves and get a new attitude. Tell the truth. Do not sin when we get angry. Stop stealing and work hard so we can share. Watch what we say. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Get rid of bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another. Forgive like God forgave us. Walk in the way of love. Do not let even a hint of sexual sin be among men and women. The same goes for impurity and greed. Stop being obscene, telling dirty jokes, and talking like a fool. Live as children of light. Find out what pleases Jesus. Live wisely. Make the most of every opportunity. Again, understand what Jesus’ will is. Don’t get drunk. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Gives thanks to God in everything.

These common duties of ordinary life are for *all* Christians.

So, whatever else we say about male headship and female strong help, we must remember that every Christ follower is called to live in humility and selflessness. For men, this is especially important since male headship has often been misrepresented and even abused. Men, we women have often sinned against you, by belittling your God-given headship and disrespecting you, but you have often exacerbated the punishment placed on us women through Eve by selfishly in-

sisting that headship means rigid rule, when Jesus commands every one of us – men and women – to adopt the position of child (Matt. 18:1-4) and servant (Matt. 23:11).

Next, Paul moves into how families relate to one another, and he begins with an unpopular word in our culture today: submission.

A Command for All: Mutual Submission

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”
(Eph. 5:21).

After the laundry list of virtues in chapter 4 and 5, Paul calls for mutual submission. Husbands and wives are to submit to one another. The Greek word *hupotasso*, which is translated as “submit,” is used about forty times throughout the New Testament. In military usage it means to arrange military divisions under a leader. In non-military usage, it means to arrange under, to cooperate, to subject oneself, or to carry a burden. Here are some examples of *hupotasso* in the Scripture.

- God has submitted all things to Christ, the head of the church (Eph. 1:22).
- Jesus submitted to his parents (Luke 2:51).
- We submit to the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1).
- We submit to those who serve the Lord’s people (1 Cor. 16:15-16).
- The church submits to Christ (Eph. 5:24).
- We submit to God (James 4:7).
- Peter talks a lot about submitting in 1 Peter 2, 3, and 5.
- We all submit to the authorities.
 - Servants submit to masters.
 - Wives submit to husbands.

- Young men submit to elders.
- Authorities and powers are submitted to Christ.

The tone of submission in the Bible is clear. As image-bearers of God, we submit to God, to one another, to those in authority over us (like governments and employers), to family members, and to one another in the body of Christ out of respect or reverence. Everything that follows verse 21 is qualified by this instruction. Wives are to submit to their husbands, but husbands are also to submit to their wives.

It's worth noting the only positive example for *involuntary submission* is done by God, who places all of creation in subjection (submission) to Christ and who will cause every knee to bow to him one day.³¹ Let's look at what the Bible says about people demanding to be in charge or wanting others to submit.

About Involuntary Submission and Godly Authority

James and John

One day James and John come with their mother and ask Jesus to give the two men places of power and prominence in his kingdom. Jesus corrects their attitudes straight away, saying,

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:26-28).

When James and John made a power play for leadership and authority in God's Kingdom, Jesus sets them straight. Jesus clearly states, "Whoever wants to be first must be your slave." Greatness, authority, and leadership mean service in the Kingdom of God.

Elders

Elders, who also have authority in our churches today, receive warnings about their leadership style. Peter reminds them, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

Involuntary submission and domineering is prohibited. Peter instructs elders to "shepherd" God's flock instead of "lording it over those entrusted to [them]." Worldly leadership domineers. Godly leadership serves. In the same way, when husbands "lead" their wives, they do it as servants, not as rulers.

There are myriad ways to domineer and demand submission. An online survey published in January 2013 by Crosswalk.com had wives reporting these types of forced submission by husbands: choosing what they wore and where they went, using anger to control situations, dismissing their opinions and insight, controlling the bank account, refusing to make decisions and then criticizing, and withdrawing emotional support while demanding sex.³²

Paul

Paul redefines worldly notions of leadership, authority, and submission by his leadership style.

We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you... For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:6-9, 11).

Paul, who has the authority of apostleship, doesn't assert that authority in domineering ways in the churches he planted. He models the headship of Christ and God-like authority when he shares his life with them. Paul even chooses words like young children, nursing mother, and gentle father to describe his style of leadership and authority.

So, we see again and again that the positive examples and commands regarding submission are when someone *submits themselves* to someone else. Authority must be exercised in a spirit of gentleness, deference, and care. And leadership, according to Jesus and Paul, means slavery, giving up your life for the benefit of others. Forced submission is not appropriate in the church or in the home.

However, *voluntary* submission is expected from followers of Christ. Jesus gave us the supreme example when he prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” (Matt. 26:39b) There are (many) times when being submissive requires the setting aside of what we want in favor of what someone else wants. After telling us to submit to each other, Paul gets specific with wives.

Wives Submit and Respect

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything... However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband (Eph. 5:22:24, 33).

Paul tells wives to submit to and respect their own husbands like they do Christ.

Why? Because the husband is the head of the wife like Christ is the head of the church.

Submit. Paul has already told men and women to submit to one another, but he mentions it again, specifically as a wife relates to her husband. At the close of this section (5:33), he uses another word: respect. Note that husbands are not instructed to make their wives submit. The clear instructions for wives in this passage are to submit (*hypotasso*) to their husbands and respect (*phobetai*) them. We have already looked at the word submission. It applies to husbands and wives, but

it is repeated several more times in the New Testament as a particular command for wives.³³

There are countless ways to submit to one another. I submit to my husband when I care about him and consider his needs first, when I think about what would bless him (not just in big ways, but also in small, simple ways like making his morning coffee), when I pray for God's will in his life, when I give up something I want to bless him, when I defer to his opinion, when I hold my tongue if I'm right or irritated, and when I speak words of affirmation to him and about him to others. He, by the way, does all of these things for me, too, and considers me a strong help, which makes submission a joy, not a burden. But even if he didn't make my submission a joy, if I want to obey Christ, then I will submit.

Respect. *Phobetai* comes from the Greek word *phobeo*, which can mean to fear, to revere, and to respect. Many times it carries a connotation of fearful respect of an authority. However, it doesn't appear that Paul means "fear" in this passage, and here's why: at the beginning of this passage (verse 21), Paul says to "Submit to one another out of reverence (*phobos*) for Christ." He continually uses the relationship between Christ and the church as the model for Christian marriage, and we need not be scared of our Lord. In the husband and wife relationship, we respect each other, but something is wrong if we are scared of each other. John reminds us that mature love drives out fear (1 John 4:18.). Therefore, wives should not fear their husbands, but respect and honor them.

Leadership or Headship?

Wives are *supposed* to submit to and respect their husbands voluntarily, but *why*? Paul gives a simple reason: because the husband is the head of the wife like Christ is the head of the

church. There is a divine order here that was hinted at in Genesis, which we should explore.

Head. I don't know for sure, but I'm guessing that the frequent substitution of "leader" for "head" is supposed to bring understanding and help for men and women in our marriages. I didn't like the word "head" at all when I read it and decided to ignore it for years, skimming over it to the "loving your wife like your own body" part. But I lose so much more than I gain when I do this. In Scripture, we find that the God-ordained order called "head" reveals a much richer meaning than the words often used more frequently like authority, rule, and leadership. As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the principle of leadership is encompassed within headship, but it's a poor synonym for it. I cannot find anywhere in Scripture where a husband is called the leader of his wife. I can, however, find several places where the husband is called the head of the wife.

In 1 Corinthians 11, right at the beginning of a section on head coverings, Paul notes that "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3). What does Paul mean? Is there really any difference between headship and leadership?

Head. *Kephale* is the Greek word used for "head" in this passage and in others. It is found about 76 times in the New Testament. Almost every time we find it in Scripture, it means a literal head that sits atop a neck.

- Jesus says don't swear by your head (Matt. 5:36).
- The hairs of our head are numbered (Matt. 10:30).
- A woman anointed Jesus' head with costly perfume (Matt. 26:7).
- A crown of thorns was placed on Jesus' head (Matt. 27:29).

Gender Reflects the Image of God in Marriage

- Paul shaved his head because of a vow (Acts 18:8).
- Being kind to our enemies heaps burning coals on their heads (Rom. 12:20).
- Women pray and prophesy with covered heads, men with uncovered heads (1 Cor. 11:4-5).

Egalitarians, who assert there are no gender distinctions in Scripture, sometimes insist that *kephale* means “source,” so that husbands are the source of their wives, just as Adam’s rib was the source of Eve. This seems to ignore the plain meaning of the word. Complementarians, who assert there are gender distinctions in Scripture with specific roles for the sexes, often insist that *kephale* means “authority,” so that wives are under their husbands’ leadership. This also seems to ignore the plain meaning of the word.³⁴ But if you read the few places in Scripture where *kephale* is NOT talking about a literal head, then we get some much-needed insight into this order of creation called headship. It’s an order that was hinted at in Genesis 1-3 and is explained quite thoroughly with the progression of God’s revelation in Scripture.³⁵

Head But Not Boss

Christ is called the head (*kephale*) of the church.

- “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Eph. 1:22).
- “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows

and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:15-16).

Christ is called the head (*kephale*) cornerstone.

- “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very **head** of the cornerstone” (1 Pet. 2:7).
- “Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?”’” (Matt. 21:42).

Head cornerstone. What is a cornerstone? And why would the word *kephale* be used with it? “The cornerstone (or foundation stone or setting stone) is the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation, important since all other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire structure.”³⁶

So, cornerstones function as part of a foundation; indeed the *kephale* cornerstone is the first stone set in a foundation, the stone to which all other stones will be aligned as they are set. This cornerstone ensures that the walls are stable, straight, and strong. What a beautiful image! What Christ does as a head cornerstone for the church, husbands can imitate in their relationship with their wives.

Paul fleshes out this metaphor, noting that Christ is bearing the weight of the building, creating a solid foundation, and ensuring each stone can fulfill its potential as we, together, are joined together to become a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, for God.

So, then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the house-

hold of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together into a dwelling place for God (Eph. 2:19-22 NRSV).

Peter elaborates on Christ as head cornerstone as well.

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious;
and whoever believes in him
will not be put to shame.”

To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner.” (1 Pet. 2:4-7 NRSV)

While we women have trouble reflecting the image of God as strong help, men also have trouble reflecting the image of God as head. Many Christian men, in the name of Christlike headship, foster “personal immaturity or spiritual weakness or insecurity through excessive control, picky supervision, or oppressive domination. Even when acting as Christ, the husband must remember that Christ leads the church not as his daughter but as his wife. He is preparing her to be

a “fellow heir,” not a servant girl (Rom. 8:17).”³⁷ Unfortunately, I know of more than one widow whose submission to this kind of domineering headship left her unable to navigate life in her spouse’s absence. Christlike headship equips and empowers instead of weakens.

