

Equal But Not the Same:

An Argument for Gender Roles Before the Fall

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This paper was written to serve as a starting point for discussion with our elders and leadership team at Calvary Chapel in Steinbach, and with other friends and pastors with whom I network.

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If we are to understand the Bible's perspective on gender, we must carefully examine gender at the beginning of the story, in Genesis 1-3, chapters that influence our interpretation of the rest of the Bible and set the stage for the whole book at basic yet complex levels: God is creator; humanity is separate – not evolved - from animals; humans are male and female; sin is the problem of humanity that God remedies through Christ. As Genesis 1-3 previews the whole story, this opening narrative should not be overlooked, and an examination of these chapters may teach us much about male-female relationships.

In the context of complementarian vs. egalitarian¹ discussions, it is important to examine Genesis 1-3 as egalitarians assert that male authority stems solely from the Fall and God's statement to Eve in Genesis 3:16, "your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." Egalitarians maintain that no gender roles or distinctions existed before sin, a fact that is reaffirmed, they argue, by Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Paul Jewett argues: "The barriers of race, class, and sex are done away with. For this reason we reject the traditional view of sexual hierarchy?"² Gordon Fee agrees,

But in Christ Jesus, the One whose death and resurrection inaugurated the new creation, all things have become new; the new era has dawned. The new creation, therefore, must be our starting point regarding gender issues? All structures are predicated altogether on cultural givens. There simply is no biblical structure for the household? [The] Holy Spirit [is] obviously gender-blind.³

But Fee's statement is faulted on two levels. First, there are some biblical structures for the household; for example, homosexual and incestuous unions are forbidden; children must obey their parents; and women – by God's sovereign choice and design – have babies, inside a marriage relationship and by one husband. The second fault is that the argument skirts over the biblical story preceding Genesis 3:6 and assumes no evidence for gender roles before the fall, during the brief period of sinless perfection. Few would argue that sin ruined gender relations, but that is quite different from asserting sin created gender differences.

Differences do not necessitate hostility; the fall brought hostility, but did it bring the differences? This question must be answered, and will be the focus of this paper that will examine Adam and Eve's relationship surrounding the fall in search of evidence (or lack of) for gender roles or differences. If gender roles do not exist before the fall, they are purely sin-wrought, not God's original intention, and to be discarded by Christians today. If gender roles do exist before the fall, they were part of utopic and sinless Eden, which might reveal how men and women did and so should now relate according to God's original and unflawed design.⁴ First, to chapter one?

An examination of gender in Genesis one reveals an emphasis on equalities more than differences. I note three areas where men and women are equal:

First, male and female are equal in worth as bearers of God's image. Verses twenty six and twenty seven attest that male and female reflect God's image, with neither gender doing so more than the other. Men or women are not superior, both are made in God's image and reflect their Creator, in this respect they are equal

and honorable.

Perhaps this detail deserves some reflective application in the form of the following six questions:

*Do we as church leaders communicate to men and women that as bearers of God's image they reflect our Father to us?

*Do we subtly promote or inhibit or value common traits of one sex above another?

*Do men's words hold more weight than women's in church discussions?

*Do we tolerate elements of femininity or masculinity and as an inconvenience without considering that these very elements may reveal God to us?

*Do we favour one gender? Do we roll our eyes at the other with comments like, "typical man!" or "women always?"? Though legitimate frustrations may invoke sexist sentiment, recalling that women and men bear God's image should encourage respect and not disdain.

* Might a guest perceive any of the above negative impressions by our congregations services and interactions?

Second, men and women are equal in commission, both are made for (v26) and then told to (v28) rule over the "fish? birds? livestock? and all the earth and all the creatures that move along the ground." Nothing is off limits for either men or women; they are equal not only in worth, but also in commission. God did not tell Adam to train the large animals and Eve to arrange the flowers, but gave ruling responsibility of the whole earth to them both. Alter notes the Hebrew *radah* can also be translated, "dominion" and writes that "it seems to suggest an absolute or even fierce exercise of mastery."⁵ Male and female are equal in their mandate to rule the earth, God made no separations or categories, He told them both to rule it all! Perhaps this equal commission warrants some reflective self-examination.

* Do we communicate that men and women share an equal to rule in the world?

