

HUMANITY

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Created Male and Female

Todd Wilson has said that there has been “a historic consensus about human sexuality that has been part of the church in each of its major expressions—Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant.” He adds, “It has been around for centuries, from roughly the fourth to the middle of the twentieth century.” He calls this historic consensus “mere sexuality,” but notes that it has been challenged in the past forty to fifty years, such that there is now the need for “rediscovering the Christian vision of sexuality.”¹

We begin by noting that manhood and womanhood are not central themes in Scripture, despite the abundance of material on the topic. The overwhelming majority of biblical commands are addressed to us in our common humanity, or, within the church, to us in our common status as followers of Christ. We also hasten to note that biblical revelation is not primarily given to reveal humanity, but God. There are only a handful of commands that address men as men or women as women, and most of those are to men as husbands and fathers and women as wives and mothers, not to all men or all women. From this, we learn that male and female are far more alike than different.

Moreover, Scripture nowhere gives us an explicit definition of what it means to be male or female, or a list of differences between men and women. There are also no commands to male or female that indicate specific virtues

¹ Todd Wilson, *Mere Sexuality: Rediscovering the Christian Vision of Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 34.

as required of one sex to the exclusion of the other. However, the whole person is the special creation of God, including one's biological distinction as male or female. Human sexuality is neither accidental nor incidental to our humanity. With this in mind, we consider the biblical teaching on this topic, being ever mindful that, for evangelical Christians, biblical teaching is the sole normative source for faith and practice.

Men and Women as God Intended: Genesis 1–2

As with other aspects of theological anthropology, Genesis 1–2 give foundational teaching on our creation as male and female. This passage is all the more important when we observe that it gives us the only depiction in the Bible of man and woman in original innocence. Thus, Genesis 1–2 reveal male and female as God intended.

The first mention of male and female occurs in Gen 1:27. This verse seems to emphasize what is true of both male and female. Both are created in the image and likeness of God; both are addressed by the command in v. 28, the so-called cultural mandate. Indeed, both are necessary to obey the first part of the command: "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth." Genesis 1 supports the idea of male–female equality. In its first words about humanity, Scripture portrays male and female as equal manifestations of the *imago Dei*. They are equal recipients of the divinely-given mission; they are equal participants in a divinely-created relationship; and they are equal stewards of a divinely-delegated authority over creation.² Before Scripture describes the ways in which male and female are different, it describes the ways in which they are the same.

Genesis 1 reveals humanity's relationship to the Creator, while Genesis 2 reveals humanity's relationship to each other. In other words, the first creation account introduces humanity and the creation mandate, while the second account details how humanity will fulfill that mandate in harmony. The

² The manner in which male and female express their authority over creation is intrinsic to their relationship to each other. While the man and the woman had equal authority over creation in Genesis 1–2, they did not necessarily have identical authority in relation to one another. We will address this further in our discussion of complementarianism and egalitarianism later in this chapter.

narrative of Gen 2:18–25 is the first extended treatment of maleness and femaleness. We observe that Genesis 1 presumes the coexistence of male and female, but in Genesis 2, there was a point at which the female did not exist. Here the man is given assignments and commands prior to the creation of the woman. That the man was created before the woman must be noted, although the significance of that fact is debated among evangelicals. In Hebrew culture, to be first entailed greater responsibility. As Richards and O'Brien point out in their work *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*, being "first" in Western society infers superiority and primacy.³ Although being first in Hebrew culture may include additional privileges, it primarily entails greater responsibility. Hence, we may infer that the man's creation prior to woman denotes his responsibility for the woman. Further, as when the man named the animals—an expression of his headship over and responsibility to care for them—the man's act of naming the woman likewise expressed his headship over and responsibility for the woman. Again, this headship does not imply superiority, but rather responsibility.

Verse 18 indicates that the Lord initiated the creation of the woman to alleviate the man's solitude. Unlike the animals, the Lord revealed to the man his need for the woman. While the man had perfect fellowship with God and harmonious coexistence with creation including the animals, he had no one like himself. The Lord's solution to the man's aloneness was to create a "helper" (*ezer*) who was "suitable to" or "corresponding to" (*kenegdo*) him. The word for "helper" (*ezer*) does not indicate a secondary, demeaning, or insignificant status; the Lord calls himself the helper (*ezer*) of his people (Deut 33:29; Ps 121:1–2). Rather, the woman is the only creature who can stand face-to-face with the man and enable him to fulfill God's command to rule and reign over the earth.

The description of the woman as "a helper corresponding to" the man gives the woman a role obviously not given to the man, and the fact that God did not create another male as the helper for Adam indicates that the woman brings something new and distinctive to the relationship. They are both similar and different. Even the naming of the woman signifies this: the

³ E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2012), 13–14.

man (*ish*) names her woman (*ishah*)—her name both comes from and sounds like the man's name. Further, that the man named the woman also expressed his headship. As with other occurrences of spiritual and representative headship, he was responsible for the woman before God.

The mode of the woman's creation conveys her nature. The Lord fashioned the woman out of the side of the man. It is noteworthy that the verb used to describe the creation of woman—*banah*, meaning “to build”—occurs only in verse 2:22 of the creation narrative. In Hebrew thought, the side signified the man's rational powers; woman shared in man's capacity for comprehension, reason, and agency.⁴ Of note, the Lord could have created the woman out of the dust of the ground as he did the man; this certainly would have expressed her equality. However, the Lord's creation of the woman depicts not only that woman is equal to the man, but that she is *of* the man; woman is ontologically *from* him. She is of the same substance as him, in every way related and corresponding to him. In fact, when the man first sees the woman, he recognizes the ways in which they are substantively the same: she “is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). Thus, the woman's differences from man cannot be regarded as making her inferior to man. Man could neither disparage her person nor dismiss her intellect without despising himself.⁵

From the beginning, male and female were created for relationship. The creation of the woman was precipitated by God showing the man that he needed a partner who was both like him and different from him. As with humanity's other qualities, the relationship between the man and the woman reflects, or images, God. God is both One and in relationship with the Persons of the Godhead; the union between male and female makes them both one and in relationship with each other.⁶ The man understands his identity as a man through comparison and contrast with the woman, and vice versa. In other words, both man and woman understood who they

⁴ Earle Bennett Cross, *The Hebrew Family: A Study in Historical Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 42. Within Hebrew thought, emotional affections were located in the bowels.

⁵ Portions of this chapter appear in Katie McCoy, “Recovering the Communion of Persons,” *Eichon* 1, no. 2 (2019): 44–59.

⁶ Portions of this chapter appear in Katie McCoy, “God Created Them, Male and Female,” *SWTJ* 63, no. 2 (Spring 2021): 49–64.

were individually by who they were in relationship to each other. Dietrich Bonhoeffer described this as an “I-Thou” way of relating, in which one's self-understanding occurs through how they relationally correspond.⁷ Just as God is not alone in himself, human beings image God by what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called an analogy of relation (*analogia relationis*).⁸

This analogy of relationship, in which humans image God in their relationships with each other, personifies or manifests the *imago Dei* in a way that isolated humans cannot, what Karl Barth called “being in encounter.”⁹ Bonhoeffer elaborates: “Human beings exist in duality, and it is in this *dependence on the other that their creatureliness exists*.”¹⁰ The relational interdependence in which human beings exists is the *analogia relationis*. Thus, human beings image God in interdependence upon one another.¹¹ Since humanity images God with their whole being, and since sexual differentiation is not just reproductive but also relational, we can conclude that sexual differentiation between male and female images the Divine.

John Paul II in his work *Theology of the Body* said the body is a gift, one that subsumes the whole person. The significance of the male-female relationship illustrates the “nuptial meaning of the body.” To fulfill the body's

⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, translated by G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 185. “The analogy between God and man [*imago Dei*] is simply the existence of the I and the Thou in confrontation.” The I-Thou motif originates with Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970).

⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 65 (see chap. 3, n. 78). Bonhoeffer contrasts this with an *analogia entis* (analogy of being). The “freedom” of God that human beings image reflects God's ability to be free for another. “The creature is free in that one creature exists in relation to another creature, in that one being is free for another human being” (66).

⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, 185: “Hence humanity is the determination of our being as a being in encounter with the other man.” See also Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2*, 248: “The only real differentiation and relationship is that of man to man, and in its original and most concrete form of man to woman and woman to man. Man is no more solitary than God. But as God is One, and He alone is God, so man as man is one and alone, and two only in the duality of his kind, i.e., in the duality of man and woman. In this way he is a copy and imitation of God. In this way he repeats in his confrontation of God and himself the confrontation in God.” This is not to say that individual humanity does not fully image God. The image of God is not contingent upon relationship, but it is manifested in relationship.

¹⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*. Italics original.

¹¹ Bonhoeffer 64.

nuptial meaning, both male and female mutually give themselves to create a “communion of persons.”¹² This communion is a relationship in which both male and female mutually realize the significance of their gendered bodies as embodied gifts to each other.

Male and female are not just different. They are different in ways that correspond to one another. J. Budziszewski calls this “polaric complementarity.” Like two opposite points on an axis, male and female are both interdependent and congruent.¹³ The polaric complementarity enables male and female biologically to understand themselves through comprehending each other relationally. Within the woman, man recognizes himself. He understands himself through her corresponding similarities and differences. Gerhard Müller describes this as among the reasons God created sexual differentiation: “In sexual difference . . . each of the two can only understand himself or herself in light of the other: the male needs the female to be understood, and the same is true for the female.”¹⁴ In other words, the man understands himself by understanding what he is not and vice versa. Man cannot comprehend his identity as a man apart from woman and vice versa; both masculinity and femininity find their meaning in contradistinction to one another: “Femininity is found in relation to masculinity and masculinity is confirmed in femininity. They depend on each other,” John Paul II explains.¹⁵ Ross Hastings identifies the relationality between male and female. It constitutes both unity and a “differentiated, complementary, noninterchangeable plurality. . . . *It is otherness and oneness. Otherness in oneness.*”¹⁶

¹² John Paul II, *Theology of the Body in Simple Language* (Philokalia Books, 2008), 19. John Paul II discusses at length how the celibate person also fulfills the nuptial meaning of the body by being “married” to God (168, 173).

¹³ J. Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2012), 38–40. Budziszewski identifies this as “polaric complementarity.” Not merely do biologically quantifiable brain differences between male and female exist, but they exist in corresponding ways, the differences of one balancing what the other lacks (41).

¹⁴ Gerhard Müller, “An Opening to the Mystery of God,” in *Not Just Good, but Beautiful: The Complementarity Relationship Between Man and Woman* (Walden, NY: Plough, 2015), 12.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 16.

¹⁶ Ross Hastings, “The Trinity and Human Sexuality: Made in the Image of God” *Cruz* 53, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 15.

The distinction some see here has called forth much discussion. In fact, divergent interpretations of Genesis 2 are the starting point for two major camps in contemporary evangelical thought concerning the roles for men and women in the home and church, called egalitarian and complementarian, which we treat later.

Apart from the issue of complementary roles, there does seem to be an emphasis on the complementary natures of male and female connected with the institution of marriage in Genesis 2. Specifically in reference to Gen 2:24, Richard Hays says, “Thus the complementarity of male and female is given a theological grounding in God’s creative activity: God has made them to become ‘one flesh.’”¹⁷ James Brownson notes the numerous commentators who argue for “gender complementarity” from Gen 2:24 and the language of “one flesh,” but critiques the idea, arguing rather that “the ‘one-flesh’ union spoken of in Gen 2:24 connotes, not physical complementarity, but a kinship bond.”¹⁸ He believes that this invalidates one of the major arguments against same-sex relationships. He says, “To say that the same-sex erotic acts depicted in Rom 1:26–27 are ‘against nature’ because they violate the physical complementarity of the genders depicted in the one-flesh union of Gen 2:24 is simply mistaken.”¹⁹

Other scholars agree that the phrase “one flesh” is not solely about the physical union made possible by the gender complementarity of male and female, but it certainly includes that. John Collins says, “Though the term one flesh is not about their sexual union as such, it does find its consummation in that union.”²⁰ Gordon Wenham notes that the establishment of a kinship relation is part of the meaning of one flesh but adds that sexual

¹⁷ Richard Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to J. Boswell’s Exegesis of Rom. 1,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14, no. 1 (1986): 191.