There are other men, however, who assert their selfish desires under the guise of headship and authority. Holding back instead of stepping out in strength and faith, they fail to bear the weight of responsibility and sacrifice that God requires in marriage. They sit back while the other “stones” do the work and bear the weight. These men neglect the most precious people in their lives, building resentment and disdain in their wives and exasperating their children (Eph. 6:4). Sadly, they distort the image of God they are meant to reflect.

Jesus illustrates the difference between headship and worldly authority again and again. Let’s look at a couple of examples. One day while Jesus was teaching at the temple, the Pharisees and teachers of the law brought in a woman caught in adultery, making her stand before the group. They used their authority to bring condemnation, humiliating her and using her as a pawn in their scheme to trap Jesus. Our Lord, however, responded with the one-two punch of grace *and* truth. Grace: “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). Truth: “...neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11). Jesus’ headship doesn’t censure, but it doesn’t allow us to keep sinning, either. The authority of his headship combines mercy *and* rightness with God.

Another time Jesus was teaching the crowds and his disciples about leadership, authority, and truth. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were the worst kind of authority: not only did they not practice what they preached, they relished

all the perks of their position from the best seats at banquets and synagogues to public recognition and self-promotion. If you didn't know the story, you'd think Jesus would tell the crowds to ignore these guys in authority. He doesn't. Even though they were wielding authority in the worst kinds of ways, Jesus said, "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you" (Matt. 23:2-3a). The truth stands, Jesus said, even when authorities misuse or misrepresent it. However, he went on to describe what Godly authority looks like. "The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Matt. 23:11-12). Again, we see Jesus, our head, blending authority *and* humility in ways that inspire us to submit to him.

Worldly authority condemns and humiliates. Godly headship convicts and inspires. Worldly authority is hypocritical, prideful, and makes obedience a burden by impossible standards or legalism. Godly headship is truthful, humble, and makes obedience attainable by example and mercy.

So if headship isn't primarily about authority, at least worldly notions of it, does it have anything to do with those words? Of course! Christ is the head of the church, and all authority in heaven and on earth was given to him by God (Matt. 28:18). However, headship, when it involves leadership and authority, is strikingly different from worldly privilege and power. Why? Because in Christ, God redefines what leadership looks like. Indeed, Jesus' leadership is so different than what usually comes to mind that one hesitates to use the term "leadership" at all. In the life of Jesus, we see leadership as serving, washing feet, nurturing, feeding, healing, and becoming a slave to all. If we use the term "leadership," we must use

it as Christ demonstrates: as a shepherd cares for sheep. Fierce when facing the enemy and gentle when tending the flock, our Lord is the standard for this word called “head.”

The Genesis story shows us that man, made in the image of God, has not only authority, but also responsibilities that define his relationship with his wife. Men are hopeless in their own power to fulfill this calling, but in Christ gender relationships are redeemed. Following Jesus in faith, men, you have the supreme example ever before you and the best coach there is: the Holy Spirit. In Christ, you can be a head who blesses, not curses, his wife. Get inspired to reflect the image of God as head! Lay your lives down for your wives. Bear the weight of responsibility and sacrifice as Christ, the head cornerstone, does for the church, encourage your wife to exercise her God-given talents and spiritual gifts, and remember, you’re not facing the enemy alone if you’ll also leverage her identity as your strong help.

A wife may have joy and confidence in *hypotasso* (submitting to) and *phobetai* (respecting) a Christ-like head who lays his life down for her. A man who enables her to reach her full potential in God’s kingdom, who bears the weight of responsibility for her well-being, who gives himself up for her, who seeks her wise counsel and leverages her strong help, is very much a woman’s Christlike head.

Paul has much to say to husbands on this subject in Ephesians 5:25 and following.

Husbands Submit, Love, and Entrust

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ...

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to

present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband (Eph. 5:21, 25-33).

Paul tells husbands that they must submit to their wives and love them just as Christ loved the church. Furthering the simile, he tells them to love their wives like they love their own bodies. Give yourself up for your wife, like Christ did for the church. And why did Christ give himself up for us? He did it to make us holy.

Paul devotes more than twice as many verses in describing how husbands are to love their wives (nine) than to how wives are to submit to their husbands (four). Perhaps it is because this is such a radical teaching. Because we enjoy so many freedoms as women in the United States, it is hard to imagine what life was like for women 2,000 years ago or even what life is still like for many women around the world today.

At the time of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, women were very restricted in their lives; they enjoyed very few freedoms and suffered from a low view of their sex by many men. Let’s take a look at some writings about women through the ages to see how men viewed them.

Negative Views of Women Throughout History

Women, by Semonides of Amorgos (Poem 7), is a Greek poem written in the 6th or 7th century BC. likely meant to be performed at a wedding feast. It proposes that men and women were created differently, and that there are ten types of women based on different models in nature. The woman modeled after the bee is virtuous (and virtually impossible to find, of course) and the other nine are horrible. Here's a sampling:

From the start, the gods made women different.
One type is from a pig—a hairy sow
Whose house is like a rolling heap of filth;
And she herself, unbathed, in unwashed clothes,
Reposes on the shit-pile, growing fat.
Another type the gods made from a fox:
Pure evil, and aware of everything.
This woman misses nothing: good or bad,
She notices, considers, and declares
that good is bad and bad is good. Her mood
changes from one moment to the next.³⁸

These ideas were not limited to secular poets and philosophers, though. Despite examples of strong and capable women in the Old Testament, some rabbis of Judaism also devalued women in their teachings. “The words of the Torah should be burned rather than entrusted to women”³⁹ (Sotah 3:4, 19a). Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, known as Maimonides, wrote much about women and their status.

Maimonides's recipe for a “pleasant and honorable” marriage entails clear instructions for a submissive wife. Fear of her husband should rule her and she should honor him

beyond any limit. The wife should intuit all his desires, remove all his hates, follow all his commands and should view her husband as a prince or king.⁴⁰

Palestinian sage, Ben Sira, blames woman alone for sin entering the world. “From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die” (Sirach 25:24, NRSV). Reading on, we find this indictment of women.

A daughter keeps her father secretly wakeful,
and worry over her robs him of sleep;
when she is young, lest she do not marry,
or if married, lest she be hated;
while a virgin, lest she be defiled
or become pregnant in her father’s house;
or having a husband, lest she prove unfaithful,
or, though married, lest she be barren.
Keep strict watch over a headstrong daughter,
lest she make you a laughingstock to your enemies,
a byword in the city and notorious among the people,
and put you to shame before the great multitude.

Do not look upon any one for beauty,
and do not sit in the midst of women;

or from garments comes the moth,
and from a woman comes woman’s wickedness.
Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does
good;
and it is a woman who brings shame and disgrace
(Sirach 42:9-14, NRSV).

These writings echo God’s prophetic words in Genesis 3.
“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over

you.” Yet, amidst the misogyny, suspicion, and domination, come Paul’s radical instructions to husbands to *hypotasso* (submit to) and *agapao* (love) their wives and to *paradidomi* (give themselves up) for them so that they might *hagiazao* (sanctify) them, modeling Christ and the church to the world.

Radical Agape Love

Love. *Agape* is one of four words for love in Greek and is mentioned more than 300 times in the New Testament. Unlike the affection of friendship (*philos*), the passion of sexual love (*eros*), and the warmth of familial love (*storge*), the agape love is unconditional, self-sacrificing love (*agape*). *Agape* is the kind of love that prompts God’s rescue mission for humanity through Christ. Associated with the exercise of the will, *agape* involves both feelings AND action.

- Jesus commands us to agapao (love) our enemies and pray for them (Matt. 5:44).
- God agapao (loved) the world and gave us Jesus so that we might have eternal life (John 3:16).
- Jesus says that if we agapao (love) him, we will keep his commands (John 14:15, 21, 23).
- The agape (love) of God has been poured in our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).
- Agape (love) is thoroughly described as, among other things, patient, kind, not envious, boastful, or puffed up, not easily angered or grudge-keeping. Agape (love) rejoices in the truth, always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres (1 Cor. 13).

Agape is a high standard of love for Christian husbands. It is modeled on Christ’s love for the church and would have

been a radical change from the common type of marital affection expected in antiquity. I daresay it's a radical change from what most marriages experience today.

Trust and Vulnerability

Paul says Jesus gave himself up. *Paradidomi* is mentioned more than 100 times in the New Testament. It means to give into the hands of another with a sense of close personal involvement, to deliver something to keep, to entrust, and even to arrest.

- Jesus said a man going on a journey *paradidomi* (entrusted) his wealth to his servants (Matt. 25:14).
- Pilate had Jesus flogged and *paradidomi* (handed him over) to be crucified (Matt. 27:6).
- Jesus *paradidomi* (gave up) his spirit when he died on the cross (John 19:30).
- Paul and Barnabas *paradidomi* (were committed to) the grace of God for the work they completed (Acts 14:26).
- Paul and Barnabas *paradidomi* (risked their lives) for Jesus (Acts 15:26).
- Paul was *paradidomi* (given over) to death so that Jesus' life would be revealed in their bodies (2 Cor. 4:11).

And on it goes. There is a sense of vulnerability and trust, especially in light of Christ giving himself up for the church, that husbands are meant to exhibit in their relationships with their wives. This giving up, this entrusting of husbands to their wives, is a great gift for women. Indeed, it's an honor for us when husbands do this. What can it look like? The examples are endless. My husband entrusts himself to me when he shares his dreams for our future, when he confides in me his

feelings of failure, insecurity, or disappointment, especially regarding work, when he gets up in the night to take care of a crying baby, or when he asks my advice or perspective. In these ways and so many others, I know that he is not only loving me *like* his own body (Eph. 5:28), sometimes he is loving me *more than* his own body.

Sanctification

Sanctify. The word Paul uses here is *hagiazō*, and it means to make holy, purify, or consecrate.

- Jesus uses this word in his prayer, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name” (Matt 6:9).
- Jesus rebukes the Pharisees who are swearing by the gold of the temple because they consider it sacred (Matt 23:17, 19).
- Jesus says that God set him apart and sent him to the world (John 10:36).

Tim Keller in his book, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God*, talks about sanctification in marriage.

Within this Christian vision of marriage, here's what it means to fall in love. It is to look at another person and get a glimpse of what God is creating, and to say, "I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to his throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say, 'I always knew you could be like this. I got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you!'"⁴¹

And a verse that seems to parallel Paul's instructions to husbands is from Jesus' prayer for his disciples:

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified (John 17:16-19).

Adam failed in this commission of holiness. Instead of washing Eve with water through the word of truth, he stood by and watched her sin. Ever since then, husbands have struggled to sacrificially love and entrust themselves to their wives, just like Christ did for the church, so that they may become holy through the word of truth. But now, in Christ, as instructed by his apostle Paul, we get the chance to make it right. We get the chance to show the whole world how men and women can complement, complete, and inspire each other in holiness.