* Do we relegate either sex to unbiblical roles in career or interest?

* Do we set an environment of affirmation for women who excel in their careers?

* Do we in any way communicate disapproval or disappointment toward Moms who choose to work?⁶

* Do we acknowledge that professional (and even traditionally male) careers are God's call for some women, as an extension of their commission to rule?

Genesis 1:27-28 affirms men and women are equal in their commission to rule the earth, there are no gender-topic allocations in God's commission! Both are created equally to rule, yes rule!

Third, men and women are equally blessed. God blesses both sexes (v28) to "be fruitful, to increase, to fill the earth and subdue it, and to rule over" it (Genesis 1:28). There is no second-place blessing, no distinction in the blessing, just empowering, encouraging, and commanding – blessing! The nature of the blessing is also worth examining. First, this blessing can be summed up in two words: expansion and rule. "Fruitfulness? increase? fill the earth," are all expanding words; while "subdue" and "rule" obviously denote rule. God did not bless men and women to expand and create chaos, but to expand and bring order and peace. Note too the tone of the blessing, it affirms, encourages and empowers. Second, there is no note of caution, no tentativeness in God's blessing them, no private word to Adam warning him of Eve's weakness. Loosely paraphrased, God's blessing is, "Go for it! Expand and expand – and bring order to all you do!" Peterson writes in *The Message*, "God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

And Alter translates: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and conquer it."⁷

The equal blessing of men and women holds up a third mirror for self-examination.

* Do our actions toward women and men echo the sentiment of this phrase?

* Do we control, manage, withhold or curtail our endorsement of endeavors by women or men?

* Have we whittled down God's blessing for both sexes to fit our comfortable preferences or carved out "ministry areas?"⁸

* Do we lead either gender with reservation or nervousness because of past abuses?

* Do we fear the worst more quickly than we believe the best?

* Which sounds more like us: a) Peterson's paraphrase: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be

responsible” or, b) “be careful, watch out, I’m not sure about?”

Notice too, God blessed man and woman unreservedly before either had done anything; His blessing did not depend on their performance, it was unconditional! Although God knew they would sin, He still blessed them to rule.

Also note the Hebrew Adam can mean “person,” but Genesis one goes beyond androgyny, “male and female He created them” (v27). The differences remain largely undefined, but are acknowledged by God’s calling them “male and female” and not generic “Adam” or “people.” God honours gender, not as afterthought or procreative necessity, nor as mere cosmetic or genetic variance, but as male and female from the beginning - two distinct and very special creations, both in the image of God. Both are people - or “man” as verse twenty six and twenty seven say – but they are male and female, different, special, unique. God did not design people androgynously, gender is not an evolution gaining legitimacy later in the story; gender is from the beginning, obvious, up-front, and without apology. For Christians today, the validity of gender cannot be overstated. In a world blurring femininity and masculinity to indistinguishable confusion, we must remind ourselves that the Bible honours male and female as two distinct creations who both reflect God. As Eldredge asserts, God doesn’t make generic people; he makes something very distinct – a man or a woman. In other words, there is a masculine heart and a feminine heart, which in their own ways reflect or portray to the world God’s heart.⁹

CS Lewis affirms, “Gender is a reality and a more fundamental reality than sex? a fundamental polarity which divides all created beings.”¹⁰ And Piper agrees,

The very fact that God created human beings in the dual modality of male and female cautions us against an unqualified equation of the two sexes. This profound and beautiful distinction, which some belittle as “a matter of mere anatomy,” is not a biological triviality or accident. It is God who wants men to be men and women to be women? God has no intention of blurring sexual distinctness in the interests of equality in an unqualified sense.¹¹

Androgyny is a false value that distorts God’s reflection, yet society increasingly upholds it as normal. Canada’s National Post reported on the following “exhaustive” study.

Playboy bunnies, and the air-brushed ideals of female beauty they represent, are starting to look more and more like boys, according to a scientific study of the magazine.

Reporting tomorrow in the normally staid British Medical Journal, researchers from Toronto and Austria describe a 50-year trend toward taller, thinner, even “androgynous” centrefold models with smaller breasts and thinner hips.

The research by a Canadian psychologist and an Austrian statistician did not involve looking at naked women, but rather analyzing body measurements provided online by Playboy for their 577 centrefolds, all the way from Marilyn Monroe in December, 1953, to Shanna Moakler in December, 2001.

