

Gender Roles in the Church

Introduction: Authority – who is over us?

Trust – who is for us?

Aim



'The Egalitarian Left'

- Men & women homogenized
- Differences masked

'The Complementarian Middle'

- Men & women equal in dignity, status & humanity
- Different roles in home & church

'The Domineering Right'

- Men more prominent
- Equality masked

1. God's Original Design & Its Corruption

i) Created Together in God's Image to Rule the Earth for God

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 1.26-28

- *Image* not 'substantive' (appearance, intelligence, creativity), but 'functional' (humans 'act like God' in ruling over the earth under Him & for Him)

Key implication: men and women are EQUAL in dignity, status, worth & humanity

ii) Created in Order for the Service of God

a. The Creation of Man

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. *Genesis 2.7-9*

b. The Command to Man

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." *Genesis 2.15-17*

c. The Helper for Man

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ¹⁹ Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. *Genesis 2.18-25*

- *Helper* – not a cure for loneliness but so that jointly they might serve God
 - not a demeaning role because God is Israel's helper
(e.g. *Psalm 10.14; 18.7; see also Exodus 18.4; Deuteronomy 33.29*)

- Further evidence of 'order' in the creation account:

- Woman is made from man & not the other way around (1 Cor 11.8)
 - Woman is made for man & not the other way around (1 Cor 11.9)
 - God's law is given to man (Gen 2.16-17; cf. Gen 3.17)
 - Man names woman & not the other way around (Gen 2.23, cf. 2.20)
- Notice that these things happen BEFORE the Fall not AFTER it

Key Implication: Men & women are DIFFERENT to each other in *role*

- These differences are not located physically, psychologically, or emotionally. The difference is one of role. Like a sports' team or an orchestra, men & women work together to the same end of serving God but with differing roles.
- The picture is of 'happy headship' – loving leadership & willing submission.

iii) *The Rejection of God's Good Order & Design*

a. *The Crimes*

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. *Genesis 3.1-6*

- God's goodness is doubted
- God's word is distorted
- God's judgement is denied
- God's word is disobeyed – by Adam as well as Eve
- God's good creation order is displaced

b. *The Curses*

i) *The Serpent*

¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock & above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, & dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you & the woman, & between your offspring & her offspring; he shall bruise your head, & you shall bruise his heel."

Genesis 3.14-15

- *Enmity* seen in individuals – Job 2.7, 1 Peter 5.8; in Jesus' ministry – Matthew 4.1-11; in the church – 2 Corinthians 11.3
- *Crushing* Matthew 4.1-11; Matthew 8.29; Colossians 2.15; Romans 16.20

ii) *The Woman*

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

Genesis 3.16

- *Pain in childbearing* (cf. Genesis 1.28)
- *'Desire'* not sexual lust but the battle of the sexes
Your *desire* shall be for your husband & he shall *rule over* you. 3.16
[Sin's] *desire* is for you but you must *rule over* it. 4.7

iii) The Man

¹⁷ And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." *Genesis 3.17-19*

- *Final responsibility is Adam's*

- *Pain in work* (cf. Genesis 1.28)

- *Death*

Key Implication: Sin has corrupted everything.

This side of the new creation men will tend either to abdicate their responsibility to lead, or will instead tyrannise women. Women will tend to reject submission and seek to control men, either openly or manipulatively.

2. Equality and diversity in the life of the Church**a) Jesus' ministry**

i) Equality Jesus treated (even marginalized) women, with dignity (John 4.27)
 Jesus taught women & welcomed them as disciples (Luke 10.38-42)
 Jesus commended women as models of faith (Matthew 26.10-13)
 Jesus' resurrection was first witnessed by women (Matthew 28.5)
 Jesus' resurrection was first proclaimed by women (Matthew 28.7)

ii) Diversity Jesus reaffirmed the teaching of Genesis 1.27 & 2.24 (Matthew 19.4-6)
 Jesus appointed men alone as Apostles of His church (Matthew 10.2-4)
 This requirement remained when Judas was replaced (Acts 1.21-22)

b) Rest of New Testament

i) Equality * **Men & women are equal in salvation**
 - equally in need of salvation (Ephesians 2.1-3)
 - equally saved by grace through faith in Christ (Eph 2.4-10)
 - equally indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1.13-14)
 - equally heirs of God's promise

'For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. *Galatians 3.26-29*

*** Men & women are both gifted by the Spirit to serve Jesus**

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. *1 Corinthians 12.4-7*

*** Men & women 'teach' & 'admonish' one another to love Christ**

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. *Colossians 3.16*

*** Men & women are together 'on mission for God'**

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. *Philippians 1.3-5*

*** Married couples sometimes together instruct others (in private)**

²⁴ Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. *Acts 18.24-26 (cf. v2)*