The One-Flesh Mystery

Husbands, if you starve your wife, you starve yourself. If you hurt your wife, you hurt yourself. If you neglect your wife, you neglect yourself. Paul says husbands should love their wives like they love their own bodies, feeding and caring for them. In marriage two people really are "one flesh" (Eph. 5:28-31). And if this weren't enough to inspire obedience, Paul's second point surely should. This "one flesh" mystery testifies about Christ and the church to the world (Eph. 5:32).

Husbands who submit to their wives with sacrificial love, trust, and care, give the world a picture "in the flesh" of

Christ's love, trust, and care for the church, his bride. Wives who submit to their husbands and respect them, give the world a picture "in the flesh" of the church's submission and respect for Christ, her husband. Conversely, when a Christian marriage fails in submission, love, and respect (v. 33), the "one flesh" of their lives is like a horror movie for the world to see.

Peter gives yet another angle on this submitting that wives must do and this loving and giving up which husbands must do. Let's turn to 1 Peter 3.

Genesis in Light of 1 Peter 3

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening (1 Pet. 3:1-6 ESV).

This passage begins with the word "likewise." Dr. Rick Oster, when helping me with this passage, taught me that the Greek word for "likewise" is *homoios*, and it occurs three times in 1 Peter. (1 Pet. 3:1, 7; 5:5) This word intersects what Peter

means about “be subject.” Be subject *hypotassomenoi* is aligned with this term likewise.

- 2:18 Slaves submit yourselves to your masters in the fear of God
- 3:1 Wives likewise submit yourselves to your husbands
- 3:7 Husbands likewise treat your wives right
- 5:5 Young men likewise submit yourselves to your elders

Joint Call to Imitate Christ

So Peter, just like Paul, is telling wives *and* husbands (beginning in verse 7) to imitate Christ: how? They must be holy, speak the truth, not repay evil for evil, and not retaliate or even make threats when mistreated. Instead, they should be “respectful and pure” (v. 2 for wives, and v. 7 for husbands) in their behavior. Instead they should *entrust themselves* to God (sound familiar?) to make things right. He’s calling out both sides to change the way they’re acting.

Wives Submit to Win

Peter’s commands for women come right in the middle of a section on living Godly lives in a pagan world. He is helping them deal with their husbands’ sins the way Christ dealt with their sins. You don’t see Peter excusing their behavior. He doesn’t deny that these guys are unbelieving brutes (1 Pet. 3:1, 6). But he gives an unexpected course of action: Act so much like Christ, says Peter, that you don’t even need to use words or beauty to win over your unbelieving husband. This makes sense because beauty and words are powerful tools for women. Instead, Peter points out that the most winsome thing about women should be their gentle and quiet spirits. And this is not new information. It has always been this way, he

says, for Sarah, the wife of Abraham, did this exact thing. Like Jesus, she didn't let fear dictate her behavior but entrusted herself to "God who judges justly" (1 Pet. 2:23).

(Before I begin, let me give a disclaimer: I am not talking about emotional, physical, or sexual abuse or illegal behavior in this section; women should not stay in a home that is dangerous.)

What kind of submitting did Sarah do? She respected Abraham in her actions (obeying him) and in her speech (calling him "lord"). This principle is repeated throughout Scripture. We are forbidden to say one thing and do another. The Bible's word for this is "hypocrisy." Jesus talks about hypocrisy in the Sermon on the Mount multiple times: when giving to the needy, when praying, when fasting, and when correcting others (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5). You cannot be a hypocrite, Peter says. You speak and do what Christ expects of you.

If only Peter didn't use those difficult words, "obey" and "master," these instructions would seem so much more appealing. But let's stick with the words Peter uses and see what the Bible has to say for itself.

Obey. The word Peter uses is *hypakouo* and means "acting under the authority of the one speaking," that is, "really listening to the one giving the charge." It suggests "attentively listening" and being "responsive." Letting the Bible explain itself, let's find where else *hypakouo* is used.

- It's what the wind and sea did when Jesus spoke (Matt. 8:27).
- It's what the spirits did when Jesus spoke (Mark 1:27).
- It's what lots of people did when they became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7).
- It's what Rhoda did when she answered a knock at the door (Acts 12:3).

- It's what children do for parents (Eph. 6:1).
- It's what we do with Paul's instructions (2 Thess. 3:14).

Master. The word Peter uses here is *kurios*, meaning “master” and “lord.” It's used hundreds of times in Scripture interchangeably between the Lord and human masters. This points to the order of headship. Paul has already noted that Christ is the head of man, man is the head of woman, and woman is the master of the home.

So, wives acknowledge husbands as head in their actions and in their speech. They speak to and about them with respect. They don't get a pass on obedience to Christ if their husbands act cowardly like Abraham (Gen. 12:11-13), make bad parenting choices like Isaac, Jacob, or King David (Gen. 25:28, 37:3; 2 Sam. 14:1-23), or are unbelieving, selfish boors like Nabal (1 Sam. 25:10-11). They don't ignore them (violating *hypakouo*) or write them off as idiots (violating *kurios*). Trusting God, they live in purity and reverence. Wives, this requires us to change the way we think, taking every thought captive in obedience to Christ (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). Turn off the running commentary in your head that says to ignore your husband when he's acting stupid. This is just what Sarah did with Abraham.

Think about Sarah. We know she respected Abraham in her speech, but what examples do we have of her obedience? Besides going with her husband in faith to a land God would show them, one big example comes to mind. Fearing for his life, Abraham selfishly puts Sarah in jeopardy to protect himself. He basically says, “You're so beautiful that the Egyptians will kill me and take you for themselves, so say you are my sister” (a partial-truth: she's his half-sister). Sarah goes along, and sure enough, things get worse before they get better. She gets whisked away to Pharaoh's palace as one of his wives. I'm

pretty sure that this is the point where I'd give way to fear, but this is not the end of the story. Since Abraham isn't acting like a proper head, God judges justly, sending plagues on Pharaoh's household, and ensures Sarah's safe return home (Gen. 12:10-20).

Many years later, as recipient of God's blessing and the chosen mother of many nations, would she do the same thing? (Gen. 17:16). Would Abraham? Surely, she'd act differently if Abraham tried this nonsense again. She's going to be the mother of all Israel for crying out loud. Surprisingly (at least to me!), she does, indeed, submit to Abraham, going along with his horrible idea (Gen. 20:2).

What does Peter want us to learn from Sarah? I think one thing is this: Sarah treats Abraham as her head, even when he doesn't deserve it, and she trusts God to judge justly, refusing to "fear anything that is frightening." Again, God delivers her from the king's house, and he keeps his promise to her, allowing her to become mother to the promised son, Isaac (Gen. 21:1-5).

There is something very powerful about a calm reaction by a wife to a very serious problem in her husband. There is a response that does not rely on words but nevertheless influences others powerfully towards repentance and righteousness. Most of us don't really believe this—we don't grasp that God has methods that are much more powerful for change than the ones we normally use.⁴²

Sarah trusted God; even when her husband didn't.

One more illustration: Abigail's reaction to her wicked, wealthy, contemptuous, drunkard of a husband, Nabal, is worth noting. She submits while taking action when her husband sinned against others as well as herself. To summa-

rise, David's men come to Nabal, asking for hospitality. Nabal selfishly and rudely refuses, putting his whole household in mortal danger, since David planned to kill the whole lot of them when he heard the news (1 Sam. 25:2-13).

Again, I'm pretty sure that this is where I'd give way to fear. But not Abigail. She gets wind of the bad news through a servant and acts quickly. She makes amends for her husband's behavior by graciously offering gifts, an apology, and a blessing to David and his men (1 Sam. 25:18-31). God strikes Nabal dead, and Abigail marries the future king of Israel. Again, purity, reverence, and submission results in God's just judgment.

And for those women (and men) reading this who have suffered losses so great that they will not see justice from our God in this life, in the very next chapter, Peter reminds them that everyone "will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1 Pet 4:5). I encourage you to "leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). God keeps his promises.

If you're a woman reading this and find it an impossibly high standard, don't despair. Peter gives husbands some difficult and lofty commands too, and if they don't obey, the warning is clear: their prayers will be hindered, and they, too, will have to answer to God for their conduct in marriage.

Husbands Understand and Honor

"Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the

grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7).

First of all, remember that “likewise” word. Peter is telling wives *and* husbands to imitate Christ: how? They must be holy, speak the truth, not repay evil for evil, and not retaliate or even make threats when mistreated. Instead, they should be “respectful and pure” (v. 2 for wives, and v. 7 for husbands) in their behavior. Instead they should *entrust themselves* to God (sound familiar?) to make things right. Both husbands and wives should change the way they’re acting.

Let’s look at the words “understanding” and “honor,” as well as the phrase “as the weaker vessel” to see how husbands are to interact with their wives.

Gnosis

Understanding. The word *gnosis*, which is translated as “understanding” here, is a word that simply means to know. Peter is telling husbands to know their wives. There are different ways to know something, and in Scripture we see two types of *gnosis* appear again and again: information and experience.

- Paul wants the Ephesians to grasp how wide, and long, and high, and deep is the love of Christ and “to know this love that surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:19).
- Knowledge of God’s truth leads to godliness and hope of eternal life (Tit. 1:1-2).
- We should make every effort to add knowledge to our faith, goodness, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love (2 Pet 1:5-7).

Information. Remember Wilder's description of her orchard? She and her husband "knew" how to farm, although she admits that there were many things she didn't know in the beginning that she learned with practice. Likewise, Christian husbands "know" how to live with their wives when they read Scripture. They know that the gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to transform *all* of their relationships. They know God's order for creation: Christ as the head of man and man as the head of woman. Husbands know the instructions for conduct in marriage like submission, love, and holiness. But husbands should also know *their particular wives*, so that they can love them well. Knowing his wife's personality type, her strengths and weaknesses, her spiritual gifts, even her favorite foods and hobbies, are all ways for a husband to live with his wife "in an understanding way."

Experience. When this kind of information intersects with practice, a new kind of knowing emerges. The Wilders personally tended every tree in their orchard. They prepared each hole, "large and deep, making the dirt fine in the bottom..." They handled the tree with gentleness "so as not to injure the roots." Most notable to me is that they "took individual care of each tree" so that when they mentioned a tree, one of hundreds, they could simply say, "that tree with the large branch to the south" or some such description. Their experience of tending the orchard brought a new depth and breadth to their farming knowledge.

Similarly, getting information about Jesus and knowing Jesus are two different things. When I first heard the gospel, I could say I knew Jesus. I had information on the root of my problem (sin) and the answer (Jesus). I "knew" he was the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). In faith I committed my life to him in baptism and publicly confessed that

he is Lord. However, after years of walking in the counsel of the Holy Spirit, after reading and studying God's word, after obeying the teaching of Scripture, after offering countless prayers, after living in a community of believers in the church, the difference in "knowing" is startling. My knowledge is different, yes, but I am different too. My relationship with Jesus is different and ever more precious. Experience and practice bring a new level of knowledge. Like Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, we can know "how wide, and long, and high, and deep is the love of Christ" and "know this love that surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3:19).