For every model, researchers calculated various composite measurements, such as body mass index and waist-to-hip ratio, and also an androgyny scale based on the model’s curvaceousness.

In charting the course of the centrefolds’ physiques, researchers showed that height and waist size have increased, breast and hip size have decreased along with body mass index, and the androgyny readings went through the roof.¹²

The truth of God’s creating male and female is being assaulted, and someone needs to speak up. If the world’s leading pornographic publication – which at one time had more subscribers than Time Magazine¹³ – is slowly but surely veering towards an accepted asexuality of androgyny; and psychologist Marianne Fisher notes: “Playboy is a good indicator for what will be beautiful tomorrow,” the blatant message is simple: disobey male and female, blur to interchangeable confusion, misconstrue the image-bearers of God and God Himself becomes less familiar.¹⁴ Yet the future is upon us: Marilyn Manson’s cool androgyny, Madonna’s kissing Britney Spears at the 2003 MTV Awards, and rock band Green Day’s recent tour with the homoerotic trio “Pansy Division” all devalue Genesis 1:27 to literally millions.¹⁵ One wonders how future families will appear when sexuality in pop culture is so dazed and confused. With such overt distorting of God’s image bearers, it’s not surprising that

Christianity is often marginalized in mainstream youth culture.¹⁶ The message of Genesis one is equality with differences. Chapters two and three unpack how these differences manifest beyond biology.

To effectively discuss chapters two and three, we must recognize their differing style and purpose from chapter one. Two verse four closes an inclusio started at the beginning of the book by recalling in reversed order the phrase from one verse one, “heavens and the earth when they were created.” Alter writes, taking us back in an envelope structure to the paired terms of the very first verse of the Creation story. Now the style changes sharply in this more vividly anthropomorphic account.¹⁷

He also notes that God fashions, rather than speaks into existence, that God (after 2:4) is called “Yahweh Elohim” instead of chapter one’s simpler “Elohim.”¹⁸ The grammatical and syntactic style of chapter two is also markedly different and more detailed than before. Like the opening of a movie that tells the background for the story that follows, chapter one explains in broad-brush-strokes the backdrop for a more detailed account in chapter two.¹⁹

Egalitarians arguing against evidence of gender roles before the fall have some awkward details to contend with in chapters two and three. It is worth mentioning that my own position has changed by examining the text and discovering some unavoidable details. But this headship has no hint of domination, control, or suffocation. I cannot write something that is personally displeasing or impractical, and now see no contradiction between the male headship and equality; rather, these complexities juxtapose to present a rich and satisfying framework for inter-gender relationships.

A first point of interest in Genesis two is Adam’s being created first, a twist God did not have to include. Schreiner rightly mentions that “An egalitarian message would be communicated nicely by the creation of man and woman at the same instant.”²⁰ God was surely capable of creating Adam and Eve simultaneously, so why did He create Adam first (Gen 2:7, 18-23)?

The interpretation that Adam was created first to affirm his headship over Eve makes the most cultural, textual, and intertextual sense. For the ancient Jewish reader, Adam’s being male and created first automatically gave him primary responsibility for others in his family, a concept that the Jews developed further into primogeniture.²¹ Egalitarians may rightly retort that Jewish culture holds no authority for Christians, and that the New Testament does not teach primogeniture for Christian families and this is certainly true. Yet Paul appeals twice to Adam’s being created first, on both occasions while discussing headship;²² first in 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9, and again in 1 Timothy 2:12-13, where he states as a reason for male headship, “because Adam was formed first.” Generating authority for Christian practice from Jewish culture is weak and unconvincing - in fact, Paul preached against it on the issue of circumcision in 1 Corinthians 7:19 and throughout his letter to the Galatians - but, Paul’s New Testament comments cause Adam’s being created first to become a Christian and not just a Jewish issue. Egalitarians dismissing that Adam was created first to affirm his headship over Eve must explain why two intertestamental cross-references do not affirm what Jewish culture would support: that male headship, at least in some part, stems from Adam’s being created first.