¹⁸ James Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 32. Brownson cites Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 254–55; John Stott, *Same-Sex Partnerships? A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1998), 32; Thomas Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 85; and others who argue for gender complementarity.

¹⁹ Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 35.

²⁰ C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2006), 139.

union is also involved in becoming one flesh.²¹ Paul's citation of Gen 2:24 in 1 Cor 6:16 seems to indicate that Paul understood one flesh as involving sexual union.

More important still is the larger context. In Gen 1:28, humanity is charged with the responsibility of multiplying and filling the earth. But in Genesis 2, Adam lacks the partner necessary for carrying out this responsibility. God provides for Adam, not another man, but a woman. Kenneth Mathews says the Hebrew phrase in Gen 2:24 (*'al kēn*; "this is why") describes marriage, as "the consequence of God's charge for the human family to propagate and rule."²² It is this specific type of kinship bond, male-female marriage that is established by the one-flesh union of Gen 2:24.²³ Collins says that verse 24 shows God's approval of this custom and roots "every other human marriage in this first marriage."²⁴

The relationship between male and female is unlike any other in God's creation. Not only do they mutually enable one another to fulfill the creation mandate of Gen 1:26–29, they also experience an intimacy and self-discovery through their relationship that reflects the depth and mystery of God himself.

Men and Women and the Fall: Genesis 3

The effects of the fall in Genesis 3 illustrate both the union and the differences between male and female. Both male and female are equally guilty for their transgression, both damaged their relationship with the Lord, and both were evicted from the garden.

Within this continuity and equality, the Lord interacts with the man and the woman differently. Initiating the reconciliation between humanity after they disobeyed him, the Lord calls for the man, even though the

²¹ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis*, Word, 2 vols. (Waco: Word, 1987), 1:71.

²² Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 1A: 222.

²³ It is worth noting that in Matt 19:4–5, Jesus links the creation of humans as male and female ("made them male and female") to the institution of marriage ("for this reason"). Jesus also attributes the words of Gen 2:24 not to the human author, but to God ("he said").

²⁴ Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 139.

woman sinned first. In his headship, the man held primary responsibility and accountability to the Lord for his and the woman's sin. To be clear, the man's responsibility in no way negates the woman's guilt; as a person with full volition, she is an equal moral agent capable of choosing between right and wrong. The man's headship does not "depersonalize" the woman.

We may also note the significance of the judgments the man and the woman receive. Even in their punishment, the Lord safeguards their place within his creation: although the ground and the serpent were cursed (Gen 3:14, 17; *arar*), Scripture does not reveal that humanity received a curse. Rather, they were judged and condemned. The judgment each of them receives further illustrates the relational purpose they were created to fulfill. The man's judgment concerns his command to work. As a result of his sin, the man would struggle. His work would entail strenuous effort.

The woman's judgment concerns her relationship to her husband and capacity to bear new life. She would endure excruciating pain in childbirth and her relationship with her husband would no longer exist in harmony. Genesis 3:16 states that the woman's "desire" shall be for her husband. What does the text mean in saying the desire of the woman will be for her husband? Most commentators interpret Gen 3:16 in light of Gen 4:7, in which the Lord tells Cain that sin's desire is for [to have control over] him.²⁵ What was created to be a unified and harmonious relationship of headship and helper between the man and the woman was distorted by sin and would hereafter be fractious and discordant.

What about the effect of sin on the man? The text says of the woman's husband: "he will rule over you." The word "rule" itself does not necessarily imply something negative. Most commentators agree that the word is used too broadly to necessarily see it as meaning sinful domination.²⁶ As Raymond Ortlund puts it, "rule" could mean "godly headship," or "ungodly domination," but the fact that it appears in a statement of judgment on the

²⁵ Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 160, notes that the word for "desire" in Gen 3:16 is used elsewhere in the Old Testament only twice (Gen 4:7; Song of Songs 7:10). Of these two, "Genesis 4:7 is an exact parallel with 3:16," where the sense is clearly a "desire to master." Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 251, and Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 201–2, concur with Collins in interpreting "desire" in Gen 3:16 in light of its usage in Gen 4:7.

woman for her sin makes a negative interpretation more likely.²⁷ Victor Hamilton says, "The sinful husband will try to be a tyrant over his wife."²⁸ Richard Hess thinks it important that we see this harsh rule of the husband over the wife as describing "how life *will* be lived as the result of the Fall, rather than how it *should* be lived."²⁹ Whether one sees the fall as the origin of a husband's headship over his wife or a sinful distortion of a proper headship into a sinful domination appears to depend on the larger issue of a complementarian versus an egalitarian view of gender roles, a topic we will explore more fully later.³⁰ Either way, history records the sad story of sinful domination, exploitation, and oppression of women by men down through history. It is one of the many effects of sin, distorting God's intention and design for male-female relationships. Sin has introduced all types of disruptions. As a result of what happens in Genesis 3, we can no longer assume that human nature, male or female, fully reflects God's created intention.

Men and Women in a Fallen World: The Rest of the Old Testament

Most discussions of male and female draw little from Old Testament texts beyond Genesis 1–3. Old Testament life, society, and religion were all clearly patriarchal. Genealogies are traced through the fathers; God speaks primarily to men; the leaders (with very few exceptions) are men.³¹ The priesthood

²⁷ Raymond Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 109.

²⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 202.

²⁹ Richard Hess, "Equality with and without Innocence: Genesis 1–3," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005), 92. Emphasis in original.

³⁰ In general terms, most egalitarians see Gen 3:16 as the origin of male headship; complementarians see it as the distortion of the headship that originated in Genesis 2. See egalitarian Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 56; and complementarian Ray Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," 109.

³¹ In Genesis alone, God is recorded as speaking to Noah, Noah's sons, Abraham,

was exclusively male. Numerous laws in the Torah seem to show a higher regard for males than females. For example, Lev 27:1–8 gives instructions for dedicating persons to the Lord. In each category of age, the value placed on a male is higher than that placed on a female. Numbers 5 gives the process for testing for an unfaithful wife, but there is no corresponding test for an unfaithful husband. Numbers 30 allows for a vow taken by a young woman or wife to be invalidated by her father or husband, while a man, a widow, or a divorced woman is bound by their vow. A woman was under the authority of any father or husband in her life. Even the laws prohibiting sexual intercourse with certain relatives and under certain circumstances (see Lev 18:6–23; 20:10–21) are addressed to men, with one exception (Lev 18:23; 20:16).

There were few responsibilities laid upon men as husbands in the Old Testament. They were not to be unfaithful to their wives (Exod 20:14); they were not to covet their neighbor's wife (v. 17); they were to provide a wife with "food, clothing, and marital rights" (21:10); and any rights to divorce were limited (Deut 24:1–4).³² Even those rights, according to Jesus, were only permitted because of the hardness of heart among the men (Matt 19:8). Perhaps the most positive responsibility laid upon a husband in the Old Testament was his exemption from military duties for the first year after his marriage. He was to "stay at home for one year, so that he can bring joy to the wife he has married" (Deut 24:5). But there is no direct command for a husband to love his wife in the Old Testament.

Sarah had some struggles but is eventually included among the heroes of faith (Heb 11:11), and the law did provide a measure of protection for women (Exod 21:10–11), especially for widows (22:22). Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah are portrayed as occupying some type of leadership role.³³ All of them were prophetesses who led others to godly action and even confronted ungodliness in leaders. Ruth, Hannah, Abigail, and Esther are portrayed as

³² The meaning of the last item, "marital rights," is not certain, as it is a term only used here in the Old Testament. Paul's reference in 1 Cor 7:3 to "marital duties" seems the closest parallel, and in view of the importance of having children to women in the Old Testament, the idea that a wife had a right to sexual relations with her husband seems to be a likely interpretation. See Walter Kaiser, "Exodus," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:431.

³³ See the discussion of them in Linda Belleville, "Women Leaders in the Bible," in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 111–15.

women of character, as is the unnamed woman of Prov 31:10–31. Aimee Byrd especially draws upon the book of Ruth as an example of “gynocentric texts” in the Old Testament to contend that Scripture, and even the Old Testament, is not a purely “patriarchal construction.” She says, “Women aren’t left out. They aren’t ignored; they are heard. They are more than heard; they contribute.”³⁴

Yet many aspects of the Old Testament depiction of women remain troubling. Ronald Pierce acknowledges and catalogs many of these troubling provisions,³⁵ especially in the Old Testament law, but argues that within the context of the time, the law was “beneficial to women in its time, bringing order to the society in which they lived.”³⁶ It did not create patriarchy, but it did limit it: “It sometimes even disciplined the man and guarded the woman.”³⁷ It restrained male dominance. In fact, compared to other ancient Near Eastern legal codes, Hebrew law can be considered “progressive.”³⁸ According to Eckart Otto, women in Israel had an elevated status within their patriarchal culture:

The family laws in the book of Deuteronomy had a progressive and protective attitude to the legal status of women. They were deeply concerned with the restriction of male predominance. This did by no means imply that these provisions really overcame the patrilineal and patriarchal pattern of Judean society, but they were intended to install women even in matters of family law as legal subjects vested with rights and titles of their own that were not derived from rights and decisions of men.³⁹

³⁴ Aimee Byrd, *Recovering from Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 68.

³⁵ Ronald Pierce, “From Old Testament Law to New Testament Gospel,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 97–105. Pierce discusses Old Testament provisions concerning adultery and divorce, vows, purification ceremonies, and numerous other issues.

³⁶ Pierce, 109.

³⁷ Pierce, 105.

³⁸ Portions of this section also appear in Katie McCoy, *Old Testament Laws Concerning Particular Female Personhood and Their Implications for the Dignity of Women* (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

³⁹ Eckart Otto, “False Weights in the Scales of Biblical Justice? Different Views of Women from Patriarchal Hierarchy to Religious Equality in the Book of Deuteronomy,” in *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*.

According to Christopher Ansberry, biblical family laws assume the culture’s “androcentric social structure” and intend to “rein in the potential male abuse of power.”⁴⁰ Daniel Block notes that Hebrew law did not attempt to replace Israel’s existing social structure, but instead to morally restrain and direct those who had social power: “The solution offered by the Old Testament (and the New Testament, for that matter) is not to replace these structures with some sort of egalitarianism that neutralizes gender distinctions and homogenizes roles, but to plead for transformed leadership.”⁴¹ According to Anthony Phillips, Deuteronomic law made women “equal members of the covenant community with men.”⁴² Despite her unfavorable view of these laws, Jenni Williams concedes the acknowledgment of women’s legal and theological personhood within this text:

ed. Victor H., Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson, and Tikva Frymer-Kensky, JSOTSup 262 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 140.

⁴⁰ Christopher B. Ansberry, “Response to Reeder,” *Ex Auditu* 28 (2012): 143. Especially of note, Ansberry distinguishes between *patricentrism* and *patriarchy*, denouncing patriarchy: “These family laws do not necessarily seek to legitimize an androcentric social structure; they assume it. Instead, they seek to rein in the potential male abuse of power and to curb the household’s degeneration into patriarchy. Deuteronomy’s attention to the welfare of the domestic unit, rather than to the tyrannical interests of its head, combined with its concern with the exploitation of male power, reorients our understanding of the nature of the familial regulations that punctuate the document. Whereas certain narrative accounts within the OT indicate that patriarchal exploitation was the reality in ancient Israel (Gen 20:10–20; Judg 11:34–40; 19:22–30; 21:19–24; 2 Sam 11:1–27; 13:1–19), the Deuteronomic family laws indicate that patricentrism was the ideal.”