Knowing the husband should be the Christ-like, submissive, self-sacrificing, entrusting, sanctifying head of his wife and *being* that kind of husband are two kinds of knowing. Likewise, *knowing* the wife should be the respectful and submissive strong helper made in God's image and *being* that kind of respectful, submissive, strong helper are two kinds of knowing. (Just like reading a book about swimming and actually swimming are two kinds of knowing!) There's knowing and then there's knowing. Husbands, says Peter, know your wives.

Honoring Weaker Vessels

So, husbands should live with their wives in an understanding way, "showing *time* (honor) as with a weaker vessel." At first, this sounds contradictory to God's design of woman as an *ezer kenegdo*. Is woman a weaker vessel or is she a strong helper?

The phrasing here is quite important, so let's look at it again. The text is literally translated, "Husbands likewise dwelling with [them] according to knowledge as with a weaker vessel with the female rendering honor as also joint heirs..." Peter is asking husbands to live with their wives in

a particular way and follows this instruction with a simile “as with a weaker vessel with the female” to help explain what he means.

There are many similes in Scripture. Jesus used them with his disciples. He said, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matt. 10:16). Jesus wasn’t saying that his disciples were literally sheep or that they’d face literal wolves. He was warning his disciples that they were going to face danger, a kind of danger that would be as deadly as wolves are to sheep. Jesus wanted them to be holy yet shrewd in the way they dealt with that danger, using serpents and doves to illustrate his point.

Other similes in Scripture:

- The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field and a merchant searching for fine pearls (Matt. 13:44-46).
- Pharisees and scribes are like whitewashed tombs (Matt. 23:27).
- The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2).

Weaker Vessel. The way you would handle a crystal vase is different than the way you would handle a wooden bowl; you know what they’re made of and what it takes to damage each of them. If I carry both of those things in my car, I’ll wrap the crystal vase in bubble wrap and gently place it on the seat. If I carry the wooden bowl, I’ll toss it in the trunk with no harm coming to it.

Women are like “crystal vases” among “wooden bowls” in many ways. This simile, like all good literary devices, serves to highlight this difference for men.

The feminist response is to downplay the vulnerability of women. Be strong. Be powerful. Don't let men define your identity. The problem is that women's statistically smaller size than men and their bearing of children inherently put them in a vulnerable position. Short of all women taking steroids worldwide, we are not likely to average out to the size and strength of the average male. Ever. And the human race will die out if women don't allow themselves into the vulnerable position of childbirth and rearing. The Bible recognizes this vulnerability, and Peter specifically addresses it and the inherent role of husbands in this vulnerability in 1 Peter 3.⁴³

Wives who submit and respect their husbands are voluntarily placing themselves in a position of vulnerability. Husbands must reciprocate with mutual submission, agape love and honor, living with them in an understanding way.

Valuing Your Wife

Honor. When husbands live with their wives in an understanding way, Peter is saying that at least part of that will entail honoring wives as co-heirs of Christ. The word *time* (honor) means a value, or money paid, and by analogy, esteem (of the highest degree) especially to someone with an office or rank. In Scripture we see the forms of *time* meaning literal money as well as honor of others. It's especially helpful to notice how this word "honor" is used again and again to call us to esteem others regardless of rank.

- The thirty pieces of silver that Judas received for betraying Jesus and the money that Ananias and Saphira

received for selling their property were both called timen (Matt. 27:6, 9; Acts 5:2-3).

- The islanders of Malta honored (timais) Paul and his companions in many ways (Acts 28:10).

In the church, those who seem weaker are actually “indispensable,” and those we “think” are less honorable, we treat with “special honor.” As in the church, so it is in marriage: husbands are to treat their wives with honor because of their joint standing in Christ’s salvation. Even if you think she doesn’t deserve it, even if you don’t feel affection toward her, husbands, Peter says you must honor your wives and treat her with gentleness and care. Check your tone of voice. Use self-control with your physical presence. Be patient and careful like you would when you handle the crystal. And, husbands, if you have a running commentary of scorn about your wife in your head, change the way you think and take every thought captive in obedience to Christ (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). If you don’t do these things, God says your prayers will be hindered. If this doesn’t give you a shiver down your spine, men, perhaps you should consider how often and about what you are praying.

Leader, Authority, or Head?

I submit (see the pun there?) that we should stick with the word God gives us and say husbands are the “head” of their wives. Headship encompasses the concept of authority, not the other way around. In other words, while authority is a part of headship, sacrificial love is also a part of headship. While leadership is a part of headship, submission, honor, and understanding are also all parts of headship. Using the words “leader” or “authority” as shorthand for the biblical word

“head” distorts the full meaning of this God-ordained role, emphasizing roles that, when overdone or done in ungodly ways, harm women instead of blessing them.

Before giving particular instructions to wives and husbands, Paul calls for mutual submission. This is followed up with two clear calls: submission and agape love. Wives should submit to their husbands as they do to Christ. Husbands should do every hard and self-sacrificing thing Christ did for the church in their relationship with their wives. I see no explanation of who’s the boss. I see lots of descriptions of how to love your wife, of how to give yourself up to her, of how to help make her holy, and of how to love her like you love yourself.⁴⁴

Strictly speaking, is Christ the leader of the church? Is he our authority? Is he in charge? Of course he is! But you don’t see him lead with authority in worldly ways. He doesn’t *make* us submit to him through intimidation. He doesn’t *make demands* by yelling or bullying. He doesn’t *insist* on getting his way or on keeping his thumb on his disciples as their leader.

What does insisting on your way look like? Changing jobs frequently; being financially negligent; overworking; going out after work with friends instead of coming home; embracing a hobby that is expensive and time-consuming; failing to help around the house or with the kids; and solely choosing how to spend the family’s money, among many things. I know a woman whose husband came home one night with a new, fully loaded sports car, yet he flatly refused to let her buy so much as a new outfit without his permission.

Christ is not this kind of head. In contrast to the husband who insists on his own way and bullies, Jesus left heaven to come rescue us. He steadfastly went about his Father’s business. He got up early in the morning and stayed up late at

night to pray. He taught lessons of grace and truth to those who wanted to learn, and he patiently explained himself again and again to disciples who just didn't "get" who he really was. He endured public humiliation and scorn for our benefit, even enduring torture and death so we could have life.

Even though Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, he is also described as a good shepherd (John 10), a man of sorrows (Isa. 53), a teacher (Matt. 7), and a lamb (John 1). And when Jesus says clearly that he is, indeed, Lord, it's when he is washing his disciples' feet! Jesus reminds his disciples that lordship, if it means anything at all, means that they will serve others.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. (John 13:12-17)

Summary

The image of God in husbands, described as a head, must look like Jesus as our head. The instructions to submit (*hupotasso*), sacrificially love (*agape*) and, in a spirit of trust, make themselves vulnerable (*paradidomi*) to their wives, honoring

(*time*) them as co-heirs of Christ are good news for women (and men)!

The image of God in wives, described as a strong helper or ally (*ezer kenegdo*), must also look like Jesus. The instructions to be the masters of their homes (*oikodespotein*), submit (*hupotasso*) because of a divine order called headship, and respect (*phobeo*) their husbands are good news for men (and women)!

Men love their wives with a self-sacrificing, action-oriented love. Wives rule the home while submitting to their husbands. Mutual honor and respect are coupled with mutual submission. I'm passionate about this because I've lived it all my life. Headship didn't curse me. It's the best thing that ever happened to me. It didn't stifle me. It helped me grow and become strong. It didn't limit me. It gave me the potential to do things I never could have done all alone. Not only this, but it set the course of my marriage. Headship, strong help, and mutual submission make *both of us* stronger.

This information is not just good news for a world full of hurting marriages. It's the best news around! Unfortunately, though, for too many people, these instructions are just that: words divorced from experience. The beauty of headship and gender intended in Genesis 1-3 is redeemed in Jesus Christ if we'll only obey.

In John 14 our Lord gives us a clear barometer of our love and devotion to him: obedience. With the help of our advocate, the Holy Spirit, we can, indeed, keep his commands (John 14:15-16). And as Jesus told his disciples, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:17).

Chapter 3

Gender Reflects the Image of God in the Christian Community

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH 1 CORINTHIANS 14
AND 1 TIMOTHY 2?

Now that we've discussed the Christ-like call to headship, strong help, and mutual submission in marriage, we turn to the church. Do these have implications for marriage only or do they also affect how we relate to one another in the church? The answer is clear. "...the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man" (1 Cor 11:3). Gender matters in church.

But what do headship and mutual submission mean for men and women when we get to our churches on Sunday?

What should men do? What *can* women do? Or, to put it as I did in the introduction of the book, can women really not pray or read Scripture with men in the room?

In this chapter, as in the rest of this study, we want to remember that the Bible is a cohesive, cogent book. So, before we talk about how gender matters in church, let's see what women *are* doing in the church throughout Scripture. This will be divided into three sections.

- Female leadership in the Old Testament
- Jesus' involvement of women in his ministry
- Prominent roles of women in the early church

Next, we'll deal with two passages that have been used to restrict participation (and even speech!) by women in the assembled church.

- 1 Corinthians 14
- 1 Timothy 2

And, finally, we'll come to some conclusions about how gender matters in church.

Female Leadership in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, even though male leadership is more common, we learn that God approves many kinds of female leaders.

- Deborah was called "prophet" and appointed "judge" by God to lead the Israelites in their war against the Canaanites (Judg. 4-5).
- Huldah served as a prophetess and was consulted regarding the newly found Book of the Law (2 Kings 22:14).

Gender Reflects the Image of God in the Christian Community

- The term "prophetess" is also used of Miriam and Deborah (Exod. 15:20; Judg. 4:4).
- There were "wise women" who influenced the leaders of Israel (2 Sam. 14:1-20; 20:14-22).
- Wisdom is personified as a woman (Prov. 1-8).
- The wife of noble character is the master of her home and contributes to her husband's good standing in the community (Prov. 31).
- Joel prophesies that "in the last days" women will be granted an outpouring of the Spirit as will men (Joel 2:28ff).
- And there are other examples of prominent women who led in some form or another in Israel.

Jesus Involves Women

In the Gospels, we see Jesus involving women in various ways.

- Jesus elevated women above the status given them by the rabbis, the Greeks, or the Romans.
- Jesus often directly taught women and engaged them in conversation about spiritual matters. Consequently, women responded to his call for discipleship (Matt. 14:21; 21:31).
- Jesus noted with approval the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman after discussing with her a request to heal her daughter (Matt. 15:21-28).
- Jesus discussed worship with the woman at the Samaritan well, and she subsequently testified about him to others in her village (John 4).
- Jesus ate with Mary and Martha, spending time in private tutelage with Mary⁴⁵ (Luke 10:38ff.).

