



God's Intention for Men and Women



Evangelical Christians disagree

Theological Viewpoint	Roles in Worship	Roles in Home	Roles at Work
Patriarchal	Different	Different	Different
Strong Complementarian	Different	Different	Similar
Moderate Complementarian	Some differences	Different	Some differences
Soft Complementarian	Similar	Similar	Identical
Moderate Egalitarian	Same in theory	Similar	Identical
Strong Egalitarian	Identical	Identical	Identical
Extreme Feminism	Different	Different	Different

Comparison of Competing Interpretive Models

I. A Broad Overview of The Egalitarian Position

A. Created Equality

B. Fallen Disorder and Hierarchy

C. Restored Equality through Redemption in Christ

I. A Broad Overview of the Complementarian Position

A. Created Equality of Essence and Distinction of Role

B. Fallen Disruption of God's Created Design

C. Restored Role Differentiation through Redemption in Christ

Comparison of Competing Interpretive Models

II. Primary Rationale Supporting the Egalitarian Position

A. Evidence that God's design was for male/female equality

1. **Gen. 1:26-27** – shows that man and woman share the same human nature, both are made in God's image, and both are given God's commission to rule the earth..
2. **Gen. 2:18** – woman as "helper" is best understood as one who comes to complement (i.e., make complete something that is incomplete). So, far from the woman being subordinate to the man, this shows how indebted man should be to the woman.
3. **Gen. 2:22-24** – they are one flesh, or the same flesh, indicating full equality of person.
4. **Gal. 3:28** – A return to what He intended in creation, an intent that was distorted by the fall and sin but now made real again in Christ.
5. **1 Cor. 12:7-11** –God distributes His gifts to His people as He so wills, but one's gender is not a factor in His giving any particular gift to a person.

II. Primary Rationale Supporting the Complementarian Position

A. Evidence that God's design was male/female equality of essence

1. **Gen. 1:26-27** – The thrust is that male and female are equal in essence (i.e., both fully human, both full imago Dei, both of equal value and worth to God) and together commissioned to rule over the earth.
2. **Gal. 3:28** – Men and women are equal in essence because their salvation comes to humans with no consideration given to gender.
3. **1 Cor. 12:7-11** – Women are equal in essence with men in God's sight, but it does not preclude the possibility that God may prescribe just how those gifts be used in the Church.
4. **1 Pet. 3:7b** –It is important for husbands to respect their wives in this fashion that Peter warns that husbands who do not treat their wives with the honor accorded them by God will not be heard before God in their prayers.

Comparison of Competing Interpretive Models

III. Objections to the Complementarian Position and Responses

A. Objection: This complementarian understanding is in reality a fully hierarchical view, with women subordinate to men; it in fact leads inevitably to seeing women as inferior, as second-class citizens, who are not as important to God and His purposes as are men.

Response: Authority structures do not entail the greater human value or essential superiority of those in charge, or minimize the human value or imply the essential inferiority of those under their charge. Men and women only experience their full humanity when they function in the manner God intended in His creation of them. We are most free as humans when we affirm the legitimate authority structure God intended, and work within that.

B. Objection: Your interpretation of Gen. 2, by which you see three indicators of male authority, is wrong. Creation Order/"Helper"/Adam Naming Eve.

Response: It appears that Paul understood Gen. 2 as the complementarian does. It is Paul who observes the importance of Adam's creation first, and Paul who notes Eve was created for Adam's sake. Therefore, the complementarian reconciles with Scripture's interpretation of itself on this issue. The one point Paul does not address is Adam's naming of Eve. The support for this rests, then, entirely on the significance of naming in ancient near-eastern culture.

Comparison of Competing Interpretive Models

III. Objections to the Complementarian Position and Responses

C. Objection: Gen. 3:16 Sin affected in Adam an illegitimate desire to dominate his wife, despite her continued longing for equal companionship.

Response: God would not give to her the “curse” of caring for Adam. Rather, her desire, because it is connected with what sin has done to her, is best understood as a negative, wrongful one. It accords exactly with sin's desire in Gen. 4:7, i.e., a desire to usurp rulership. This, coupled with the identical sentence structure and parallel terminology between the two passages, and their close proximity to each other, leads the complementarians to their conclusion on this important text.

D. Objection: You have left out the many and significant examples of female leadership in Israel, in the gospels, and in the early church. It simply is not correct to say that the Bible exhibits a uniform pattern of religious male leadership.

Response: Yes, women do play significant religious, and at times leadership, roles throughout the Bible. The point is that at the level of highest human religious authority, the Bible gives a clear and uniform picture of male leadership.