⁴¹ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 530. “The sexual crimes presented here also address issues of gender relations. Many interpret these instructions as irredeemably patriarchal, the primary intention being to defend the rights and honor of men at the expense of women. However, the cultural presuppositions reflected here are millennia removed from modern pervasively egalitarian Western societies. However, our caricatured view of patriarchy, which etymologically means ‘the rule of the father,’ is problematic. It evokes images of high-handed and self-serving men whose primary concern was maintaining male honor and male control over the household.” Additionally, Block contends that the term *patricentrism*, rather than *patriarchy*, better reflects the biblical culture. See Daniel I. Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 41.

⁴² Anthony Phillips, *Ancient Israel’s Criminal Law: A New Approach to the Decalogue* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 16.

[N]ot only are women legal persons, but theological persons. They are not independent, true. They have no equality, also true. But they have personhood. Therefore, although authority (and power) is vested in the male head of the household, that power and authority are by no means so absolute or monolithic as might be thought.⁴³

For Williams, Deut 22:22–29 may not sufficiently express women's equality, but it does express women's personhood and curb the potential for tyrannical power. The Law reveals God's character and restrains the sinfulness of mankind. Many laws prescribed how God's people were to respond after someone committed an offense. As Gal 5:24 says, the Law is our "tutor to Christ," but it cannot produce a righteous and compassionate society; only the Holy Spirit has the power to effectuate such change. Thus, while consistent with its social structure of patriarchy, equality of personhood is ingrained in Deuteronomic law. Otto continues: "If equality is a tenet of all modern concepts of law, that all humans are to be treated alike, then a decisive step into this direction was made by the Deuteronomistic concept of a society without marginalized people."⁴⁴ Thus, Deuteronomic law, including its laws on sexual assault, expressed equity and justice for every human, regardless of gender or socio-economic standing.

Additionally, biblical law holds men accountable for their sexual behavior. Sexual morality is a part of the holiness code, and the social order it ensures is of communal importance. In *God, Justice, and Society: Aspects of Law and Legality in the Bible*, Jonathan Burnside explains that the Hebrew sexual ethic is "less individualistic than modern law" and "is positively oriented toward the community as a whole."⁴⁵ Within this community-oriented concern, even legitimate sexual activity, while private, is of collective significance. This idea contradicts the Western value of individualism that likely influences our reading of Old Testament law.

⁴³ Jenni Williams, "Adding Insult to Injury? The Family Laws in Deuteronomy" in *Tamar's Tears: Evangelical Engagements with Feminist Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Andrew Sloane (Eugene: Pickwick Publications 2012), 101.

⁴⁴ Otto, "False Weights in the Scales of Biblical Justice?," 146.

⁴⁵ Jonathan Burnside, *God, Justice, and Society: Aspects of Law and Legality in the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 381–82.

Deuteronomic law was a revolutionary statement of women's dignity. Otto claims that the legal provisions within Deuteronomistic family law "paved the way for the modern emancipation of women already, in antiquity, and their authors deserve our respect."⁴⁶ Thus, Hebrew law constrained the potential abuses of men. Fully knowing humanity's sinfulness, the Lord constructed protective hedges around a woman in her most vulnerable states.⁴⁷ When interpreted through the lens of Hebrew culture, and when considering practices of surrounding nations and their treatment of women, Old Testament law regulated the behavior of, and restrained the sinfulness of, men who could have misused their social power to exploit rather than to protect.

Beyond the Old Testament law, in the Prophets and Writings we are given some glimpses into the joys and difficulties men and women experienced in their relationships, especially marriage. We have the wholesome delight husbands and wives can take in their sexual relationship in Song of Songs and Prov 5:15–20. God compares his own passionate love for his people to marital love (Hos 2:14–20; Ezek 16:8–14), and Solomon sees a good wife as a priceless gift from God (Prov 18:22; 19:14; 31:10–12). But fallen men and women have also always experienced some friction in their relationships. There are numerous proverbs comparing a quarrelsome wife to a dripping faucet and affirming that living on a corner of a roof is preferable to living with such a woman (Prov 19:13; 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15–16). No doubt some of Solomon's wives could have come up with some similarly pungent adages about the trials of living with fallen men.

One extended treatment of a wife, Prov 31:10–31, provides a helpful corrective to some who think the Bible teaches that a woman's place is limited to the home. This woman did care for her family but was by no means limited to her home. She had numerous outside interests and businesses. Her husband was not threatened by her competence but blessed by it. She is given as a model to encourage wives to utilize to the fullest their gifts.

On the whole, while the Old Testament may not describe the differences between male and female as directly as we find in Genesis 1–3, it

⁴⁶ Otto, "False Weights in the Scales of Biblical Justice," 140.

⁴⁷ For a detailed exegesis of Old Testament laws concerning women, see McCoy, *Old Testament Laws Concerning Particular Female Personhood and Their Implications for the Dignity of Women*.

does provide a paradigm for the equal value and differences between male and female. A patriarchal context is assumed, rather than argued for, but it is mitigated by “gynocentric interruptions,” which appear in the pages of the Old Testament.⁴⁸ Yet, biblical law—which reveals the righteousness of God—upholds the dignity of women, particularly women who are socially or physically vulnerable. As with other laws, commands concerning women restrained human sinfulness and expressed justice. More explicit teaching comes with the fullness of the gospel and the New Testament revelation.⁴⁹

Men and Women in the New Testament

The Teachings of Jesus

There are two major points on men and women in the teachings of Jesus. The first is not so much specific verses as the overall tenor of his teaching and ministry. There is a more thorough involvement of women with Jesus and his ministry; they are more visible and more noted than in the Old Testament. He taught them, used women as positive examples in many of his parables, accepted their help and support, and honored them by appearing to them first on resurrection day, as they had honored him by being last at the cross and first at the tomb.

The Gospels themselves give repeated positive recognition to women. Five women are mentioned in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus, with Elizabeth and Mary the key figures in Luke’s birth narrative (Luke 1–2). Jesus’s conversations with women often highlight their exemplary characteristics. Mary’s devotion to Jesus is seen as better than Martha’s devotion to traditional female activities (Luke 10:38–42). The widow is praised for her financial gift (Mark 12:43–44), and the Syrophoenician woman for her great faith (Mark 7:24–30). Jesus everywhere treated women with respect and dignity, as human beings. He spoke to them as intelligent beings. He interacted with their theological questions directly despite their lack of religious education

(John 4). Jesus also treated women with honor and tenderness and protected them from shame (Luke 8:40–48; John 8:1–11). Dorothy Pape highlights Luke 11:28, where Jesus pronounces blessing, not on the womb that bore him and the breasts that nourished him, but on those who hear and obey God’s Word. She says that what Christ saw as most important about a woman was not her specifically female properties, but her capacity for discipleship, for hearing and obeying God’s Word.⁵⁰

Since Christ is to be the model for husbands, men do well to listen to Dorothy Sayers’s words on how different Christ’s attitude toward women was from that usually encountered by women:

They had never known a man like this Man—there never has been another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never flattered or coaxed or patronized; who never made arch jokes about them, never treated them as “The women, God help us!” or “The ladies, God bless them!”; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously; who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unselfconscious. There is no act, no sermon, no parable in the whole Gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess from the words and deeds of Jesus that there was anything ‘funny’ about woman’s nature.⁵¹

And perhaps it is the character of Jesus shining out from the Word that has drawn women in far greater numbers than men to Christ and his church down through the centuries, and this in spite of what we must admit has been the failure of men to live up to Christ’s example in their relations with women in both home and church.⁵²

⁴⁸ Byrd, *Recovering from Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, 73.

⁴⁹ Pierce, “From Old Testament Law to New Testament Gospel,” 97, points to Paul’s teaching in Gal 3:23–25 of the law’s function of serving as a guardian until “the fuller revelation of the gospel.”

⁵⁰ Dorothy Pape, *In Search of God’s Ideal Woman* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1976), 66.

⁵¹ Dorothy Sayers, *Are Women Human?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 47.

⁵² According to a March 2016 report from Pew Research Center, figures from 192 countries show that women are more likely than men to be affiliated with

Yet a second balancing point must also be noted. As Craig Blomberg says, “Despite all these remarkable ‘advances’ over his culture, Jesus never promotes full-fledged egalitarianism,” as contemporary egalitarians understand it.⁵³ In terms of marriage, Jesus’s own life presented a revolutionary model of the meaning of authority and leadership (Mark 10:42–45), but he never explicitly commented on the appropriate roles for men and women in marriage.

Glorify God with Your Body

Paul’s command in 1 Cor 6:20 (“glorify God with your body”) is a fitting summary statement of a variety of new emphases in the New Testament on sexual morality. It begins with Jesus placing adultery in the heart on the same level as adultery with the body and the call to resist such sin at all costs (Matt 5:27–30), and includes his stricter limitations on allowable divorce (Matt 5:31–32; 19:9), along with calling for the recovery of the original pattern of monogamous, lifelong marriage (Matt 19:4–6).⁵⁴ Polygamy had been practiced in the Old Testament, along with the practice of having sexual relations with the female servants of one’s wife and having sexual relations with concubines.⁵⁵ Adultery was prohibited in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:14), and there are dozens of commands prohibiting sexual relations with numerous categories of persons (see Lev 18:6–23; 20:10–21), but the idea

Christianity by a margin of 53 percent to 47 percent. See <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2016/03/22/women-more-likely-than-men-to-affiliate-with-a-religion/>.

⁵³ Craig Blomberg, “Women in Ministry: A Complementarian Perspective,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James Beck, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 144.

⁵⁴ While the response of the disciples in Matt 19:10 seems to indicate that Jesus was certainly raising the expectation of permanence in marriage, Christians are not of one mind in the interpretation of the exception clause here and of other possible exceptions elsewhere (Exod 21:10–11; 1 Cor 7:15). For presentation of various views, see H. Wayne House, ed., *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990); David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), and Gordon Wenham, William Heth, and Craig Keener, *Remarriage after Divorce in Today’s Church: 3 Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

⁵⁵ Having sex with the servants of one’s wife was the wife’s idea in Gen 16:1–2; 30:1–13. Abraham (Gen 25:6), Gideon (Judg 8:31), Saul (2 Sam 3:7), David (2 Sam 5:13), and Solomon most of all (1 Kgs 11:3) were all described as having concubines.

that a sexual relationship should be limited to the context of monogamous marriage was more clearly emphasized in the New Testament than the Old. C. D. McConnell sees “Jesus’s interpretation of Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:1–12” as “a strong argument for monogamy.”⁵⁶ Moreover, there are no examples of polygamy in the New Testament, and every discussion of marriage assumes monogamy. Paul commends monogamy by requiring overseers and deacons to be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6); and to be on the list of widows to be supported by the church, a widow must have been “the wife of one husband” (1 Tim 5:9).⁵⁷ Monogamy is most certainly the ideal set forth much more emphatically in the New Testament than in the Old Testament.⁵⁸ Additionally, the presence of polygamy in the Old Testament was regulated by biblical law, but not approved.

The Old Testament lists more than a dozen kinship relations within which sexual relations were prohibited (see Lev 18), but the New Testament gives a clearer line: sexual intimacy is only for one man and one woman, who are committed to each other in an exclusive and lifetime relationship of marriage. This is sex “in the service of God.”⁵⁹ The unitive and procreative purposes of sexual union are intended to serve those purposes within heterosexual marriage. That is why sexual union is limited to that one context. The prohibition “flee sexual

⁵⁶ C. D. McConnell, “Polygamy,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Daniel Treier with Walter Elwell, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 677. It should also be noted that in connecting Gen 1:27 with Gen 2:24 in Matt 19:4–5, Jesus is also assuming marriage is for one man and one woman.