A second reason Adam was created first was to highlight his need for Eve. In the context of Adam’s ruling work (naming the animals), his incompleteness becomes obvious. Paradoxically, this is the sole problem in paradise; Ed Silvoso calls it “the one deficiency in paradise, [that] the man needed ‘a helper suitable for him.’”²³ God knew this need before it surfaced, and simultaneous creation of both sexes would have eliminated Adam’s awareness of any deficiency, but instead God verifies the inadequacy by announcing His first and only “not good” in creation: “for man to be alone” (Gen 2:18).

We benefit from acknowledging it is still not good for a man to be alone. Taking cue from these scriptures, our congregation’s main (though not final) level of leadership is a team comprised of men and women, where I cannot overstate the blessing of female perspective and initiative. Frequently seeing and saying things overlooked by male perspectives, the women on our team help the church reach and disciple more people by serving, strengthening and overseeing ministries at Calvary. We feel this is a modern application of this detail; when Adam was alone, God said for the first and only time, “it is not good” (Gen 2:18), but when Adam was with Eve, God said for the first and only time “it is very good” (Gen 1:31).²⁴ Men and women are created to work together.

Second, it is interesting that God creates and presents Eve within the context of Adam's naming the animals. Notice the significance of naming in Genesis one and two as well as in the rest of the book. Naming denotes rule and authority, first by God over creation, then by Adam over the animals, and keeping with the pattern, by Adam of Eve. The Hebrew verb *qara* occurs in all six naming occurrences in the first two chapters of Genesis, three referring to God and three to Adam:

Gen 1:5 God called (*qara*) the light "day," and the darkness he called (*qara*) "night." And there was evening, and there was morning-- the first day.

Gen 1:8 God called (*qara*) the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning-- the second day.

Gen 1:10 God called (*qara*) the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

Gen 2:19 now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name (*qara*) them; and whatever the man called (*qara*) each living creature, that was its name.

Gen 2:20 So the man gave (*qara*) names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

Gen 2:23 the man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called (*qara*) 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

The naming pattern is intriguing, as Grudem writes, just as God demonstrated His sovereignty over day and night, heavens, earth, and seas by assigning them names, so Adam demonstrated his authority over the animal kingdom by assigning them names.²⁵

Yet an argument for headship rooted in Adam's naming Eve is not mere imagination, Genesis emphasizes the link between authority and naming when God names His creation, when parents name their children²⁶ and when God changes people's names as part of His invading and ruling their lives to redefine their destiny.²⁷ In every instance where *qara*'s means "to name," the namer is always responsible for the one being named, (Adam and Eve are the lone exception for egalitarians denying Adam's headship). Without attempting to define the scope or precise nature of this headship, given the details stated above, it is likely that Adam's naming the animals and ultimately Eve "indicates a leadership function that Eve did not have with respect to her husband."²⁸

One final comment about Adam's naming Eve: notice before the fall, Adam names her generically "woman" (Gen 2:23), but after, "Eve" (Gen 3:20), a redemptive proper noun meaning, "mother of all the living." The fall brought death and permanently stained humanity, but Adam lovingly prophesies the blessing of Eve's destiny, she will be the mother of all people. There is nothing utilitarian (woman the child-bearer), or condemning (woman the curse-bringer), and nothing impersonal ("he called her Eve") between Adam and Eve here, but rather love, care, and blessing as Adam models his headship appropriately. To draw a devotional application from the text, do those of us who are men see women impersonally or graciously, as mere helpers, or as friends? Adam models the respect we should cultivate, and honours Eve despite the fall that ruined them both.

A third detail suggesting Adam's headship before the fall is the fact that Eve was "created for" and "brought to" Adam, though as we will see, this implies no notions of inferiority. As stated earlier, part of the reason for Adam's initial aloneness was to highlight his need for Eve, hence she was made "as a helper suitable for him" (Gen 2:18) and then brought "to him" (Gen 2:22). Lest we detect a whiff of authoritarianism, Robert Alter notes, "The Hebrew 'ezer kenegdo' [translated 'a helper suitable']?is notoriously difficult to translate;"²⁹ in fact, the term seems to have been misunderstood often. As many point out, the phrase has no inferior associations, popular Christian writer John Eldredge writes,

It means something far more powerful than just “helper;” it means “lifesaver.” The phrase is used elsewhere of God, when you need him to come through for you desperately. “There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens to help you” (Deut. 33:26). Eve is a life giver; she is Adam’s ally.³⁰