On Gender

- Women traveled with Jesus as part of his larger group of disciples, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, Salome, and others. They were “helping support him out of their own means” (Luke 8:1-3).
- This team of women ministered to Jesus. Indeed, the term sometimes translated “deacon” in the New Testament is applied to the service provided by these women (Mark 15:41).
- Some of these women remained by the side of Jesus during his crucifixion, even when the men fled for their lives (Mark 15:40-41).
- These women were also the first to go to the tomb after Jesus’ resurrection, were the first to receive the announcement that Jesus is risen, and were the first witnesses to report Jesus’ resurrection to the other disciples (John 20:10-18).

Prominent Roles for Women in the Early Church

Looking at the early church, we learn that male headship includes women in prominent roles.

Prayer

Women prayed in the early church in the presence of men. Paul notes that in the Corinthian church they were expected to show a sign of male headship during those prayers (Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 11:1-17).

Teaching

Women taught the Word of God in the New Testament church. Though they were especially encouraged to teach younger women (Tit. 2:3-5), men were also taught by women. For example, Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, taught a prominent Jewish man, Apollos, who was "learned" with a "thorough knowledge of the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24-26; 2 Tim. 1:5).

Hosting the Assemblies

Women served as hosts to church assemblies in their homes (Acts 12:12; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15).

Holding the "Ministry" of Widowhood

Women who were 60 years old or older could be appointed to the "ministry" of the widow and placed on the payroll of the church. The qualifications of the "official" widow are detailed by Paul (1 Tim. 5:1-16) in the same overall context of Paul's description of the work of elders and deacons. Her work is described as that of "good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds" (v. 10). Compare this to Acts 9:36-41 where Christian widows are praised for their good works and alms.

Deacons

The early church had female deacons. Two texts indicate that they may have been appointed very early on. The first is Romans 16:1-2 in which Phoebe is called a "deacon of the church in Cenchreae." Though the word translated "deacon"

can also be translated "servant," Phoebe likely held the official work of the deacon because Paul asks the church to "give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me." In other words, Phoebe was probably not just a "female servant" but rather a "deacon" in the technical sense.

In a text giving qualities of deacons, Paul pauses to give the qualities expected of "women." Though it is possible that Paul means "the wives" (of male deacons), the context may indicate that Paul means "women deacons." In the Restoration Movement, many scholars have taken 1 Timothy 3:11 to indicate female deacons, and note that the New Testament church had women deacons.

From the literature of the second and third centuries, which clearly indicates that the church of that period had women deacons, we can assume that if there were women deacons in the first century church, they were generally unmarried (virgins or widows). This is because married women were expected to stay home and care for their families. This might explain why 1 Timothy 3:11 does not mention husbands for the "women" it addresses. In the second and third century church, women deacons primarily served other women and children.

General Decision-Making

Women participated in many of the decisions made by the early churches; Acts 15 indicates that the entire church was assembled and involved in making very important decisions regarding the mission to the Gentiles.

Prophecy

First Corinthians 11 affirms women prophesying in the presence of men. The gift of prophecy was given by God, and its outpouring upon women shows God's intention of using women to minister to the church through the strengthening, encouraging, and comfort of prophecy⁴⁶ (Acts 2:17-18; 21:7-9; 1 Cor. 11:1-16, 14:3). Women are not only prophesying; they are also praying in church (1 Cor. 11:1-17), and Paul *does not forbid them to do this*. He only instructs them to have “authority on their heads” when they do.⁴⁷ When a woman prophesies with an uncovered head, “it is the same as having her head shaved.”⁴⁸ Having a shaved head today can mean everything from a fashion statement to a medical condition. However, in the ancient world, shaved heads or short hair were a sign of subjugation, the opposite of delegated authority. This matters for our study of the tough passages to come, so let's explore why before moving on.

Looking at Roman history,

...a punishment could be applied to women of the upper classes who were caught committing adultery or prostituting themselves. By law, an adulteress could have her hair cut very short and she was no longer permitted to wear any garment indicative of a matron. Instead, she was compelled to wear a plain toga. These were signs of her disgrace.⁴⁹

Shaved heads on women were also a sign of shame and subjugation in the world of the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 21, God would not allow the Israelite men to take women captive as sexual slaves after war. They could, however, bring the captured woman to their home and allow her

to “shave her head, trim her nails, and put aside the clothes she was wearing when captured... [mourning] her father and mother for a full month” (Deut. 21:13). Then the men had to marry the women, granting them the rights and privileges of a covenant relationship. If they became displeased with their new wife, they were required to release her to go wherever she pleased (Deut. 21:14).

So, a shaved head in the Old Testament and in Roman society was a sign of being conquered; it was a sign of punishment and disgrace to women. Paul is trying to get the attention of the church by using shock language here. If men and women want to ignore the beauty of gender and headship in worship, then women should just go ahead and cut off their hair or shave their heads (1 Cor. 11:6-9). Gender matters in church, but it does not preclude women from public participation. We are to recognize God’s order of headship in church while remembering “in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman” (1 Cor. 11:11).

So, when looking at all this biblical evidence, whatever we say about headship and gender distinctions, we know that God calls and blesses women ministering, teaching, praying, and leading in a wide variety of ways. The Scriptures are full of examples of strong female leadership and service: the *ezer kenegdo* described in the beginning chapters of Genesis. Many women I know have become confused, distressed, and in the worst cases, suspicious of Scripture, when their churches refuse to allow them to participate in visible ways. Churches and schools that do not acknowledge this miss a tremendous blessing available to them. They silence and cut off the God-like strong help of their women, even putting at risk the spiritual well-being of many of them. Indeed, one reason that egalitarianism has become so attractive (and why I thought

I was egalitarian!) is the overreaching complementarianism practiced by too many churches.

In the same way, churches and schools that do not acknowledge the order of headship also miss a tremendous blessing available to them. They choose this moment in history to dismiss as “cultural” what God reveals as fundamental to his created order and our benefit.

Gender roles are different. We have seen how true, powerful, and beautiful this is. Unnecessary gender restrictions not only fail to capture God’s intent, but they are unkind and unjust, damaging the intention of God in creation as well as the witness of the gospel.

Difficult Passages

Despite all of this freedom for women to serve, teach, and lead, there are two specific texts that must be dealt with because they appear to limit or even forbid a woman’s ability to serve in public ways. According to 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2, there are some limitations of women teaching in general assemblies. Because of everything we’ve covered so far, prohibiting all speech by women would contradict other examples of women speaking in church. Furthermore, an overly restrictive view of these two texts would prevent even such simple gestures as women confessing in church, singing, or saying amen. For these reasons, we must read these texts as addressing either particular types of speech, particular motivations for speaking, or both.

What do we do with 1 Corinthians 14?

“Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.” (1 Cor. 14:34-35)

Three groups are addressed in this chapter, and Paul tells them all to *sigao*, that is, to be silent.

- A tongues-speaker is to be silent (*sigao*) if there is no interpreter (1 Cor. 14:26-28).
- A prophet is to be silent (*sigao*) if a revelation comes to someone else (1 Cor. 14:29-33).
- A woman is to be silent (*sigao*) if she has questions (1 Cor. 14:34-35).

What kinds of questions are these women asking in church?

Many egalitarians assert that the women were asking disruptive and irrelevant questions because they were recent converts or uneducated or both. They note that Paul says, “Everything must be done so that the church may be built up” and “God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people” (1 Cor. 14:26, 33). This makes sense at first glance.

Many rigid complementarians assert that the women were violating the order of headship by speaking at all. They note that “silent” means “silent”—for all reasons and all time in the assembled church. However, not only do most churches fail to obey this interpretation, they also ignore the clear example of 1 Corinthians 11 where women are praying and prophesying.

However, Paul explains why women should stop asking questions, and it isn't because the women were being disruptive. Paul grounds his command for silence in the principle of submission found in the law, which is the Old Testament.⁵⁰

“In the context of judging prophecies, Paul says, ‘the women should keep silent in the churches.’ He does not allow women to speak out and judge prophecies in front of the whole congregation, but he leaves that governing task to men...”⁵¹

As I think about judging prophecies as an exclusively male task, I'm wondering how churches today do that. First we should find out what that looked like in the historical and cultural context of this writing. Who was doing it? What exactly were they doing?

This becomes more understandable when we reflect on the structure of synagogue worship. The elders of the synagogue were tasked with reviewing the remarks of the guest preacher of the day and judging them as true and to be received, or false and to be rejected. They sat at the front of the congregation, and if a true word was spoken, they were the ones meant to pronounce “Amen, Amen” at the end of it.⁵²

Keller notes that this may be one of the reasons that the elders were so angry with Jesus. When he said “Truly, truly” at the beginning of his teaching, he was affirming it as true without their approval.

As it was in the synagogues, so it was in the early church.

Without a resident, trained clergy and an authoritative compilation of the deposit of truth left by Jesus, traveling apostles, messengers of apostles, and apostle-wannabes could show up at any worship event and speak... False

doctrine was the biggest enemy of the infant church, and the counter to it was to have a group of local elders, chosen for their maturity in the faith, whose job it was to judge truth from heresy, whether from the mouths of their own congregation or from a traveling speaker (1 Tim. 5:17-18).⁵³

So, elders were judging truth from heresy in the synagogue and early church. My elders do that today. They aren't sitting at the front of the congregation yelling out agreement or disagreement on a Sunday morning, but they have authority to guard the doctrine of the church. When my husband and I were asked to teach a marriage and family class in the adult education program, we were given a faith statement from the elders. We (and all the other teachers) are forbidden to teach against anything contained in it. The elders, as overseers of the church (1 Tim. 3:1), set the boundary lines for our teaching, and teachers are subject to correction if we teach against that doctrine. If we persist in teaching against the faith statement, the elders have the authority and the duty to remove us as teachers.

To summarize, Paul argues against tongue speaking that is un-translated because it does not build up. He argues against prophets speaking up at the same time because everyone must be instructed and encouraged. And, he argues against women asking questions that the elders would be asking because it violates the Old Testament principle of submission. All of these fall under what Paul calls "the Lord's command (v. 37), and as such are guiding principles for all churches.

Paul's letter to Timothy sheds even more light on this topic. Remembering that the Bible is the best commentary on itself (and using the principle that uses the easier-to-under-

stand passage to explain the harder-to-understand passage), let's see what 1 Timothy 2 says about women in the church.

What do we do with 1 Timothy 2?

Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (1 Tim. 2:8-15)

Because so much is at stake in these verses, I want to take a moment to remind you that “...everything that Paul (or any biblical author) wrote was to a specific group of people with a specific situation in view... In compiling the canon, it was a presupposition that God's truth was applicable to the church throughout history... [1 Timothy, out of all of Paul's letters, could be seen as a] church planting manual—how to set up a church in an organized way...”⁵⁴ Because Paul “had functioned as a missionary and church planter for so many years, he likely had a general vision of how churches should be structured. Hence, his instructions were not entirely situational but reflected the pattern of governance that he expect-

ed to exist in his churches.”⁵⁵ Indeed, if we claim that Paul’s instructions to specific situations do not apply to the church today, then most of the New Testament would be irrelevant. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...” (2 Tim. 3:16). The goal, then, is to find out what Paul is saying in this particular historical and cultural context and how we can obey his teaching today.

To unpack this part of Paul’s letter to Timothy, let’s note the three sections with which we’re dealing.

- Verses 8-10: Men and women receive guidance for prayer in the gathered church.
- Verses 11-12: Paul tells women HOW to learn and what NOT to do in the gathered church.
- Verses 13-15: Paul explains the “why” of verses 11-12 and highlights the role that only men can perform.

Verses 8-10

Paul starts his train of thought about prayer in the beginning of Chapter 2, reminding Timothy that God wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (v. 4) The men, therefore, should join in prayer “leaving anger and argument behind in favor of unity and freedom from contention.”⁵⁶

Continuing his thoughts about prayer, Paul says he “also want[s]” women in the assembly to dress modestly: without fancy hairstyles or expensive jewelry and clothes. This is not a question of IF women can pray in the assemblies but HOW they should pray. We just read in 1 Corinthians 11:5 that women are allowed to prophesy and pray in public meetings,

and here Paul notes that they should use modesty and discretion in their attire when they do.

Verses 11-12

Paul next gives a specific instruction of *how* a woman should learn in the gathered church. “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.” The word *hesychia*, translated “quietness” in verses 11 and 12, does not mean “silence” (like *sigao* in 1 Corinthians 14) but means “peaceful.” It’s the same word from verse 2 where Paul tells us to live “peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

With our 21st century point-of-view, it would be easy to jump straight to the words we don’t like (quietness and submission) while overlooking the radical idea that we take for granted: women *should* learn. We noted in Chapter 2 how certain traditions in Judaism and the secular world forbade women from learning and even considered them unfit for learning. Certainly, women should learn, Paul says, but in the gathered church, women learn with submission and peacefulness, which is always the posture of a teachable heart. Proverbs speaks about the heart in connection with our ability to learn and discern what is right.

- “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5).
- “The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin” (Prov. 10:8).
- “Haughty eyes and a proud heart—the unplowed field of the wicked—produce sin” (Prov. 21:4).

So, women should learn with peace and submission. Paul then moves us in the natural progression of student to teacher. Today, we have no limit of educated women who are fully competent to teach in the church. However, Paul places (limited) restrictions on the type of teaching and position women may assume in the church with regard to men. “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet,” he says.

So let’s define the words “teach” and “authority,” note the structure of Paul’s argument, recall what we’ve already seen women doing in Scripture, and try to determine what Paul means.

The first word is simple. It’s the Greek word *didaskein*, which means “to teach.” It is found dozens of times in the Bible. Timothy’s mother and grandmother taught him (2 Tim 1:5), and Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos (Acts 18:26). So, if these women are teaching, Paul cannot be prohibiting *all* teaching by women.

Unlike all the other words defined so far, *authenteo* isn’t found elsewhere in Scripture.

Its first occurrence in surviving Greek literature is dated to the first century BC, not long before Paul used it, and for centuries after that its recorded uses are quite rare. In fact, until the official recognition of Christianity under Constantine in the year 312, the verb appears in only a handful of places, most of them in obscure nonliterary sources. No doubt part of the reason for this paucity of attestation is that [*authenteo*] was considered a colloquial word, so that writers with literary pretensions avoided it.⁵⁷

So, before we define *authenteo* using extra-biblical texts, let's look at the usual word used for authority in the Bible: *exousia*.

Exousia is found more than 100 times in Scripture. It comes from two words: *ek* meaning “out from” and *eimi* “meaning being as a right or privilege.” *Exousia*, therefore, carries the connotation of “operating in a designated jurisdiction” or having “delegated power” or “conferred authority.” Paul uses a form of *exousia* many times in 1 Corinthians.

- Paul says to be careful so that the Corinthians' rights (*exousia*) do not cause the weak to stumble (1 Cor. 8:9).
- Paul has the right (*exousia*) to food and the right (*exousia*) to take a wife. He and Barnabas lack the right (*exousia*) to not work (1 Cor. 9:4-6).
- Paul says women should have authority (*exousia*) on their heads when they pray and prophesy (1 Cor. 11:10).
- Paul will not make full use of his authority (*exousia*) as an apostle and will offer the gospel free of charge (1 Cor. 9:18).
- Paul says at the resurrection God will destroy all dominion, authority (*exousia*), and power so that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

Authenteo, while not used anywhere else in Scripture, was used in extra-biblical writings centuries before 1 Timothy was written with the “rather specific meaning [of] ‘kin-murderer,’ someone guilty of killing his or her own flesh and blood.” Much later (in the first century BC), *authenteo* is found meaning “not ‘murderer’ but ‘master,’ and it seems to have belonged to the colloquial.”⁵⁸ Some scholars think these two different definitions for *authenteo* indicate that it's a homonym: one word with two meanings. Whether it is or not, we

can safely assume that *authenteo* has to do with authority or mastery of some kind.

Now that we understand the words a little more, we need to understand the writing technique(s) Paul is using.

Inclusion or Hendiadys?

Some scholars believe that verses 11-12 are an inclusion. An inclusion is a writing tool that brackets a passage with similar words or phrases, indicating one theme. In this case, the word *hesychia*, that is “quietness,” would be the theme of these two verses. Under this theme, learning should be done with submission while “to teach or assume authority” over men is forbidden. Some scholars also believe that the phrase “teach or assume authority” is a hendiadys. A hendiadys is a figure of speech when two words work together to mean one thing. (It stems from the Latin phrase “one thing by means of two” or “one through two.”) We use hendiadys all the time when we say things like the house is “nice and warm.” We don’t mean “the house is nice and the house is warm” but we mean “the house is cozy.” The hendiadys in this passage describes a particular kind of authoritative teaching, that is, “teaching with teeth in it.”⁵⁹

Those who find an inclusion here believe that women may never teach men in the gathered church and may never exercise authority over them.⁶⁰ I agree with those who see a hendiadys (authoritative teaching) and conclude that women may not assume teaching authority over men in the gathered church. Why? First of all, Paul says that women should have a sign of delegated authority, *exousia*, on their heads when they pray and prophesy in the church. Secondly, there are several examples of women teaching in Scripture (Acts 18, 1 Cor. 11, 2 Tim. 1, Tit. 2), so this must be a particular kind of teaching.

The hendiadys explains what kind: authoritative teaching. Thirdly, when you consider the created order of headship combined with the freedom for women to participate in many ways in church, this makes sense.

Putting it all Together

When we read 1 Corinthians 14, which forbade women asking the kinds of questions that elders would ask, when we note the historical practice of elders setting the boundary lines for sound doctrine in the synagogue and early church, when we look at the hendiadys of 1 Timothy 2 (“teaching with teeth in it”), and when we look to the very next chapter where qualifications for elders are delineated, we can conclude that Paul is reserving the authority of overseer (elder) and rabbi (senior teacher) to males in the church. Kathy Keller puts it this way:

Because this has already been linked in 1 Corinthians 14 with the judging of the prophets and is followed immediately in 1 Timothy 3 by a discussion of the qualifications of elders, I find it not only plausible but unavoidable to come to the conclusion that women were being enjoined to silence (i.e. forbidden to participate) in a function reserved for elders alone—those men tasked with judging personal and corporate faithfulness to the apostolic “deposit” of truth.⁶¹

Women are to be submissive, strong help. They should not be elders or rabbis (senior pastors of our day) over men, which violates creation order.⁶² However, as we have already noted, women can serve in many ways with delegated authority, honoring the principle of headship.

Verses 13-14

We saw that Paul's instructions to women in 1 Corinthians 14 were grounded in the Old Testament law. Similarly, in 1 Timothy 2, Paul grounds his prohibition in the universality of the created order, not culture or custom. He gives two reasons why women cannot "teach or assume authority" over a man.

- God created man first, not woman.
- The woman was deceived, not the man.

By referring to Adam and Eve, Paul reminds us of another time a woman exercised *authenteo* over a man. "Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (1 Tim. 2:14). Adam didn't believe a lie; he knew the truth but sinned anyway. So, how was Eve deceived? Genesis 3 tells us exactly how: Adam's strong help (*ezer kenegdo*) succumbed to the tempting question all of us ask when we want to wriggle out of God's command: "Did God really say..." (Gen. 3:1) and then believed the lie that eating the fruit would give her the ultimate authority. She would be "like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5).⁶³

Verse 15

"But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety." (1 Tim. 2:15)

Saved through childbearing? What does this mean? Well, I know what it can't mean. It can't mean that Eve is worse than Adam. Paul notes Adam is responsible for the sin and death that entered the world (Rom. 5:12-18). It can't mean that women who never have children or who can't have children will be any less saved.⁶⁴ It can't mean that I save myself when I have a child. To be clear, I cannot save myself at all. My

righteousness is “by faith from first to last” (Rom. 1:17). And yet I participate in my salvation, which is called sanctification, because I am told to “work out [my] salvation with fear and trembling.” (Phil. 2:12) This is where I think Paul is headed in this description of childbearing and salvation. Wendy Alsop explains it this way.

I grew up thinking the term “saved” referred simply to that one point in time in which I walked down the aisle of my church, repented of my sins, and publicly professed belief in Christ... As an adult, I’ve come to understand the broader way the Scripture uses the term salvation. Salvation is a process that follows me from the day I first understand my need for Jesus Christ (or more accurately, from before time began) until I sit at the Marriage Feast in heaven as the Bride of Christ. Scripture uses the terms justification, sanctification, and glorification to define this process. I was saved (justification). I am being saved (sanctification). And I will be saved (glorification).⁶⁵

Women who have children know that a primary tool for our sanctification is motherhood. I thought I was a pretty nice person before I had kids. The day I brought my daughter home, I immediately got a lesson in what giving up my rights 24/7 for the next 18 years would look like. And I didn’t like it. I was unprepared. I was sleep-deprived. I was constantly on call. God revealed selfishness and pride (among other things) in me, sanctifying me through the hard work of raising children. Paul seems to be emphasizing that many women can experience the radical transformation of sanctification right where they are: in motherhood. He “points the way forward by urging them [women] to devote themselves to their domestic role.”⁶⁶ In everyday family life, women have countless

opportunities to “continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”

To be clear, there are other options for understanding this passage, too. Literally translated, this section of verse 15 reads “through the childbearing.” Some scholars believe Paul is simply highlighting how we are all saved because of the birth of Jesus Christ, come to die for our sins and conquer death. This fits with what I find elsewhere in Scripture, too (Isa. 53, Matt. 1:18-23).