⁵⁷ We think the phrase “husband of one wife” in the context of 1 Tim 3 means more than just that the man in question is not a polygamist; rather, he is an exemplary husband. But a polygamist would definitely fail to meet this qualification. For a more thorough discussion, see Ben Merkle, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 124–29.

⁵⁸ As the gospel has taken root in cultures where polygamy was widely practiced, the question of what those engaged in polygamous relationships should do upon conversion has been a matter of some controversy. According to C. D. McConnell, “Polygamy,” 677, “The norm appears to be the position that monogamy is marriage’s ideal form, but Christ’s love and forgiveness apply to polygamists. The implications for polygamists holding leadership roles in the church are still under debate.” For more information, see the bibliography of sources on polygamy at the end of McConnell’s article (677).

⁵⁹ Christopher Ash, *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 2003).

immorality" (1 Cor 6:18) covers not just adultery or sex with a prostitute, but also premarital sexual intimacy and same-sex relationships.⁶⁰

A New Perspective on Marriage

In the New Testament, a new purpose is revealed for marriage. Alongside relieving the aloneness of the man, and the unitive and procreative purposes of their one-flesh union, the purpose of portraying the relationship of Christ and the church is added. The comparison made in the Old Testament of God as the husband of his people Israel (seen especially in Hosea 1–3) sets the stage for the New Testament portrayal of Jesus as the bridegroom of his bride, the church (Eph 5:22–33). Indeed, Paul says that the mystery of marriage, from Gen 2:24 forward, relates to Christ and the church, but that mystery is only made known in the New Testament.⁶¹

The key word addressed to wives in relationship to their husbands is the difficult and, to some, distasteful word *submission*,⁶² meaning "to voluntarily yield or line oneself up under another."⁶³ The instruction to wives to voluntarily submit to their husbands is a choice of their will, done ultimately to

⁶⁰ Some with same-sex orientation are recognizing that engaging in a same-sex relationship would be wrong and are choosing a life of celibacy. See Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness & Homosexuality*, updated & expanded ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016); and Mark Yarhouse and Olya Zaporozhets, *Costly Obedience: What We Can Learn from the Celibate Gay Christian Community* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

⁶¹ Gerald Hiestand, "Put Pain Like That Beyond My Power: A Christocentric Theodicy with Respect to the Inequality of Male and Female Power," in *Beauty, Order, and Mystery: A Christian Vision of Human Sexuality*, ed. Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), 111: "By linking his comments to Genesis 2, the apostle assures us that from the beginning, God created the human marriage relationship to reflect the higher reality of the Christ/church relationship."

⁶² This is the imperative addressed to wives in all three major passages on husbands and wives in the New Testament: Eph 5:22, 24; Col 3:18, and 1 Pet 3:1.

⁶³ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed., trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, rev. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 898, section 1bb. Quoted in George W. Knight, III, "Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church: Ephesians 5:21–33 and Colossians 3:18–19," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 168.

honor the Lord. It is noteworthy that Scripture nowhere instructs husbands to expect, command, or coerce submission from their wives. We are careful to note that this command does not include a woman's submission to sin, including the sin of abuse.

But submission is not unique to wives. It is something all citizens, male and female, are to show to the civil authorities (Rom 13:1). Younger men are to submit to older men (1 Pet 5:5); all church members, male and female, are to submit to their leaders (Heb 13:17, but with a different Greek verb for "submit"); all Christians are to submit to one another (Eph 5:21); and all Christians are to submit to God (Jas 4:7). This responsibility given to wives is much in continuity with the responsibility given to wives in the Old Testament, such that Sarah can be cited as an example of submission (1 Pet 3:6).⁶⁴ What is new is the call addressed to husbands: to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

The Church as Family

One final new element in New Testament teaching related to our creation as male and female is what we see as the most pervasive image for the church in the New Testament—that of family.⁶⁵ It begins with the idea of God as our Father, who adopts us into his family.⁶⁶ It leads into the idea of Christians as brothers and sisters, which is the language the New Testament uses for fellow believers more than 200 times.⁶⁷ But here is where our thinking needs to be informed by the New Testament context. "Brother" and "sister" were not just terms of courtesy or warmth in the New Testament world.

⁶⁴ Peter Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 123, sees "weaker" as "weaker in body and more vulnerable," and argues that the application to husbands is neither to deny their power nor to exploit it, but to use it to honor their wives; see also the argument for mutual submission by Alan Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

⁶⁵ This is argued by John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019), 35–39.

⁶⁶ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 20th anniversary ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 201, argues persuasively that the idea of God as Father is an overwhelmingly New Testament idea.

⁶⁷ See Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches* 36.

Joseph Hellerman suggests, "In the New Testament world the closest family bond was not the bond of marriage. It was the bond between siblings."⁶⁸ Thus when New Testament writers wrote of the bond that should exist between members of the church, they chose the most powerful word their culture had. Moreover, the teaching on how marriage no longer applies in the resurrection (Luke 20:34–36) and Paul's reminder that the bonds of a physical family are part of the present world that is passing away (1 Cor 7:29–31) imply that the church family is "more important than the human family because it will endure into eternity."⁶⁹

For our purposes here, the church as family means one's sex is still relevant to relationships in the church. This is seen in Paul's instruction to Timothy: "Don't rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with all purity" (1 Tim 5:1–2). This is worth mentioning because some think that Paul's statement in Gal 3:28 ("There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus") eliminates any significance of maleness or femaleness in the church. In terms of access to salvation, that idea has some validity. One's ethnicity, social class, or sex has no relevance for the gospel. But the verse says we are all one in Christ, not that we are all identical in Christ. There is a created goodness in maleness and femaleness that is not eliminated in the church. Brothers are still male brothers, and sisters are still female sisters.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Joseph Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 50. Hellerman is not claiming that the New Testament teaches that the sibling bond is more important than the marriage bond; he is only helping us see what it meant to call someone "brother" or "sister" in the New Testament's cultural context. For a more detailed study of the significance of sibling language in Paul, see Reidar Aasgaard, *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!" Christian Siblingship in Paul* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

⁶⁹ Kristin Aune, *Single Women: Challenge to the Church?* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2002), 127.

⁷⁰ Scott Bartchy, "Divine Power, Community Formation, and Leadership in Acts," in *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today*, ed. Richard Longenecker (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 97–98, gives further explanation of the family nature of the church. He says there were two main metaphors for all human relationships in the Greco-Roman world: the family and the world of politics. It is in the latter where egalitarian ideas such as "equal access to

Men and Women in the Eschaton

There is little data on how our sexuality will be affected by the consummation. The consummation of our salvation will include the resurrection of our bodies. Our resurrected bodies will be different from our present bodies in many respects (1 Cor 15:42–44), but none of those differences would necessarily involve the elimination of our maleness and femaleness. It is true that in Luke 20:36, the resurrected are compared to angels, but only in that they "can no longer die." The fact that the resurrected are raised bodily means they are also different from angels in at least that respect (angels being spirits).

The teaching of Jesus that in the resurrection people neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt 22:30) raises the question of whether in the eternal state we remain male and female. While there is no text that explicitly addresses the question, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body strongly points to an affirmative answer. In our original creation, our bodies were male and female and were pronounced "very good indeed" (Gen 1:31). Even after the fall, we are commanded to glorify God with our bodies (1 Cor 6:20). And while Paul teaches that the body raised will differ in many respects from the body that is sown in death (1 Cor 15:42–44), there is no indication that it will lose the quality of being a sexed body.⁷¹

Murray Harris suggests that the resurrection body is "angel like," in that it will be "without sexual passions or procreative powers," but "not that the

the vote, positions of public leadership, and the ownership of property" belong. Speaking particularly of Luke's description of the church as family as it appears in Acts, Bartchy writes, "His apparent goal in writing as he did was not the creation of an egalitarian community in the political sense, but a well-functioning family in the kinship sense" (98).

⁷¹ Matthew Mason, "The Wounded It Heals: Gender Dysphoria and the Resurrection of the Body," in *Beauty, Order, and Mystery: A Christian Vision of Human Sexuality*, ed. Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), 144–46. Mason argues that the biological sex of the body with which we are born will be the sex of the body in which we are raised, and makes application to those who suffer from gender dysphoria. Because the resurrection brings healing, those who struggled with the sex of their bodies during their life on earth will finally be at peace with their bodies in the resurrection. Though Mason does not extend the application to those who suffer from one of the multiple forms of intersex, the resurrection of the body, freed from the effects of the fall, would also seem to be good news for them.

resurrected righteous will be sexless." Harris affirms sexual identity as an essential part of our personality, which is retained in the righteous.⁷² In support of this is the fact that the risen Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples in a way that seemed to maintain continuity with his earthly identity as a man.⁷³ Beyond that, we are told little of the anatomy of the resurrected body.⁷⁴

Historical Developments

The past forty or fifty years have seen unprecedented challenges to the consensual teaching of the church regarding numerous aspects of human sexuality. Here, we want to trace some of the historical developments that have led to our present situation.

Mere Sexuality

This first historical development is the framework within which all the subsequent developments have taken place. It is what Todd Wilson calls "mere sexuality" . . . the themes that have characterized the Christian vision of sexuality down through the ages." He claims it is the "historic consensus that has been part of the church in each of its major expressions—Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant"; that it has "been around for centuries, from roughly the fourth to the middle of the twentieth century"; and that it "has only been seriously called into question within the last forty to fifty years." He acknowledges some diversity and divergence over the years, but says the consensus has been "surprisingly robust," and that at the heart of this consensus is "the belief that sexual difference, being male or female, is both theologically and morally significant."⁷⁵ On most of the issues discussed in this chapters—the nature of human sexuality, the purposes of maleness

⁷² Murray Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection & Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 123.

⁷³ See Mason, "The Wounded It Heals," 141–42, for discussion of what we can gain concerning the nature of our resurrected bodies from the resurrection appearances of Jesus.

⁷⁴ Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 124, says, "No New Testament writer broaches the subject of the anatomical or physiological constitution of the spiritual body."

⁷⁵ Wilson, *Mere Sexuality*, 34–35.

and femaleness, the meaning of marriage, the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives, of men and women in the church, and more—we find ourselves within this historic consensus, and see continuity with such a long and strong consensus a strength of our positions.

The Persistence of Patriarchy

Sadly, there is much in the history of the church that has prompted the current challenges, though it could be argued that the problem has not been with the teaching of the church but with the very imperfect living out of that teaching. For example, the judgment pronounced on the woman in Gen 3 has loomed large in the history of male-female relationships. Men have ruled over women, often harshly. The replacement of harsh ruling by sacrificial, Christlike love has been far from widespread, even among Christ's followers. It is not difficult to collect statements from figures from the early church and beyond that describe women in demeaning or at best patronizing terms.⁷⁶ Elizabeth Clark says the "most fitting word with which to describe the Church Fathers' attitude toward women is ambivalence."⁷⁷ Clark is scrupulously fair in noting some positive portrayals of women, but she also notes that women are seen positively most often when they choose a celibate lifestyle of asceticism. On the whole, the Fathers affirm the traditional views of their culture that saw women as inferior to men and subordinate to them, often supporting those views with citations from Scripture. This, however, reflects the influence of their Greek culture rather than their conformity to Scripture. As Clark says, "Readers can judge for themselves the extent to which exegesis sometimes played handmaiden to personal and cultural assumptions."⁷⁸ At the same time, in considering some of the statements of Augustine, Edmund Hill asks us to see him in his time: "This was a time

⁷⁶ For example, Augustine is puzzled why God did not make another male as Adam's helper, as a male would have "made a better assistant." He finally says, "I cannot think of any reason for woman's being made as man's helper, if we dismiss the reason of procreation." For a book full of such citations, see Elizabeth Clark, *Women in the Early Church*, Message of the Fathers of the Church, vol. 13 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), 28–29.