Mickelson attacks associations of inferiority even more strongly,

The word ezer (translated helper) is never used of a subordinate in the Bible. It appears twenty-one times in the Old Testament. Seventeen times it refers to God our “helper.” God is hardly secondary or subordinate to us. The other three times (in addition to the Genesis reference) refer to a military ally. When God is spoken of as our “helper,” we are really speaking of him as our strength or power. The Hebrew word *kenegdo* means “equal and corresponding to.” R. David Freeman, a biblical scholar at the University of California and a specialist in Semitic languages, examined all the uses of these two words in the Old Testament and concludes that the proper translation for Genesis 2:18 would be ‘I will make a power (or strength) equal to him.’³¹

Yet to stop at “helper” is to only examine half of the phrase. Grudem rightly comments on Eve’s being “fit for him.”

Yet in the same sentence God emphasizes that she is not to help Adam as one who is inferior to him. Rather, she is to be helper ‘fit for him,’ and here the Hebrew word *kenegdo* means ‘a help corresponding to him,’ that is, ‘equal and adequate to himself.’ So Eve was created as a helper, but as a helper who was Adam’s equal. She was created as one who differed from him, but who differed from him in ways that would exactly complement who Adam was.³²

There is no hint of Adam’s dominance or ownership, or of Eve’s inferiority or belittlement, but every sense of ideal suitability for partnership. Eve is not Adam’s equivalent to Santa’s elves; she is his sidekick, aide, ally, companion, rescuer or as we often say, “other half.” With this understanding, it is unfortunate that “helper suitable for him” is often misconstrued to carry negative connotations leaning toward female inferiority and servitude. Grudem’s suggestion seems fitting, “I believe one reason God allowed this controversy into the church at this time is so that we could correct wrongful male chauvinism in our churches and families.”³³ However, headship is not chauvinism, it is leading honourably with care and nurture. Eve’s being “made for” and “brought to” Adam emphasizes his headship, and her partnership is never weakened or compromised. “Made for” and “brought to” are not semantic errors, but a communication of male-headship that honours Eve.

A fourth observation verifying male headship in Genesis 1-3 is Adam’s primacy in communication and accountability. It was to Adam - not Adam and Eve – that God communicated regarding the forbidden tree (Gen 2:16-17), though Eve knew these instructions too (3:2).³⁴ We must suppose that Adam told Eve, though we do not read of God asking him to do so. That Adam received primary communication may not secure the headship discussion, but it does support the pattern emerging from the story.

A fifth evidence of male headship is that though Eve sinned first, Adam is held primarily accountable for the fall in Genesis and throughout Scripture. If Adam and Eve were fully co-equal, why did God call to Adam in Genesis 3:9? Schreiner writes,

If God were truly egalitarian, Eve would have been reprimanded first, since she ate the fruit before her husband and presumably convinced Adam to eat of it as well. Yahweh spoke to Adam first because he bore primary responsibility for what occurred in the garden. In Romans 5:12-19 Paul confirms this reading of the narrative, for the sin of the human race was traced to Adam, not to Eve? not suggesting that Eve bore no responsibility for her sin. Yahweh censured her actions as well and judged her for what she did (Gen 3:13, 16). Greater responsibility, however, is assigned to Adam as the leader of the first human couple.³⁵

Eliminating the possibility of a syntactical mistranslation in Genesis, Piper points out that the Apostle Paul also holds Adam accountable:

But if Adam and Eve fell into sin together, why does Paul blame Adam for our fall in Romans 5:12-21? Why doesn’t Paul blame both Adam and Eve? Why does Genesis 3:7 say that it was only after Adam joined in the

rebellion that the eyes of both of them were opened to their condition? Why does God call out to Adam ‘where are you’ (Genesis 3:9)? Why doesn’t God summon both Adam and Eve to account together? Because, as God-appointed head, Adam bore the primary responsibility to lead their partnership in a God-glorifying direction.³⁶

Adam is held responsible again when God curses the ground, Piper continues, God says, “it is because of you, Adam, that the ground is cursed” (3:17). God does not say, “it is because of you both, Adam and Eve,” as if they shared equal responsibility in an unqualified sense.³⁷

Furthermore, God tells Adam that because he sinned he would die, but Eve died too. Why is Adam on the hot seat more than Eve, and why didn’t God mention Eve’s death? Both shared the consequences, but Adam’s took the brunt of the blame, which is quite unegalitarian.