Key implication – mutual respect & mutual relational submission

ii) Diversity

What if God created man and women differently? What if it's not a question of limitations but a matter of distinct divine purposes for different parts of the body? I guess you could say that the eye is limited because it cannot hear. Or that the ear is limited because it cannot see. But that would be missing the point, wouldn't it? The egalitarianism of Western culture, for all its good purposes, leads to the homogenization of men and women, to unisex clothes, colognes, roles, and lifestyles. The lovely and distinct colour palletes of men and women then mush together into a grey-brown muck.

Jonathan Leeman, *Understanding & Honoring Distinctiveness*

1 Timothy 2.8-15

⁸ I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness-- with good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing-- if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

1 Timothy 2.8-15

- Women are to learn alongside men (this was radical), but when the people of God gather to hear the word of God, women are not to teach (cf. Colossians 3.16). That teaching role is reserved for (certain) men (cf. 1 Timothy 3.1-7).

- Women are not to exercise authority over men (i.e. the role of 'elder' is reserved for suitable men). Paul's argument is not made either from culture or from the intellectual ability or Bible-handling ability of women (this is really important!).

- v14? - not that women are more gullible or prone to sin
 - it may mean that when the creation order was rejected in Genesis 3, things went wrong.

- v15? - not that women are saved by giving birth (cf. 1 Timothy 1.15; 2.3-5).
 - it may mean that Eve (or women generally) will be saved through the birth of *the child*, the serpent-crusher, or it could mean that women are saved as they put their faith in Christ and evidence this by accepting God's created order.

- This does not mean that it is *impossible* for God to use women in His service (even by preaching), but it does mean that we should ask, 'Is this God's preferred & revealed way of ordering His church?'

1 Corinthians 11.3-16

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵ but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. ⁶ For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. ⁷ For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. ⁸ For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹ Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰ That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; ¹² for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. ¹³ Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴ Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, ¹⁵ but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶ If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

1 Corinthians 11.3-16

- Women are given a remarkable freedom to pray & prophesy in church.
- Men & women are both to demonstrate rather than to subvert the created order when they pray & prophesy.
- This argument comes from both the created order & the nature of God.
- While some hold that women should continue to wear hats in church today, many think it helpful to distinguish between a *timeless principle* (different gender roles) & a *cultural application* (head covering).
- Comparing 1 Corinthians 11.5 & 1 Timothy 2.12, we can say that whatever the women were doing when they were praying & prophesying, it was something less than teaching / exercising authority over men. Nevertheless, it was significant – prophesy is a ministry of the word that encourages people & builds the church (see 1 Corinthians 14.3-4)

1 Corinthians 14.33-35

³³ For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

- God is concerned about order among His people, but why are the women who were told to pray & prophesy in chapter 11 now told to keep silent?
- *'Admittedly, taken out of context Paul's words, 'It is shameful for a woman to speak in church' sound repugnant. As David Garland explains, 'shameful behaviour' is relative to a given cultural context. He elaborates, 'The situation that best fits the adjective 'shameful' is one in which wives defy convention by publicly embarrassing their husbands through their speaking.' Specifically, 'in the context, it is likely that Paul imagines a wife joining in the process of weighing what is being said during the congregational scrutiny of prophecy (14.29)... By doing so, they compromise their husband's authority over them & appear to undermine the good order of the household.'*

Andreas & Margaret Köstenberger, *God's design for man & woman*, p179

Titus 2.1-10

But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. ² Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. ⁶ Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. ⁷ Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸ and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. ⁹ Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

Titus 2.1-10

- Titus is to teach different groups to live in accordance with the gospel of Christ.
- Younger women are to be taught by older women. This teaching is to encompass their home life (v4), their moral life (v5b), & their working life (v5b).
- This training is crucial to the life and witness of the church (v5c).

Key Implication **Rejoice in our God-given diversity & respect differences of opinion**

Books to read:

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| *Carrie Sandom | <i>Different by Design</i> (Christian Focus, 2012) |
| * A & M Köstenberger | <i>God's Design for Man & Woman</i> (Crossway, 2014) |
| * Claire Smith | <i>God's Good Design</i> (Matthias Media, 2012) |
| Derek & Diane Tidball | <i>The Message of Women</i> (IVP, 2012) |
| Goddard & Hendry | <i>The Gender Agenda</i> (IVP, 2010) |
- * The Council on Biblical Manhood & Womanhood (cbmw.org)
Christians for Biblical Equality (cbeinternational.org)