⁷⁷ Clark, 15.

⁷⁸ Clark, 16.

when the social subordination of women to men was taken for granted by everybody, by women as well as men.”⁷⁹

The medieval era was much the same. Ruth Tucker and Walter Liefeld say, “Although the medieval world was greatly influenced by women, there was a strong underlying current that envisaged women as inferior,” including debates on whether or not women had a soul.⁸⁰ The foremost medieval theologian, Thomas Aquinas, is well known among scholars for adopting, with approval, the phrase Aristotle used to describe women: “The female is a misbegotten male.”⁸¹

For close to a thousand years, convents had been the primary place where women had the liberty for meaningful ministry; the Reformation changed that. Marriage was now viewed much more positively as part of a Christian’s vocation, and convents and monasteries in countries deeply influenced by the Reformation largely disappeared. Even so, the Reformation did not see any major gains for the status of women. Luther praised women but only as wives and mothers. While there is some debate on Calvin’s view, most believe Calvin upheld the traditional view of the woman as subordinate to the man.⁸²

Bad as the record of the church has been down through the years, there has been one encouraging sign in the past 200 years. Wherever churches have been planted around the world by Protestant missionaries, one universal result has been an improving life and improving status for women. Robert Woodberry has shown that those missionaries he calls “conversionary Protestants” have been a powerful force for the rise and spread of stable democracies around the world.⁸³ One of the contributions made to the

⁷⁹ Edmund Hill, “St. Augustine—A Male Chauvinist?” November 1994, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/st-augustine-a-male-chauvinist-10087>.

⁸⁰ Ruth Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1987), 130.

⁸¹ For the source of this quotation in the writings of Aristotle and Aquinas, see Frank James, “Thomas Aquinas on Women,” at <https://carolyncustisjames.com/2013/08/06/thomas-aquinas-on-women/>, accessed July 19, 2022.

⁸² Tucker and Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church*, 174–75. For the argument that Calvin had a more positive view of women, see Jane Douglass, “Christian Freedom: What Calvin Learned at the School of Women,” *Church History* 53 (June 1984): 167.

⁸³ See Robert Woodberry, “The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy,” *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (May 2012): 244–74.

countries where they have served has been mass education. Woodberry notes that before the late nineteenth century, “economic elites throughout Europe resisted educating women and the poor because they believed it would undermine stability”; missionaries educated women and the poor and it did to an extent “undermine stability.”⁸⁴ As women became educated, they began to agitate for greater changes, eventually leading to the various waves of what we call the feminist movement.

The Feminist Movement

As there have been historical inequalities between male and female, there have been historical attempts to correct such inequities. Social efforts to advocate for the equality of men and women are typically attributed to feminism. The term *feminism* is relatively recent and includes a broad range of beliefs and philosophies. Additionally, the effect of feminism in Western culture has influenced theological studies and evangelical thought and practice. We briefly outline the feminist movement here, noting its historical submovements or “waves” and the relevance of its ideology to the theological study of humanity.

“Feminism” is notoriously difficult to define, in part due to the tenets of feminism itself. Feminist ideology claims that women, by virtue of their being born female, are personally, sexually, and culturally oppressed. Men, by virtue of their being born male, are oppressors, who control and define women according to their sexual drives and desire for power. The root of women’s oppression is, therefore, male-rule, or “patriarchy.”

To appreciate fully the impact of feminism on modern society, we must note the contrast between its current characteristics and its earliest days. Known as “first wave feminism,” early feminists advocated for legal equality between men and women, most notably women’s suffrage.⁸⁵ Also noteworthy, women’s suffrage advocates were also ardent abolitionists, recognizing the

⁸⁴ Woodberry, 251.

⁸⁵ Mary Wollstencraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 2nd ed., ed. Carol H. Poston (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975). See also Mary Kassian, *The Feminist Mistake: The Radical Impact of Feminism on Church and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005) for a thorough explanation of feminism and its influence.

mutual disenfranchisement of black and female Americans in political life.⁸⁶ In 1848, first wave feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton crafted and signed the “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions,” modeled after the American Declaration of Independence. Its signatories, which included Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony, called for equal status before their government, stating that a woman was compelled to “submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.”⁸⁷ Following the influence of Victorian-era stereotypes, women were regarded as fragile, infantilized playthings, weak-minded and weak-willed ornaments, who would be unfeminine if overly intellectual.⁸⁸ “Feminine” virtues included chastity, compliancy, and politeness.⁸⁹ Moreover, prior to the Industrial Revolution, women took part in family businesses; it would have been common for a woman to work alongside her family.⁹⁰ Further, early feminists were vocally against abortion; abortion was, at best, an evil practice to which women were driven by the selfish, sexual appetites and intemperance of men.⁹¹

We would be remiss if we did not note the inaccuracies promoted about Christian theology among some early feminists. They say how the Bible was misused, especially the claim that the reasons for women not occupying certain positions in the church were because they were viewed as inferior. Stanton wrote the Women’s Bible, altering Scripture to fit her paradigm

⁸⁶ Among them, Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906), Sarah Grimke (1792–1873), Angelina Grimke (1805–1879), Lucretia Mott (1793–1880), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902), and Lucy Stone (1818–1893).

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions,” in *The Essential Feminist Reader*, ed. Estelle B. Freedman (New York: The Modern Library, 2007), 57–62.

⁸⁸ Kathryn Hughes, “Gender Roles in the 19th Century,” *British Library*, May 15, 2014, <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century>.

⁸⁹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979; repr. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 23.

⁹⁰ Mona Charon, *Sex Matters: How Modern Feminism Lost Touch with Science, Love, and Common Sense* (New York: Crown Forum, 2018), 18.

⁹¹ Cat Clark, “The Truth about Susan B. Anthony,” *The American Feminist* (Spring 2007), <https://feministsforlife.org/-taf/2007/spring-2007.pdf>. See also Mary Krane Derr, Rachel MacNair, and Linda Naranjo-Huebl, *Prolife Feminism: Yesterday and Today*, 2nd ed. (Kansas City: Feminism and Nonviolence Association, 2005).

of gender equality, at one point even naming God “Our Mother.”⁹² Still, there were those who aimed only to love God with all their minds, such as Mary Astell in her anonymous work, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, while some first-wave feminists blamed the Bible for perpetuating the inequality of women.⁹³

This wave of feminism is often that with which women want to be associated—causes that acknowledge the equality of women as image-bearers of God and, specifically, ideas that advance a “more perfect union” in American life. However, today’s feminism is far afield from its beginnings.

Second-wave feminism was precipitated by the work of Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. A formidable philosopher, de Beauvoir identified the root of women’s inequality not only with male-rule, but also with the symbiotic influences of Christianity and capitalism. Modern feminism hinges upon a power dynamic—the problems of the world relate to an inequitable power structure, and therefore, the solution for society is to shift that power structure. An avowed socialist, de Beauvoir praised Communist Russia for granting women political and economic equality, which de Beauvoir identified as the key to women’s emancipation.⁹⁴ In her own words: “All forms of socialism, wresting woman away from the family, favor her liberation.”⁹⁵ Further, de Beauvoir maintained that a woman’s biology determined her destiny. Unlike men, whose reproductive role was limited to the event of insemination, a woman was enslaved to her reproductive processes.⁹⁶ “In no other is enslavement of the organism to reproduction more imperious or more unwillingly accepted.”⁹⁷ To liberate a woman from these consequences, she required contraception,⁹⁸ abortion,⁹⁹ and the socialization

⁹² Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman’s Bible: A Classic Feminist Perspective* (Garden City: Dover Publications, 2003).

⁹³ Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694; repr., Peterborough, Canada: Broadview, 2002).

⁹⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 127.

⁹⁵ de Beauvoir, 112.

⁹⁶ de Beauvoir, 117.

⁹⁷ de Beauvoir, 32.

⁹⁸ de Beauvoir, 696.

⁹⁹ de Beauvoir, 485. While abortion was considered necessary, de Beauvoir did not necessarily speak of it with approval. Rather, it was required in nations like

of childcare,¹⁰⁰ all of which would enable women to participate in the means of production.

In 1963, Betty Friedan verbalized the collective discontent that many housewives felt in her landmark work *The Feminine Mystique*.¹⁰¹ For Friedan, women suffered from a chronic malaise, a “problem with no name.”¹⁰² Hindered by the demands of marriage and maternity, women were unable to form their own identities. Women were isolated, discontent, and confined. She stated: “We [women] can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: ‘I want something more than my husband and my children in my house.’”¹⁰³ Friedan’s solution for women was to become participants in the workplace and financially independent of their husbands. This solution required a woman to have autonomy over her sexuality and reproduction. Thus, abortion became a central tenet of feminist ideology.¹⁰⁴ This autonomy shifted their primary relationship away from family to society and was secured through “reproductive rights” (abortion on demand). Second-wave feminism also embraced lesbianism as an expression of women’s liberation from patriarchy; heterosexuality was a means by which men gained control over women.¹⁰⁵ Women sought to define themselves independently from their relationships to men, and in so doing, to reclaim or recover their sense of identity. They hungered for significance and the opportunities for personal development in addition to their roles in family life.

Second-wave feminism focused on the social liberation of women through achieving equal opportunities, rebuffing traditional gender roles, and obtaining political representation.¹⁰⁶ Like its first-wave predecessor, second-

France to ensure that a woman not be compelled to birth an unwanted child (696).

¹⁰⁰ de Beauvoir, 127.

¹⁰¹ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2001).

¹⁰² Friedan, 15.

¹⁰³ Friedan, 32.

¹⁰⁴ Bell Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (London: Pluto Books, 2000), 29.

¹⁰⁵ Mary Kassian, *The Feminist Mistake: The Radical Impact of Feminism on Church and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 101–3.

¹⁰⁶ Julia Schuster, “Why the Personal Remained Political: Comparing Second and Third Wave Perspectives on Everyday Feminism,” *Social Movement Studies* 16, no 6 (2017): 648.

wave feminism exposed some valid concerns and revealed social inequalities. Many women found themselves barred from vocational or educational opportunities. Until 1978, a woman in the United States could lose her job if she was pregnant.¹⁰⁷

However, while second-wave feminism aimed to champion women as individuals, ironically, it came to demand conformity. Feminist ideology hinged upon women identifying with a collective women’s experience of oppression, a grievance in which they found solidarity among other women as a marginalized class.¹⁰⁸ The root of women’s oppression was patriarchy, or “father-rule,” a system perpetuated in part by marriage, maternity, and religious practice.¹⁰⁹ The woman who did not claim to sense oppression was likely still under the power of patriarchy—she was brainwashed into adapting to men’s social expectations for her femininity. At one point, de Beauvoir instructed Friedan that women should not be authorized to withdraw from the workforce and raise their children, “precisely because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one.”¹¹⁰

By the 1990s, feminism evolved into a third wave, emphasizing women’s empowerment and sexual license. Unlike its second-wave forerunners, third-wave feminists embraced the sexualization of women as an expression of power.¹¹¹ This wave focused on the diverse experiences of women and differing social privileges, as well as embracing the idea that gender is fluid.¹¹²

No doubt, there are issues upon which Christians can—and should—be co-belligerents with feminists. In the 1980s, for instance, prominent

¹⁰⁷ “The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978,” *U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*, <https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/pregnancy-discrimination-act-1978#:~:text=The%20Pregnancy%20Discrimination%20Act%20of%201978%20%7C%20U.S.%20Equal%20Employment%20Opportunity%20Commission,> accessed July 20, 2022.