So, whatever the full meaning Paul intended for this statement, I know that Jesus saves me and that working out my salvation, sanctification, involves the perseverance to continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety. Actually, Paul bookends this teaching to men *and* women with a call for discretion and self-restraint.⁶⁷

Spiritual Gifts vs. Roles

One final clarification is needed before closing this section on gender and Christian community. Paul mentions a list of gifts from the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12 that he insists are given to everyone for the common good. “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Cor. 12:11).

- A message of wisdom
- A message of knowledge
- Faith
- Gifts of healing
- Miraculous powers
- Prophecy
- Distinguishing between spirits
- Speaking in different kinds of tongues

It is important to recognize that spiritual gifts are not the only “measuring stick” for service in the body of Christ (as egalitarians assert). Just two chapters later in 1 Corinthians 14, we see Paul giving parameters for the use of these very gifts. In the exercise of spiritual gifts, gender matters in the Christian community.

Elisabeth Elliott noted that even though she had better gifts than most men for being a pastor, knowing the Bible in several languages, expositing it with much experience, attaining maturity through suffering, etc., there were biblical parameters for their use. “God has not called me, as a woman, to exercise those gifts *in a pastoral role*. I am called to use them, but why should they only be valuable if used in one particular role, the ordained ministry?”⁶⁸

Rosaria Butterfield, former professor of English and women’s studies at Syracuse University who converted to Christ in 1999, explains it this way.

God calls women to be many things, including serving as mothers and doctors and homemakers and lawyers and teachers. He gives women liberty to use their gifts in the world and to acquire, if he permits, the highest level of education necessary to fulfill them. But God also calls all of us—men and women—to use all things, including our roles, in submission to him and to his will. When I became a biblically married woman at the age of thirty-nine, God called me to use the gifts he gave me to be a helper to Kent in his calling. This role has not always been easy, but it has always been good, uniting us as a ministry team. I could not fulfill God’s call for the public ministry that I have today without Kent’s headship and the critical lessons that God taught us about submission during the first decade of our marriage.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, I must also acknowledge here that many churches, including my own, have practiced overreaching complementarianism, preventing women from fully exercising their spiritual gifts and missing out on countless blessings that God intended. Kathy Keller notes,

I am frequently embarrassed by others who use the title “complementarian” but who go beyond Scripture to legislate arbitrary rules about the age of boys when women must not teach Sunday school to them any longer or whether a female small group leader should have a male co-leader if the group is mixed, and so on. These non-biblical boundaries fall under Jesus’ condemnation of obeying “the traditions of men” instead of the “commands of God.”⁷⁰

This, however, does not give my church permission or any other to overcorrect and do away with the (generous!) parameters for gender roles found in Scripture.

We have no problem understanding this in other areas of our lives. My parents love Middle Tennessee State University women’s basketball. They have been season-ticket holders for as long as I can remember. Sometimes, especially at away games, there are referees who make one bad call after another against MTSU. It makes my parents crazy to see this poor judgment, this misapplication of the rules of the game. It’s completely unjust and unfair. However, do you know what they *don’t* say to me when they are agonizing over such a scene? They *don’t* say that the rules were just standards for a time when basketball was first played in 1891. They *don’t* say the rules are too hard to understand. They *don’t* say the rules were for beginners and that now, because the players are so much more talented, we can set aside some of them. No! They

say that the referees should *rightly apply* the rules and make a correct judgment.

What I mean is this: repentance involves change *and* obedience, not just change. In terms of gender, we know the rules for “fair play” (to put it crassly). If some churches have been making poor calls in terms of the “rules,” then it’s time for a course correction. In this way, I find egalitarianism *and* patriarchy a bridge too far.

Conclusion

Our sanctification in terms of gender can take myriad forms, but the heart of all sanctification is obedience. Jesus said, “Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own” (John 7:17). Rosaria Butterfield calls this the hermeneutics of obedience. Child psychology calls this action preceding belief.

Young children do not have the moral means to create or respond to right and wrong... This does not mean, however, that you suspend the training of right responses... Actions precede beliefs. Teach him to keep his food on his high chair tray. Teach him to not hit. Teach him to not scream in the house. Teach him correct behavior. When the age is right, he will understand *why* this behavior is right.⁷¹

This could be part of what Jesus meant when he said, “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:2). Part of following Christ is obeying God even when we don’t want to or when his commands don’t make sense to us, just like young children with their parents. Do I like everything I read about gender in the Bible? If I’m honest, I’ll tell you that I don’t.

Even though headship has been great for me in my childhood home and in marriage, it hasn't been so great for me in the Christian community. But I know that God is a good father. I can trust his revealed word on gender. And I believe that if I obey, I will gain ever deeper love and respect for God and his word.

In this study on gender, I have gained the words to describe what I have experienced my whole life. The unique strengths of men and women, coupled with their specific instructions for interacting with one another, present a beautiful picture to the world. Headship. Strong help. Submission. Love. Respect. These words are not cultural. These words are timeless, and they are good news!

Gender reflects the image of God in life. Men and women are equally loved by God and are full partners in stewarding all of creation. Male *and* female also reflect, in gendered ways, the nature and character of the triune God for the world. Men are called to tend and nurture in their stewardship of the earth and their relationship to women. And women, as corresponding partners to men, provide strength and help in that stewardship and kinship.

Gender reflects the image of God in marriage. Husbands *and* wives are to submit to one another (Eph. 5:21). Yet the genders also have specific instructions in conduct toward one another within the order called headship. As master of the home, the wife must respect and submit to her husband as the church submits to Christ (Eph. 5:22-24). As head of the wife, a husband must love his wife as fiercely and loyally as Christ loved the church, submitting to her and "giving himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25-28).

Gender reflects the image of God in the Christian Community. Men and women were counted among Jesus' disci-

ples. Men and women are full partners in salvation and full partners in the gifts of the Spirit to build up the church. Men and women hosted house churches, taught, prayed, prophesied, spoke in tongues, and served in many similar ways, including as deacons. But headship matters here too.

So, I appeal to rigid complementarians: acknowledge the strength and spiritual gifts of women. Rightly apply the Scripture's teaching on gender even if it seems strange or scary. Let it correct and contradict you. Men, lay down your lives for the women in your life and act like a proper head. Encourage the women around you to be strong, visible partners in your churches, schools, and homes with all of their Spirit-given gifts. Women, when you refuse to publicly participate in a prayer, Scripture reading, or teaching when asked, you are part of the problem. Preach God's word to yourself until you can embrace his description of you as strong help.

And, I appeal to egalitarians: let Scripture speak to your experience and the modern world in which we live. In a world already confused about gender, we don't help clarify God's words to us by flattening out or ignoring distinctions that he shows us in his Word. Submit to the Scripture's teaching on gender even if it seems irrelevant or outdated. Let it correct and contradict you. Acknowledge the differences in the genders and how God intended to use them to bless us and others. Use the words we are given in Scripture, like submission, head, and strong help, even if the terms seem difficult.

And, I appeal to all of us, male and female, to build each other up in love, as each does his or her part (Eph. 4:16), reflecting the image of God to the world.

Endnotes

1. Note Jesus' high view of Scripture, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-19).
2. To be fair, not all egalitarians follow the logic of the "trajectory" argument to full-blown theological liberalism, but the opportunity is there. "The redemptive thrust of the Bible does not aim at abolishing headship and submission but at restoring them to their original purposes in the created order." John Piper, Wayne Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions: An Overview of Central Concerns About Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 30, <https://document.desiringgod.org/50-crucial-questions-about-manhood-and-womanhood-en.pdf?ts=1471551126>.
3. Again and again, Jesus describes the kingdom of God. Among other things, Scripture shows me that becoming like a child will help me enter it (Mark 10:14-15). It belongs to the poor (Luke 6:20). Most of those who hear about it won't enter it (Mark 4:1-20). Demons have no authority in the face of this kingdom (Matt.12:28). The rich find it hard to enter it (Matt. 19:24; Mark 10:23-25). The repentant find a warm welcome in it (Matt. 21:31). Those who will produce good fruit will be given the kingdom (Matt. 21:43). The kingdom of God is in our midst and within us (Luke 17:20-21).
4. American Heritage Dictionary, s.v. "republic, democracy, kingdom." Accessed September 18, 2018, <https://ahdictionary.com>.

5. God is “the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see” (1 Tim. 6:15b-16a). Jesus is “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5) and the one who will triumph over all the powers that be in the last days because he is “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev. 17:12-14).
6. Among other things, the Bible claims to be perfect (Rom. 3:4), understandable, especially so with the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:14; Rom. 8:6-8; 1 Cor. 2:10-14), necessary to make sense of reality (Deut. 32:47; Matt. 4:4; John 6:63, 68), necessary for salvation (Rom. 10:9, 13), necessary for obedience (Deut. 8:6; 2 Tim. 3:15-16), sufficient without addition or subtraction (Rev. 22:18-19), powerful (Psa. 36:6; Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12), relevant to life in all cultures (Deut. 8:3), and authoritative (John 10:27; 1 Cor. 14:37-38; Heb. 1:1-2). Scripture affirms this about itself, and I believe it. I accept all of this as true in the discussion that follows.
7. Tim Keller, *Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 118.
8. The New Testament tells us much about our new identity, but Peter gives us a good summary: we are obedient children who are purified (1 Pet. 1:14, 22), foreigners on earth (1 Pet. 1:17), born again for eternal life (1 Pet. 1:23), a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), chosen (1 Pet. 2:9), God’s special possession (1 Pet. 2:9), and recipients of mercy (1 Pet. 2:10).
9. Jayson Casper, “Forgiveness: Muslims Moved as Coptic Christians Do the Unimaginable,” *Christianity Today*, April 20, 2017, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/april/forgiveness-muslims-moved-coptic-christians-egypt-isis.html>.
10. Webster’s Dictionary 1828 Online Edition, s.v. “sex, gender.” Accessed September 18, 2018, <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/gender>.
11. Krista Conger, “Of mice, men, and women: making research more inclusive,” *Stanford Medicine*, Spring 2017, <https://stanmed.stanford.edu/2017spring/how-sex-and-gender-which-are-not-the-same-thing-influence-our-health.html>
12. “...because God chose to speak His Word through human words in history, every book in the Bible... has historical particularity; each document is conditioned by the language, time, and culture in which it was originally written.” Gordon D. Fee, Douglas Stuart, *How To*

Read The Bible For All Its Worth: A Guide To Understanding The Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 19.