Comparison of Competing Interpretive Models

III. Objections to the Complementarian Position and Responses

E. **Objection:** Your use of "male headship" and your reference to passages like 1 Cor. 11:3 and Eph. 5:23 where "head" (*kephale*) is used, does not recognize the meaning of this term as "source." Understood this way, the Bible does not envision man as authority over woman, but source of her, since Eve came from Adam.

Response: The strongest lexical evidence suggests that while *kephale* is sometimes used of impersonal objects to mean "source" (e.g., the "head", i.e., "source" of a river) its predominate, if not exclusive, use as it relates to human beings is as "authority over," not "source." Exegetically, it becomes difficult to understand how Paul could mean anything other than "authority over" in particular passages. Eph. 5:23, for example ("the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church") is followed in v. 24 with this statement, "as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives to their husbands in everything." Likewise in 1 Cor. 11:3 ("Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ"), it seems hard to take *kephale* as "source," for to do so requires that God be the source of Christ as Adam is the source of Eve and Christ is the source of man. But did Christ ever originate from the Father as both man and woman originated? Furthermore, the following context of this verse clearly deals with woman wearing head covering "as a symbol of authority" (11:10). Therefore, for lexical, exegetical and contextual reasons, it appears clearly best to understand male "headship" as denoting male authority in the home and the church.

Comparison of Competing Interpretive Models

III. Objections to the Egalitarian Position and Responses

A. Objection: Israel's political and religious structures exhibit an almost exclusively male leadership, and this by God's calling and command.

Response: This reflects, primarily, the patriarchal culture of the time. Just as God tolerated polygamy and even introduced laws to regulate it despite His created purpose of monogamous marriages, so here He tolerated patriarchy, showing His disapproval through the women who did rise to leadership positions in Israel in spite of the cultural suppression of women.

B. Objection: You say that Jesus broke with cultural expectations and norms in permitting women participation with Him in ministry and witness to the Gospel. Why, then, did He not break with those same conventions and choose some women disciples? His choice of all male disciples suggests that He endorsed the tradition of male leadership we see throughout the Old Testament.

Response: Jesus began the process of the restoration of women to their place of full equality, a process seen continuing in the early church (e.g., Gal. 3:28, 1 Cor. 12). Jesus knew that only a certain degree of break with tradition would be possible, still leaving Him the opportunity to teach and travel freely as He did. A parallel case can be seen when Paul fails to denounce slavery, although clearly he sees it to be at odds with the freedom of the gospel. Or the fact that Jesus chose no “gentiles” as apostles.

Comparison of Competing Interpretive Models

III. Objections to the Egalitarian Position and Responses

C. Objection: Paul tells women to submit to their husbands. How can he rightly do this if, as you say, he has declared hierarchy the result of sin and now abolished in Christ?

Response: Interestingly, the fullest treatment by Paul on husbands and wives (Eph. 5:22-33) is introduced with a transitional statement in 5:21 that reads, "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." What follows after this verse, then, cannot rightly be seen to contradict his clear command that Christian people be subject to one another. What, then, does he mean in 5:22? He gives this as a prime example of the kind of submission that needs to go on more generally among all Christian people. Its purpose is illustrative, and is not meant to single out wives as subordinate to their husbands.

D. Objection: When Paul says that the man (1 Cor. 11:3) or husband (Eph. 5:23) is the head of the woman, doesn't he mean that the man has the position of authority and responsibility over the woman?

Response: No, and this can be shown by looking at the word translated as "head" (Gr.: *kephale*). This term is widely used in Greek literature outside of the NT to mean "source" (as with the "head" of a river). Therefore, what this means, then, is that woman owes her existence to the fact that man was created first and, in his incomplete state, God made from him the woman. The woman, then, is "sourced" in man. As such, this word does not suggest, as many think, that man has some rightful authority over woman. This "sourcing" is then reversed because every man since Adam is "sourced" from a woman – demonstrating balance/equality.

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III. Objections to the Egalitarian Position and Responses

E. Objection: When Paul says in 1 Tim. 2:11-15 that women are to learn in submission and not to teach or exercise authority over men, and that this need be the case because of the order of creation and Eve's fall into sin, doesn't this require that women are to be in a subordinate relationship in the church, with only qualified men teaching or preaching?