¹⁰⁸ Kassian, *The Feminist Mistake*, 144–48.

¹⁰⁹ Kassian, 27.

¹¹⁰ Dale O’Leary, “The Oppressed Lives of Stay-at-Home Moms,” *Crisis Magazine*, April 27, 2012, <https://www.crisismagazine.com/2012/the-oppressed-lives-of-stay-at-home-moms>.

¹¹¹ Lorna Finlayson, *An Introduction to Feminism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 201.

¹¹² Schuster “Why the Personal Remained Political” 648

feminists vehemently opposed pornography.¹¹³ Laws protecting women from domestic abuse, ensuring legal recourse of victims of sexual assault, equal pay for equal work—wherever cultural beliefs are contrary to Scripture, Christians have a duty to proclaim what is true. But the mindset of power-dynamic has infiltrated religious spheres. The idea of recovering the presence and influence of women extended to biblical hermeneutics. Feminist theologians sought to reframe Scripture through a woman-centered lens. For many, the Bible was considered to be corrupted by its patriarchal context. For Rosemary Radford Ruether, only that which “promotes the full humanity of women” is considered redemptive.¹¹⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza promulgated a “hermeneutic of suspicion,” which approached Scripture from a posture of unbelief.¹¹⁵ Within feminist theology, the Bible has no ultimate

¹¹³ Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, *Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality* (1988), <https://www.feministes-radicales.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Catharine-A.-MacKinnon-Andrea-Dworkin-Pornography-and-Civil-Rights-A-New-Day-for-Women%E2%80%99s-Equality-1988.pdf>, accessed July 20, 2022.

¹¹⁴ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1983), 19. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983). Of note, though not a hermeneutical work, is Phyllis Trible's *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

¹¹⁵ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001). These principles are an evolution from her 1983 monograph, *In Memory of Her*, in which Fiorenza contributed what is perhaps the most well-known methodology within feminist theological interpretation. Fiorenza's 1984 contribution to *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity*, ed. by Judith L. Weidman (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 33–54, is a concise summary of the hermeneutical approach detailed in her earlier work. Its fourfold approach consists of a hermeneutic of suspicion, proclamation, remembrance, and creative actualization. A hermeneutic of suspicion assumes that both the biblical texts and its subsequent interpretations are androcentric and for the perpetuation of patriarchy (47). This principle “questions the underlying presuppositions, androcentric models, and unarticulated interests of contemporary biblical interpretation” (48). It further extends to biblical translations, evaluating how much they “succumb to linguistic sexism,” as in the generic “he” used to signify humanity (50). Using the hermeneutic of proclamation, oppressive texts and tradition are “denounced as androcentric articulations of patriarchal interests and structures” (50). This principle considers the biblical text as it relates to specific, contemporary patriarchal cultures and values (51). In a hermeneutic of remembrance, the interpreter moves from

authority, but rather must submit to women's experience.¹¹⁶ This is among the values of feminist critical theory, which locates the source of authority, and consequently truth, in women's collective experience. As one feminist theologian explained: “Whatever contradicts those convictions cannot be accepted as having the authority of an authentic revelation of truth.”¹¹⁷

In recent years, we can see an increasing normalization of feminist ideology being syncretized with Christian doctrine. For instance, a popular online magazine promoted “5 Ways the Bible Supports Feminism,” citing that both uphold the equality between male and female and both give women meaningful places of service and value their contributions.¹¹⁸ Increasingly, popular female ministers describe themselves as “Christian feminists.” In terms of intent, we may generally give these ministers the benefit of the doubt; most seem to believe they are representing the truths of Scripture in a way that connects to a post-feminist society. Ask a Bible-believing evangelical what he or she thinks a Christian feminist is, and you will likely hear an affirmation of the full equality of women with men. We need not question the

critique to reconstruction. This principle “recovers *all* biblical traditions through a historical-critical reconstruction of biblical history from a feminist perspective” (51). Within a historical-critical reconstruction of biblical women's experience, their sufferings and struggles under patriarchy are both remembered and reclaimed (51). Women must not allow the biblical text's bias to “cancel out the memory of the struggle, life, and leadership of biblical women who spoke and acted in the power of the Spirit” (52). Finally, the feminist interpreter engages in the hermeneutic of creative actualization. Founded on its reconstructed memory of women's experience, it retells the biblical stories from a feminist perspective (53). These revisions are not limited to woman-specific passages. They include the retelling of the account of the “last supper,” renaming the God of the Bible, or re-visioning the baptismal ritual. They praise biblical foresters and lament the lost stories of biblical foremothers (53–54). This process of creative actualization can only occur within a feminist process of interpretation that “repents of the structural sin and internalized values of patriarchal sexism” (54).

¹¹⁶ Kathryn Greene-McCreight, *Feminist Reconstructions of Christian Doctrine: Narrative Analysis and Appraisal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 48.

¹¹⁷ Margaret A. Farley, “Feminist Consciousness and the Interpretation of Scripture,” in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty Russell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1985), 44–46; quote from p. 46.

¹¹⁸ Amy R. Buckley, “5 Ways the Bible Supports Feminism,” *RELEVANT Magazine*, April 29, 2015, <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/worldview/5-ways-bible-supports-feminism>.

sincerity of their intent; many have heard the term *feminist* used as a benign affirmation of male-female equality.

However, it is imperative that Christians exercise great caution with this claim. First, we must acknowledge that feminism is itself a worldview. As we discussed in chapter 1 of this book, all worldviews proffer answers to three core questions:

- 1) Who are we?/Where did we come from? (Creation)
- 2) What is wrong with the world? (Fall)
- 3) How do we fix it? (Redemption).

Despite the variations within the feminist worldview, it generally answers these questions in the following way:

- 1) Women are equal persons with men; this conviction is held whether one is a theist or an atheist.
- 2) What went wrong in the world is patriarchy, male-rule, by which women are universally and systematically oppressed and marginalized.
- 3) The solution to the human condition is to eradicate patriarchy and all forms of "male privilege" from society, thus allowing women to have equal opportunities and social experiences as men.

Second, we must recognize that feminism and Christianity are competing worldviews. The two ideologies each appeal to an ultimate source of authority to shape one's belief and practice: for feminism, that authority is women's experience; for evangelical Christianity, that authority is written revelation of Scripture. As with any two worldviews, at some point their claims will conflict, leading to an appeal to authority. If two sources of ultimate authority clash, one authority must take precedence over and inform the other.

Third, applying the Christian worldview, we must affirm that the root problem of all social ills is sin and alienation from the Lord. While beyond the scope of this project to delineate the relationship between individual sins and society at large, we must not fall prey to the increasingly common cultural narrative that one's demographic determines one's moral class. This idea with a power dynamic and conflict-driven worldview is more similar to the tenets of Marxist thought than Christianity.

Lest the reader fear we are being unduly dramatic, we note the philosophical origins of what is now popular feminist thought. In 1886, Frederick Engels claimed in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* that marriage and its demand of female fidelity was a capitalist construct, designed to ensure the preservation of private property, and that the wife was the first oppressed class.¹¹⁹ Marriage was a social tool used to enslave her because she was otherwise unable to support herself economically. In exchange for exclusive sexual access, she would receive financial security and safety. In other words, marriage was, for women, a form of prostitution.¹²⁰ This is precisely the rhetoric promulgated by second-wave feminists like Betty Friedan, who located the source of women's discontent and lack of identity with the expectations of family life.¹²¹

For these few reasons alone, we must reject the attempt to amalgamate feminist ideology with Christian theology. We also affirm that Christian theology does not require ideological feminism to uphold and defend the full equality of women—such a belief originates in Genesis 1–2, not a modern Western social movement.

The Complementarian/Egalitarian Debate

In mainline churches, the feminist movement succeeded in achieving acceptance of the ordination of women and their inclusion in all types of ministry. But evangelical feminism encountered opposition in some evangelical churches. In fact, the book that may be fairly described as launching the modern egalitarian/complementarian debate, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, is subtitled: *A Response to Evangelical Feminism*.¹²² For thirty years now, this debate has been carried on with some intensity in evangelical

¹¹⁹ Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (London: Electric Book Company Ltd, 2001).

¹²⁰ Julie Bindel, "Marriage Is a Form of Prostitution," *The Guardian*, November 11, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2008/nov/12/women-prostitution-marriage-sex-trade>.

¹²¹ Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* includes a chapter in which she refers to marriage and domestic life as a "comfortable concentration camp" (chap. 12).

¹²² John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991).

circles. Some critique the complementarian position as inherently misogynistic or at least, in some versions, oppressive to women.¹²³ Moreover, recent surveys seem to show widespread support for women serving as pastors, even in evangelical churches.¹²⁴

Thus, the authors of this work recognize that a complementarian position on roles for men and women faces an upstream battle in today's culture. They believe some versions of complementarianism are unduly harsh and not reflective of the full teaching of Scripture on our sexuality or the ontological equality between man and woman. Still, the authors of this book are conscientious complementarians and believe it can be formulated in ways that are not oppressive or demeaning to women. At any rate, it is one of the most important historical developments, especially for evangelicals, and so deserves consideration here. At the same time, the debate is so multi-faceted that anything less than a lengthy book can only give a survey of the issues. Such a survey and one formulation of complementarianism is given here.

We want to be clear that we regard this debate as addressing the theological differences among evangelicals concerning gender roles. To give a brief definition to the two camps, the belief that one's biological sex should neither predict nor limit one's relational or ecclesial roles became known as "egalitarianism," while the belief that one's biological sex indicates and prescribes at least some of one's relational or ecclesial roles became known as "complementarianism." Both views claim male and female to be equal; both views claim to interpret accurately the same biblical passages;¹²⁵ and both

¹²³ See Jean Dimock, "Influence of Plato and Aristotle's Patriarchy on Christian Hierarchy Today," in *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*, ed. Aída Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 107–12, especially 110.

¹²⁴ Ryan P. Burge, "Researcher: Most Evangelicals Support Women in Church Leadership," *Christianity Today*, June 30, 2020, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/june-web-only/research-evangelicals-women-leaders-complementarian-preach.html>. The research from a 2020 survey did not ask specifically for support of women as pastors, but for support for women preaching on Sunday morning, which could be in a guest or other special capacity. But researcher Ryan Burge believes his findings are in line with a 2011 survey which found that 65 percent of Southern Baptists support women serving as pastors.

¹²⁵ Among them, Gen 2:18–24; 1 Cor 14:33–36; Gal 3:26–28; Eph 5:21–33; 1 Tim 2:9–15; 3:1–12.

views claim the other is, at least in part, guilty of theological error, as seen in the continuation of this debate.

Representing both sides of the debate are two organizations and theological anthologies. Christians for Biblical Equality produces scholarship from an egalitarian perspective from theologians and authors such as Gilbert Bilezikian, Linda Belleville, Millard Erickson, Kevin Giles, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Catherine Clark Kroeger, Alvera Mickelson, Ronald W. Pierce, and William Webb. Expounding the egalitarian position on disputed biblical passages is the work, *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*. The main argument of the book claims that "biblical equality, therefore, denies that there is any created or otherwise God-ordained *hierarchy based solely on gender*."¹²⁶

The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood produces scholarship from a complementarian perspective by authors such as Denny Burk, D. A. Carson, Ligon Duncan, Wayne Grudem, Mary Kassian, Russell Moore, Owen Strachan, and Bruce Ware.¹²⁷ This organization produced the Danvers Statement to address gender roles as well as the Nashville Statement to address sexual ethics and gender identity.¹²⁸ Expounding the complementarian position on disputed biblical passages is the work, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. The purpose of this book is to "help Christians recover a noble vision of manhood and womanhood as God created them to be."¹²⁹ It further defines complementarity as upholding "both equality and beneficial differences between men and women."¹³⁰

One must also note the variations among adherents of both views—although some complementarian theologians give little room for difference.