13. 2 Timothy 3:15-16
14. “Because the Bible is God’s Word, it has eternal relevance; it speaks to all mankind, in every age and in every culture. Because it is God’s Word, we must listen—and obey.” Fee and Stuart, *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth: A Guide To Understanding The Bible*, 19.
15. “We must find a way to faithfully obey whatever we discover to be God’s revealed will, even if our cultural situation has changed since it was first revealed.” Kathy Keller, *Jesus, Justice, & Gender Roles: A Case for Gender Roles in Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 12.
16. With the Genesis account, I believe that God tells us what evolution cannot about the purpose and design of men and women. If you have questions about the creation narrative, many have found Hugh Ross’s, *Navigating Genesis: a Scientist’s Journey through Genesis 1-11* (Covina: RTB Press, 2014) to be very helpful.
17. Piper and Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions About Manhood and Womanhood*, 47.
18. Denny Burk, “5 Evidences of Complementarian Gender Roles in Genesis 1-2,” *The Gospel Coalition*, last modified March 5, 2014, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-evidences-of-complementarian-gender-roles-in-genesis-1-2/>.
19. The firstborn of Egypt were struck down by a plague from God while the firstborn of the Israelites were preserved (Exod. 11:12-13). God declared a special claim on every firstborn male in Israel (Exod. 13). The Torah also shows us, however, that God will surprise us and may choose whomever he pleases, regardless of birth order: Isaac instead of Ishmael (Gen. 21), Jacob instead of Esau (Gen. 25), Joseph instead of Reuben (Gen. 45), David instead of Eliab (1 Sam. 16), etc. The exceptions, however, do not make the rule.
20. Stephen W. Hines, ed. *Laura Ingalls Wilder Farm Journalist: Writings from the Ozarks* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 20-21.
21. This imagery is from Ephesians 6.
22. See Hebrews 11.
23. For more on priestly instruction and teaching see 2 Kings 17:27; 2 Chron. 15:3, 19:8, 31:4; Deut. 17:18, 31:9; Jer. 2:8; Ezek. 7:26, 22:26, 44:24; Mic. 3:11; Hag. 2:11; Ezra 7:12, 21.
24. “I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name. But a prophet who

- presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death” (Deut. 18:19-20).
25. Matt Smethurst, “It’s a Genesis to Revelation Issue: Andreas and Margaret Köstenberger on God’s Gendered Design,” The Gospel Coalition, last modified October 24, 2014, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/genesis-revelation-issue/>.
 26. Gregory L. Jantz, Ph.D., “Brain Differences Between Genders: Do you ever wonder why men and women think so differently?” Psychology Today, last modified February 27, 2014, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hope-relationships/201402/brain-differences-between-genders>.
 27. Wendy Alsup, “A (Somewhat) Scholarly Analysis of Genesis 3:16,” Theology for Women, last modified April 14, 2012. <https://theologyforwomen.org/2012/04/a-somewhat-scholarly-analysis-of-genesis-316.html>.
 28. Claire Smith, “A Sidebar Named Desire,” The Gospel Coalition, last modified September 17, 2012, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/a-sidebar-named-desire/>.
 29. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins San Francisco, 2001), 104-105.
 30. Tim Keller, “The Gospel and Sex.” The Gospel and Life Conferences of 2004 and 2005, Redeemer City to City, New York, NY 2005.
 31. See 1 Peter 3:22 and Isaiah 45:23.
 32. “Identifying a Controlling or Dominating Spouse,” Crosswalk, accessed July 17, 2018, <https://www.crosswalk.com/family/marriage/divorce-and-remarriage/identifying-a-controlling-or-dominating-spouse.html>.
 33. See 1 Cor. 14:34, Col. 3:18, Tit. 2:5, and 1 Pet. 3:1, 5.
 34. Refuting evangelical feminists, Wayne Grudem pushes hard on his assertion that *kephale* means “authority over.” While I don’t disagree that *kephale* contains within it the notion of authority, Jesus redefines authority in ways that are counterintuitive to fallen human beings who crave and misuse power. Men are doing themselves (and their wives!) a disservice to only imagine and embody the idea of “authority” when they act as “head.” Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* (Wheaton: Crossway Books. 2006), 194-195.

35. “Thomas Jefferson, Headship, and 1 Corinthians 11,” Theology for Women, accessed June 18, 2018, <https://theologyforwomen.org/2016/04/thomas-jefferson-headship-and-i-corinthians-11.html>.
36. “Cornerstone,” Wikipedia, accessed June 18, 2018, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornerstone.
37. Piper and Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions*, 29.
38. Semonides of Argos, “Women,” trans. Diane Arnson Svarlien, Stoa, accessed June 20, 2018. www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/sem_7.shtml
39. “The Mishnah: A New Integrated Translation and Commentary,” E-Mishnah, accessed September 23, 2018, http://emishnah.com/Nashim_Vol_2/Sotah3.pdf
40. Jewish Women’s Archive Encyclopedia, s.v. “Maimonides,” accessed September 23, 2018, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/maimonides>
41. Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 132.
42. Wendy Alsup, “Hard Words to Women from 1 Peter,” Theology for Women. January 25, 2010, accessed June 18, 2018. <https://theologyforwomen.org/2010/01/hard-words-to-women-from-i-peter.html>.
43. Alsup, “Hard Words for Women from 1 Peter.”
44. It seems like a spiritual principle regarding the shrewd handling of money could also be applied to the responsible handling of headship and submission: “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Luke 16:10-11). When husbands and wives heed the commands of mutual submission, headship, and respect with faithful obedience, they will find themselves enjoying greater freedoms and responsibilities in their relationship and possibly even the wider world.
45. This is especially notable since Torah instruction was generally unavailable to women.
46. For an explanation of the difference between the authoritative speech of prophets like Moses, Jesus, and the apostles versus the gift of prophecy found in the New Testament see John Piper’s article “The New Testament Gift of Prophecy: Definition, Theses, and Suggestions,” *Desiring God* (online) <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-new-testament-gift-of-prophecy>, accessed August 8, 2018.

47. *Exousia* is found over 100 times in Scripture. It comes from two words: *ek* meaning “out from” and *imi* meaning “being as a right or privilege.” *Exousia*, therefore, carries the connotation of “operating in a designated jurisdiction” or having “delegated power” or “conferred authority.” Paul uses a form of *exousia* many times in 1 Corinthians. (See 1 Cor. 8:9; 9:4-6, 12, 18; 15:24-28.)
48. Similarly, when a man prays or prophesies with a covered head, he “dishonors his head.” The Old Testament Law was very clear about maintaining the distinction between the genders. “A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing, for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this” (Deut. 22:5) This may also be what Paul is referring to in 1 Corinthians 11. In other words, men were to look like men and women were to look like women.
49. Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Women: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).
50. One of the most easily understood principles of submission found in “the Law” is that a wife’s vow to God could be nullified by her husband upon his immediately hearing about it, but if the husband nullified the vow sometime *after* hearing about it, he bore the consequences of her wrongdoing (Num. 30:10-14) This reflects the relationship and responsibility of headship noted in chapter 1.
51. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 163.
52. Keller, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles*, 16-17.
53. Keller, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles*, 17.
54. Keller, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles*, 24.
55. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Women in the Church 3rd Edition: An Interpretation & Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 167.
56. Kostenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*,
57. Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 66.
58. Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 68.
59. Keller, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles*, 21.
60. Those who see an inclusion explain it this way: “v. 11 begins with ‘quietly,’ and v. 12 concludes with ‘quietly.’ The permission for women to ‘learn’ is contrasted with the proscription for them ‘to teach,’ while ‘all submissiveness’ is paired with ‘not to exercise authority over a man.’ The submission in view, then, is likely to men, since v. 12 bans

- women from exercising authority over men” (Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 187).
61. Keller, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles*, 19.
 62. It is worth noting that the word *presbuteros* translated “elder” that Paul uses in Titus 1 is the same word found in Titus 2 translated “older men” (presbutes) and “older women” (presbutis). This is no contradiction of 1 Timothy 2, for Paul’s letter to Titus notes that the “elder” women were to instruct the younger women; there is no mention of women overseeing men.
 63. “If [Adam’s headship was Satan’s target], then what Paul meant in 1 Timothy 2:14 was this: ‘Adam was not deceived (that is, Adam was not approached by the deceiver and did not carry on direct dealings with the deceiver), but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor (that is, she was the one who took up dealings with the deceiver and was led through her direct interaction with him into deception and transgression).’ In this case, the main point is not that the man is undecivable or that the woman is more deceivable but that when God’s order of leadership is repudiated, it brings damage and ruin. Men and women are both more vulnerable to error and sin when they forsake the order that God has intended.” Piper and Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions*, 45-46.
 64. Alsup notes, “One older single friend gave testimony to me of the great spiritual struggle she had to say goodbye to the children she would never bear. God rooted out much fear and wrong thinking in her life through that struggle. During the mother’s day sermon in question, the pastor made the point that single and infertile women shouldn’t feel excluded from I Tim. 2:15, because God still uses the issue of childbearing in their lives for their sanctification. I have heard from many women who struggle because they are unable to bear children. They too give testimony that God has used the issue of childbearing to sanctify them much.” Wendy Alsup, “Women Saved Through Childbearing?!” *Theology for Women*, <https://theologyforwomen.org/2011/11/women-saved-through-childbearing.html>, accessed August 8, 2018.
 65. Wendy Alsup, “Women Saved Through Childbearing?!” *Theology for Women*, November 19, 2011. <https://theologyforwomen.org/2011/11/women-saved-through-childbearing.html>. accessed June 22, 2018.
 66. Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Early Church*, 163.

67. In his letter to Titus, Paul tells older *and* younger men as well as the younger women to all be self-controlled (Tit. 2: 2-6). Gender relations require self-control!
68. Keller, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles*, 35.
69. Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 303-304.
70. Keller, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles*, 33.
71. "Actions Precede Beliefs," *Chronicles of a Babywise Mom: Implementing the -wise series*, accessed November 26, 2018, <https://www.babywisemom.com/actions-precede-beliefs/>.

About the Author

RENÉE WEBB SPROLES grew up in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, in a small neighborhood that backed up to her grandparents' farm. She and her husband, David, met at freshman orientation at Harding University in 1989 and married three years later. In 2005 Renée began homeschooling her two children, Emma and Houston, and in 2014, during her tenth year of homeschooling, Renée became the director of The School of Christian Thought (SCT) at North Boulevard Church of Christ. God has used her many years of homeschooling experience, as well as her degree in Public Relations, to develop the facets of the SCT: a speaker series, accredited college coursework through Hope International University, a residential School of Discipleship (teen-adult), and the Discipleship Tutorial (a homeschool tutorial for grades 5-12). At the Discipleship Tutorial, Renée teaches government, economics, personal finance, study skills, and English grammar and writing. She and her husband, David, have co-taught parenting classes for twenty years and currently teach a marriage and family class of a hundred students each week.

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“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Eph. 3:20).

Renew's 10 Top Resources on Gender Roles for Christian Leaders

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