Response: This traditional understanding errs because it treats Paul's specific instruction to one particular church situation as though it is normative instruction to all churches at all times. There is evidence that the church at Ephesus (where Timothy pastored) was plagued with false teaching, and that this false teaching was coming primarily from women in the church who usurped authority and taught wrong doctrine about the creation and sin of Adam and Eve. If this is the case, then we must see this passage not as precluding any and all female teaching in the Church, but as a direct prohibition to these certain women in the church at Ephesus who were false teachers.

Meadowbrook & the Role of Women: History

1999 Unanimous Decision: We will support the position that women can be involved in:

- Committees and ministry roles
- Congregational scripture reading and prayer done in unison
- “Women voices only” parts in congregational singing
- Dramatic presentations, including scripture
- Speaking and reading in classes
- Commenting during “family time”
- ***We will reevaluate our tradition periodically***

2008 Update - Unanimous Decisions:

- Lead adult Bible classes
- Announcements, presentations & comments to the congregation

How Patriarchal, Complementarian* & Egalitarian Theologians See Women Functioning in the Local Church

1. “**Hierarchical**” (or *Patriarchal*) is the traditional theological assumption/view that men hold a special, higher place than women in God’s creative plan. This view forms the basis/interpretative framework for much a Reformed/Calvinist thought as well as Roman Catholic theology.
2. “**Complementarianism**” is the view that while men and women are equal in value and worth before God, they have circumscribed roles & functions unique to their respective sex that must be observed especially in the ritualistic/liturgical practice of the church. The view is a late-modern development of Reformed thought as a compromise with *patriarchal* views, and is articulated most fully in Calvinist traditions. See Wayne Grudem’s work and the “CBMW.org”.
3. “**Egalitarianism**” is the view that in God’s perfect design and intent, there are no differences in God’s eyes between the sexes – both are equally valuable, respected, gifted, empowered and able to contribute to the life of the kingdom. This view is most often articulated in *Arminian* fellowships and non-fundamentalist evangelical churches.

COLOR LEGEND FOR CHART:

MEN ONLY	MEN OR WOMEN
MB PRACTICE	CONSIDERED

Role/Function	Hierarchical	Complementarian	Egalitarian
Head of household	Red	Green	Blue
Spiritual Leader of Family	Red	Green	Blue
Public Prayer	Red	Purple	Blue
Public Scripture Reading	Red	Purple	Blue
Public Announcement	Red	Green	Blue
Public Song/Worship Leading	Red	Purple	Blue
Deacon	Red	Green	Blue
Elder	Red	Red	Blue
Senior Pastor/Minister	Red	Red	Blue
Education Minister	Red	Green	Blue
Youth Minister	Red	Purple	Blue
Associate Minister	Red	Green	Blue
Evangelist	Red	Green	Blue
Serving offering/communion	Red	Purple	Blue
Children’s Minister	Blue	Green	Blue
Execution/Admin Minister	Red	Green	Blue
Bible Study Leader	Red	Green	Blue
Sunday School Class Leader (Adult)	Red	Green	Blue
Sunday School Class Leader (Youth)	Red	Green	Blue
Public sharing/testimony	Red	Green	Blue
Bible author/teacher/professor @ college/univ	Red	Green	Blue

*Complementarian roles shown are taken directly from Wayne Grudem’s longer list of 83 roles



Summary & Conclusions

Conclusions

- God created male and female in his image. They equally had dominion over the earth. ***After The Fall***, men began to rule over women.
- Through the redemptive work of Christ, male and female can be reconciled and the two can be one, as God intended.
- While on earth, Jesus elevated women beyond their status at the time.
- Women were to pray and prophesy in the assembly in Paul's day. Therefore, the rule that women were to "keep silent" *could not refer to* praying and prophesying.
- There are **few** scriptures that describe the worship assembly. Most of them have to do with behavior and dress rather than liturgy.
- We are to be culturally sensitive and behave in such a way that the gospel message will be heard and believed.
- Leadership roles were assigned to both men and women in scripture.
- We are all commanded to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Conclusions

- There is no evident, agreed-upon Biblical/Scriptural limitation on or prohibition against female Christians serving & functioning in any capacity in church life including leadership and public roles in the congregation.
- At Meadowbrook, the elders are unified that female Christians in the congregation may serve in any role where they are gifted & willing **except for the roles of Senior Minister/Preacher & Elder/Shepherd.**
- However, there is **no schedule, agenda** or **plan** to expand the functional roles of women at Meadowbrook. Instead, these changes would occur based on the Spirit's gifting & prompting of individuals within the congregation to step forward to serve.
- Whatever changes in this regard that actually do take place, would do so ***slowly, respectfully*** and ***appropriately.***