¹²⁶ *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 13.

¹²⁷ Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW); "The mission of The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood is to set forth the teachings of the Bible about the complementary differences between men and women, created equally in the image of God, because these teachings are essential for obedience to Scripture and for the health of the family and the church."

¹²⁸ Affirmed by Southern Baptist Convention seminaries and professors.

¹²⁹ Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, xv.

¹³⁰ Piper and Grudem.

Within complementarianism are two sub-categories: broad and narrow.¹³¹ Broad complementarians apply the paradigm of male headship to spheres outside the immediate context of 1 Tim 2:11–15 and outside the local church. Broad complementarians may claim that a woman may not serve as a minister of worship, student minister, parachurch ministry leader, or teacher of a mixed-gender Bible study. They also extend the principle of male headship to civil government, claiming that a woman's civil authority over a man is inappropriate unless it is personal. Further, some consider it a poor reflection on a nation when women rule. Narrow complementarians limit the application of 1 Tim 2:11–15 to the local church, and often only to the role of pastor or elder. The authors of this work, who themselves differ on minor points, would both fall within the narrow complementarian category. They would also note their belief in the harmonization of narrow complementarianism with their belief in the sufficiency of Scripture.

The overarching themes in these debates are two-fold: First and foundationally, how and to what extent does Genesis 1–3 inform and direct our gendered identities and relational roles? For how one interprets and applies the creation narrative portends all subsequent biblical interpretation related to gender roles and relations. Second and consequently, in light of our created identities as male or female, how ought men and women express their respective genders socially, relationally, and ecclesiastically? We consider the differences of biblical interpretation below.

Creation and Fall

According to the egalitarian view, God created male and female as equals in essence and this equality precludes hierarchy. Gender roles are the consequence of sin. Male headship, which is conflated with male patriarchy, was a result of the fall. Thus, God's original design for male and female did not include male headship. Further, the egalitarian understanding of equality typically entails role interchangeability. In other words, one's maleness or

¹³¹ See the helpful description of broad and narrow complementarianism in Andrew Naselli, "Does Anyone Need to Recover from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood?" *Eikon* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 109–50.

femaleness has no essential bearing on one's relationships, responsibilities, or roles. This perspective on Genesis informs an egalitarian understanding of male and female in redemption. If gender roles are a result of sin, and Jesus redeems us from the effects of sin, then Jesus's redemption reverses gender roles to God's original design. Therefore, insisting on male headship and female submission in marriage or male leadership in the church effectively denies the work of Christ and his intent for gender.

According to the complementarian view, God created male and female as equals in essence and this equality includes gender differentiation. Consequently, gender roles were established before the presence of sin. Male headship existed prior to the fall. God's original design for male and female included male headship; however, this headship has been infected by human sinfulness. Despite the distortion in male-female relationships, one's maleness or femaleness has an essential bearing on one's relationship, responsibility, and roles, particularly in the home and the church. This perspective on Genesis informs a complementarian understanding of male and female in redemption. If gender roles are not the result of sin, but have been distorted by sin, then Jesus's redemption *restores* gender roles to God's original design. Therefore, insisting on male headship and female submission in marriage or male leadership in the church effectively fulfills the portrayal of Christ and his intent for gender.

Marriage

According to egalitarianism, male headship is synonymous with patriarchy, is the root of gender injustice, and became the pattern for male and female in marriage as result of human sin. Christian marriage entails mutual submission. As equals, the husband has no more right to authority than the wife; one's gender does not prescribe one's role. Galatians 3:28, which declares that male and female are equal, often guides interpretation of other biblical texts.¹³²

According to complementarianism, marriage entails a husband's headship and a wife's submission; one's gender prescribes one's role. This relationship

¹³² "CBE's Mission," *Christians for Biblical Equality*, <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/cbes-mission>, accessed July 20, 2022.

fulfills God's design for marriage as an analogous depiction of the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5:22–33). In fact, this analogous relationship is the primary purpose for which God created the marriage relationship. The command to submit to one another (Eph 5:21) does not overturn the pattern of a husband's headship and a wife's submission. John Piper and Wayne Grudem explain how these verses are in harmony:

This does not mean that husbands and wives should submit to each other *in the same way*. The key is to remember that in this very passage the relationship between husband and wife follows the pattern of the relationship between Christ and the church. Do Christ and the church mutually submit to each other? They do *not* if submission means Christ yields to the authority of the church. But they do if submission means that Christ submitted himself to suffering and death for the good of the church. That, however, is not how the church submits to Christ. The church submits to Christ by affirming his authority and following his lead.¹³³

Ministry

According to egalitarianism, Gal 3:28 clarifies other biblical passages that limit a woman's role in ministry,¹³⁴ or traditions that might hinder her full participation in redemption.¹³⁵ Since redemption in Christ reverses gender roles, women are no longer limited by the patriarchal effects of male

¹³³ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, "Is Complementarianism Oppressive to Women?" *Crossway*, April 6, 2016, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/is-complementarianism-oppressive-to-women/>.

¹³⁴ Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Nancy A. Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: Biblical Feminism for Today* (Waco: Word Books, 1974). This work is considered the seminal volume of evangelical egalitarianism.

¹³⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982). Klyne Snodgrass echoes Bruce's interpretation of Gal 3:28 in his chapter "Galatians 3:28: Conundrum or Solution?" in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986). Representing a complementarian response to the egalitarian argument are Peter R. Schemm Jr., "Galatians 3:28—Proof-text or Context?" in *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 8, no. 1 (2003) and S. Lewis Johnson Jr., "Role Distinctions in the Church: Galatians 3:28," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response*

dominance and female subjugation. Additionally, women are no longer hindered by the cultural factors that likely influenced the apostle Paul and his teachings. First Timothy 2:11–15 has several alternate explanations: Paul may have been preventing a woman from teaching her husband in the church, but not from teaching other men;¹³⁶ Paul may have been preventing women from giving doctrinal instruction because they were uneducated, unlike women today;¹³⁷ Paul may have been stipulating that a woman ought not teach in a domineering manner, rather than preventing women from teaching or having authority;¹³⁸ Paul may have been addressing the cult practices and false teachings of first century Ephesus, rather than giving a trans-cultural edict on church order;¹³⁹ finally, Paul may simply have been unable to embrace fully the gender equality implicit in our common salvation due to his own biases, a limitation that more culturally and spiritually evolved Christians can overcome thereby fulfilling the vision of Gal 3:28.¹⁴⁰

According to complementarians, gender equality does not negate gender-specific responsibilities in ministry. Paul's instruction that he does not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over men in the church means that only qualified men are eligible for the role and responsibility of pastor/elder, as well as other ministry roles in which one has a teaching or authoritative role. The passage also applies to the contemporary Christian as it did to the early church. Complementarians ground their application of 1 Tim 2:12 in Genesis 1–3 and believe this connection was Paul's intent in vv. 13–14. The creation narrative, according to complementarian interpretation, depicts male

to *Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991).

¹³⁶ *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: New American Standard*, ed. Spiros Zodhiates (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1990), 1598–600.

¹³⁷ Jill Briscoe, "Does the Bible Really Say I Can't Teach Men?" *Christianity Today*, January 6, 2007, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/women-leaders/2007/january/does-bible-really-say-i-cant-teach-men.html?paging=off>.

¹³⁸ Linda L. Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11–15," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 205–23.

¹³⁹ Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

¹⁴⁰ William Webb, *Women, Slaves, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics*

headship over the woman. Many complementarians also note that the fall was at least in part precipitated by a reversal of gender roles, in that Eve, not Adam, led in the choice to sin, and Eve (not Adam) was deceived.¹⁴¹

Conclusion

The debate within evangelicalism continues. Every year the Evangelical Theological Society sees multiple papers addressing these topics, and not without reason. The authors of this book have friends within the egalitarian camp, and even after all these years we hear the complementarian view at times misrepresented and charged with fostering sexual abuse.¹⁴² We believe the version of complementarianism we have presented here is not onerous to women. It does not restrict their ministry with the exception of one role within the church; dozens of others are open to women. We confess to difficulty in seeing how a position that calls on husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church can be accused of fostering abuse. To us, the complementarian position is still worthy of defense. We believe it is good for men and women; we believe it is good for marriages and churches; most of all, we see it as the teaching of Scripture.

God's Purposes in Creating Us Male and Female

Drawing upon our survey of what it means to be male and female in biblical teaching, and in light of the historical developments and the challenges those developments raise, we now want to turn to theological synthesis and ask the question, why did God make us male and female in the first place? But before we turn our attention to that question, it is important to note first the emphasis on the goodness of this gift of sexuality. In fact, while various aspects of creation are affirmed as "good" (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21,

¹⁴¹ We must also note that some who claim to be complementarians claim that women are intellectually and ontologically inferior to men, which disqualifies them from the teaching and authoritative ministries of the church. This view, however, is contrary to the equality of men and women, a tenet of complementarianism, and is thus not rightly included in the view.

¹⁴² Dimock, "Influence of Plato and Aristotle's Patriarchy on Christian Hierarchy Today," 107–112, especially 110.

25), God's creation of humans as male and female leads to the summary description of all of creation as "very good indeed" (Gen 1:31). Our creation as male and female is not something to be denied, erased, or deemed oppressive. It has been grievously distorted by the fall, but our maleness and femaleness is a part of God's good design for us. Specifically, we see it as designed for four purposes.

The most immediately obvious purpose for our creation as male and female is marriage. The statement in Gen 2:18 is quite striking. In an unfallen creation, there is still one thing "not good"—Adam's aloneness. But in truth, Adam was not truly alone; God was there. But God regarded Adam as alone and in need of a "helper." He created Eve, led her to Adam, and the text then says, "This is why" as it describes the institution of marriage. Jesus links the creation of humans as male and female directly to the institution of marriage in Matt 19:4–5. The first answer to why God made us male and female is to allow for the institution of marriage.

But what is it about our maleness and femaleness that grounds marriage? The answer that Gen 2:24 indicates is that our maleness and femaleness allows for one-flesh union, and the attraction between males and females prompts them to seek one-flesh union, and that one-flesh union is constitutive of marriage. As Stanley Grenz expresses it, "sexuality is the dynamic that forms the basis of the uniquely human drive toward bonding," a bonding that allows "male and female to form a unity of persons in marriage."¹⁴³ While that attraction is certainly distorted by the fall and can easily become lustful desire, sexual attraction seems present from the beginning (see Adam's response upon seeing Eve) and is commended and even celebrated in texts like Prov 5:15–20 and throughout the Song of Songs. We noted earlier James Brownson's argument that "one flesh" denotes simply the forming of a kinship bond in the Old Testament.¹⁴⁴ That may have some validity, but Paul cites Gen 2:24 clearly in reference to sexual intercourse (1 Cor 6:16). The one-flesh, kinship bond between a husband and wife is symbolized and sealed by sexual union. The rest

¹⁴³ Stanley Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 278.

¹⁴⁴ James Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 22.

of Scripture teaches that heterosexual, monogamous marriage is the only context in which sexual intercourse is not only allowed, but commanded (1 Cor 7:1–5).

Additionally, the sexual complementarity between male and female expresses the relational nature of human sexuality. Hastings explains:

The precise goodness or joy of sexuality that is a consequence of creation in the image of the Triune God of grace is that it drives us to relate as equals—it drives us out of ourselves and into relationship with others—but it drives us to do so as persons with our own distinct personhood of which sexuality is a very significant part.¹⁴⁵

Their sexual drive motivates male and female to seek relational intimacy. In this relationality, male and female image the relationality of the triune God. Thus, sex is not an exclusively physical aspect of our humanity, but also a spiritual one.¹⁴⁶ “Sexuality is garnered toward the very core of Christian spirituality: to love God and to love neighbor,” Hastings summarizes.¹⁴⁷

This link between our creation as male and female and the institution of marriage, seen especially in Matt 19:4–5, strongly supports the historic view that God intends marriage to be between one man and one woman, and opposes the validity of same-sex marriage, even apart from biblical teaching prohibiting same-sex intercourse. Genesis 2:24 seems to us to expressly give the reason a man takes a wife; it is because God created them male and female.

The sexual union that virtually defines marriage serves two purposes. One is called unitive. That unity of two lives that is the essence of marriage is symbolized, sustained, and enacted in sexual intercourse. Physical union symbolizes the uniting of two lives in a relationship that is meant to be total and lifelong. The second purpose of sexual union is procreative. We must be careful here. Traditional Catholic teaching has affirmed that the unitive and procreative purposes of sexual union have been joined together by God and cannot be separated. Thus, the Catholic Church believes and teaches that “each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life,”

and thus contraception is contrary to God’s intentions for sexual union.¹⁴⁸ But this seems to go beyond what Scripture teaches. Marriage and sexual union within a marriage are intended to endure a lifetime, long past the time when procreation is possible.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, to the argument that we should enjoy sexual union in marriage, not use contraceptives, and let things happen naturally, we respond that in a fallen world, we often interfere in the course of nature, because nature is fallen. It may be a responsible act to use contraceptive measures, to interfere with what would happen naturally, especially when a wife’s health may be threatened by additional pregnancies.¹⁵⁰ Due to the corruption of our bodies by the fall, natural processes are often deadly. We conclude that the unitive purpose of sex does not always have to be joined to the procreative purpose. The unitive purpose alone is enough to validate an act of sexual union.

But normally, three matters are linked: our creation as male and female, the institution of marriage, and the expectation that the one-flesh bond of marriage will produce children. Normally our creation as male and female leads us to seek marriage and its one-flesh union with a person of the opposite sex. Normally the one-flesh union of husband and wife leads to procreation of children. This is the second reason God created us male and female. While some species have asexual reproduction, we are so designed that both male and female are necessary for the human race to continue. The purposes of God for our sexuality are marriage (one-flesh union), and within marriage, procreation.

But since the fall life has not been normal, and this is especially evident in these areas in our day. An increasing number of males and females are not led by their maleness and femaleness to join in marriage,¹⁵¹ an increasing

¹⁴⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Rome: Urbi et Orbi, 1994), 569.

¹⁴⁹ See 1 Cor 7:5 for the expectation that husbands and wives will continue to experience sexual union, even past the years when procreation is possible.

¹⁵⁰ See further discussion of this issue below.

¹⁵¹ Aune, *Single Women*, x, said in 2002, “By 2010, over half of the UK population will be single.” She adds, “For the younger generation, celibacy is an outmoded concept, and sexual relationships are a feature of singleness rather than its antithesis.” According to a 2018 survey, only 40 percent of the US population are married by the age of thirty-nine. See Mark Regnerus, “Can the Church Save Marriage?” *Christianity Today* 64, no. 5 (July/August 2020): 34–41.

¹⁴⁵ Hastings, “The Trinity and Human Sexuality: Made in the Image of God,” 17.

¹⁴⁶ Hastings, 17.

¹⁴⁷ Hastings, 17.

number of those married are choosing to have no children or very few.¹⁵² There may be good reasons for some to remain single and for some couples to remain childless, but it seems fairly clear that marriage and procreation are two of the reasons God made us male and female, and even in a fallen world, the benefits that accrue to men, women, and children by marriage and two-parent families are undeniable.¹⁵³

In addition to marriage and procreation, there is a third purpose served by marriage that is not directly linked to sexual union, but is linked to our creation as male and female. As Rachel Gilson observes, our creation as male and female “creates the possibility of marriage as a picture of God’s relationship with his people—and that picture specifically requires sex difference.” She asks further, “Why does sex difference matter for the metaphor?” and answers, “Marriage is a metaphor for non-interchangeable entities in an intimate relationship: Jesus Christ and his church.”¹⁵⁴ This seems to be what Paul means when he says the real mystery is Christ and the church (Eph 5:32). That is the original relationship; our creation as male and female allows us to picture that relationship, in an admittedly lesser and often fallen manner, but it is God’s chosen metaphor. In that metaphor, Christ and the church do not have the same role. For marriage to serve as the picture, it must involve two “non-interchangeable entities.” The husband is not interchangeable with the wife, and vice versa. They are to play different roles.

In Christ, God has demonstrated true husbandly love toward his bride (the church), and he now calls human husbands to show that same type of love. If they do so, marriage can show to the world some limited and imperfect yet genuine reflection of the type of love Christ has for his church. That love is not just sacrificial; it is also sanctifying. In the key text on this theme,

¹⁵² The National Center for Health Statistics reported that the number of births in the US in 2018 was the lowest it had been in thirty-two years, continuing a long-term decline in births despite an overall rising population. See Brady E. Hamilton et al., “Births: Provisional Data for 2018,” *NVSS Vital Statistics Rapid Release*, Report No. 007, May 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr-007-508.pdf>.

¹⁵³ See Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage* (New York: Doubleday, 2000). The subtitle of the book indicates some of the benefits: “Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially.”

¹⁵⁴ Rachel Gilson, *Born Again This Way: Coming Out, Coming to Faith, and What Comes Next* (Surrey, UK: The Good Book Company, 2020), 40–43.

Eph 5:22–33, Paul says that the purpose of Christ’s self-giving love for the church was “to make her holy,” so that one day he could “present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless” (Eph 5:26–27). This is the type of love husbands are called to emulate. Their ability to sanctify their wives is obviously limited, but this should be a goal of the love of a Christian husband, one rarely recognized or highlighted. Under the conditions of redemption, marriage should serve the purpose of sanctification in the life of a wife.

What about for a husband? The parallel breaks down here, as wives are not commanded to love their husbands in a sanctifying way, but the sanctifying influence of a godly wife is undeniable. Even upon an unbelieving husband, a wife can have a sanctifying influence (1 Cor 7:14); for a believing husband, the benefits would be far greater.¹⁵⁵ A believing wife, like all Christians, is called to obey all the “one-another” commands of the New Testament, such as love one another, encourage one another, serve one another, pray for one another, and teach one another.¹⁵⁶ Her husband would be in the best position to be positively impacted by her Christian obedience.¹⁵⁷ For a husband, as for a wife, marriage, under the conditions of redemption, is intended to serve a sanctifying influence.

One final related by-product of a marriage in which husbands strive to develop and show Christlike, sanctifying love as they lead their families is the development of at least one of the competencies important for church

¹⁵⁵ The meaning of “sanctified” in 1 Cor 7:14 (NIV) must be handled carefully. According to Fee (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 299–300), “The idea that marriage can effect salvation for the pagan partner would be nonsense to Paul” and would be contrary to 1 Cor 7:16 as well. More likely, the meaning is that the unbelieving partner is sanctified in the sense that “as long as the marriage is maintained the potential for their realizing salvation remains. To that degree they are ‘sanctified’ in the believing spouse.”

¹⁵⁶ There are at least thirty-one different “one-another” commands in the New Testament. Love one another (John 13:34–35) is found seventeen times; encourage one another (Rom 14:19) four times; serve one another (Gal 5:13) three times; many others one or two times.

¹⁵⁷ James Samra, *Being Conformed to Christ in Community: A Study of Maturity, Maturation, and the Local Church in the Undisputed Pauline Letters*, Library of New Testament Studies 320 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006), 135, argues that such informal ministry of Christians, one to another, was a major factor in Christians growing to maturity in the New Testament churches.

leaders. In 1 Tim 3:4–5, among the qualifications for being an overseer, Paul includes one related to a husband's management of his own household, with the following rationale: "If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God's church?"¹⁵⁸ This may suggest a link between roles in the home and roles in the church and seems supportive of the complementarian position.

Single Persons

A website devoted to ministry to single people has this statement at the top of their home page: "Single Adults are the largest unreached people group in your community."¹⁵⁹ The number of single people is certainly growing. Census data reports that in 1960, 72 percent of all adults 18 and older were married; as of 2010 just 51 percent were.¹⁶⁰ While some of the unmarried may be divorced, widowed, or living together without being married (an increasingly common phenomenon), as of 2016, 45.2 percent of adults 18 and older were "unmarried," with that term defined as "those who were never married, widowed, or divorced."¹⁶¹ When limited to those between the ages of 18 and 49, the percentage of single adults grows to 54 percent. Yet according to a recent Barna study, only 23 percent of active churchgoers are single.¹⁶² If they were represented in the same numbers in the church as in the population as a whole, that number should be nearly doubled. Such a disparity lends credence to the sentence from the website with which we began this section.

Such a large and growing group of people merits consideration in any Christian work on anthropology and that consideration belongs in

¹⁵⁸ For a similar qualification for a deacon but without the rationale, see 1 Tim 3:12. For a slightly different but related qualification for an elder, see Titus 1:6.

¹⁵⁹ Table for One Ministries, "Singles in America," tfministries.org/single-adult-statistics-in-America.

¹⁶⁰ D'Vera Cohn et al., "Barely Half of U.S. Adults Are Married—A Record Low," December 14, 2011, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2011/12/14/barely-half-of-u-s-adults-are-married-a-record-low/>.

¹⁶¹ United States Census Bureau, "Profile America Facts for Features," CB17–FF.16, August 16, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/newsroom/facts-for-features/2017/cb17-ff16.pdf>.

¹⁶² Joyce Chiu, "A Single-Minded Church," February 9, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/single-minded-church/>.

connection with our creation as male and female, for what distinguishes this group is that their maleness and femaleness has not led them to marriage, as it did Adam and Eve (Gen 2:24) and as it has led most humans down through history. We have affirmed that God's purposes in making us male and female focus on matters related to marriage, but are not limited to matters related to marriage. Single males and females are still males and females. What does the Bible say about singles and singleness?

Biblical Teaching

When we turn to the Old Testament, we find surprisingly little on singleness. The first command, "Be fruitful, multiply" (Gen 1:28) assumes marriage, and throughout the Old Testament individuals are identified in genealogies based on who they "begat" (Gen 5:6 KJV). Barry Danylyk points out "that the nation of Israel was characterized by near universal marriage for those who were able to marry, because marriage and offspring had a fundamental role in the appropriation of the Sinai covenant blessings to the individual Israelite."¹⁶³ The promise of offspring was central in God's dealing with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Not surprisingly, women saw their value in the Old Testament in producing offspring, especially sons,¹⁶⁴ and procreation was "the primary means by which God was building his covenant nation Israel."¹⁶⁵ There is little mention of singleness or single individuals throughout most of the Old Testament.

But there are hints of a change as some of the prophets begin to look forward to the new covenant. Jeremiah's prophecy of the new covenant has no mention of offspring (Jer 31:31–34), and the "offspring" or "seed" that the Suffering Servant of the Lord will see as a result of his death (Isa 53:10) are seen by most commentators as spiritual offspring, rather than physical offspring.¹⁶⁶ Isaiah 54 and 56 describe future blessings to come to those pictured as a barren woman (Isa 54:1) and to one who is both a foreigner

¹⁶³ Barry Danylyk, *Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of Scripture Affirms the Single Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 56.

¹⁶⁴ This is seen in the rivalry of Leah and Rachel (Gen 29:31–30:24) and that of Hannah and Peninnah (1 Sam 1:1–10).

¹⁶⁵ Danylyk, *Redeeming Singleness*, 81.

¹⁶⁶ Danylyk, 100.