Sixth, and on the heels of this observation, we cannot ignore that the rest of the Bible beyond Genesis holds Adam – not Adam and Eve – accountable for the fall.

Since Eve sinned first, we might expect that the New Testament would tell us that we inherit a sinful nature because of Eve’s sin, or that we are counted guilty because of Eve’s sin. But this is not the case. In fact, it is just the opposite.³⁸

Notice that Romans 5:14 fails to mention Eve when discussing sin and the fall:

death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. (*Italics mine*).

And Adam is again the sole recipient of blame in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 also hones in on Adam, comparing his legacy of sin to Christ’s inauguration of freedom:

The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit... The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven ?just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

Grudem commenting on this text writes,

It is unmistakable then, that Adam had a leadership role in representing the entire human race, a leadership role that Eve did not have. Nor was it true that Adam and Eve together represented the human race. It was Adam alone who represented the human race, because he had a particular leadership role that God had given him, a role that Eve did not share.³⁹

Some may discredit this logic by arguing that the New Testament uses Patriarchal language, and that this is a bad thing. However the same Paul quoted above does not ignore Eve, he openly discusses her in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and again in 1 Timothy 2:13-14, calling her, “?the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.” Eve is not off the hook; but for Paul, Adam carries the weight of responsibility for the fall.

Seventh, the consequences of the fall are themselves evidence for pre-fall gender roles. The fall brought hostility; but hostility magnifies and latches on to - not creates - these differences. God did not issue the same consequence to both Adam and Eve. Rather, Eve is told of pain in childbearing and of her desire for the man who will “rule over” her (Gen 3:16); and Adam hears that his work will become difficult and undesirable, and that he will die (though they both do). Grudem⁴⁰ notes that the man’s rule differs greatly from the notions of cultivation and care from earlier in the story. The Hebrew *mashal* used here has military and oppressive connotations, and later describes Joseph’s rule in Egypt,⁴¹ the Philistines bullying Israel,⁴² Solomon’s conquering kingdoms,⁴³ God’s rule over sea and earth,⁴⁴ and oppressors who cause suffering.⁴⁵ Note too that God did not curse Adam and Eve, perhaps His edicts are not tailor-made punishments but simple statements of fact⁴⁶ and consequence for their actions.

An eighth reason for gender roles before the fall is the New Testament’s comments for marriage, which affirm rather than dismiss gender-roles. If all gender roles are fall-wrought, the New Testament must present an

egalitarian view of marriage and gender, but the opposite is true. Specific instructions to husbands and wives correct the “ruling over” and “desiring for” predicted in Genesis, but never erase male headship. Paul writes in Corinthians “man is the head of woman” (1 Cor 11:3), and in contrast to “desiring your husband,” he tells Colossian women to “submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (3:18); Paul tells Colossian husbands to “?love your wives and do not be harsh with them” (3:19). The remedy counters the curse, but does not obliterate headship. New Testament directions for marriage maintain love-led submission and headship, with no room for harshness or power-trips.

A ninth argument for male headship stemming from Adam and Eve’s relationship is the parallel drawn by Paul asserting that marriage reflects Christ’s relationship with His church, as Ephesians 5:23 states, “for the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church.” Are Christ and His church equal or egalitarian? How does Christ lead and love His “bride?” Grudem explains, Now the relationship between Christ and the church is not culturally variable. It is the same for all generations. And it is not reversible. There is a leadership or headship role that belongs to Christ that the church does not have. Similarly, in the marriage as God created it to be, there is a leadership role for the husband that the wife does not have. And for our purposes it is important to notice that this relationship was there from the beginning of creation, in the beautiful marriage between Adam and Eve in the Garden.⁴⁷

Egalitarians have a difficult task in qualifying a Biblical rejection of the above Scriptures.⁴⁸

To conclude, a close reading of Genesis 1-3 demonstrates that God ordained male headship in sinless paradise before the fall; not as a byproduct of sin, but as part of God’s original and continuous plan for Christians today. And though not an authoritative argument by itself, we cannot ignore that the early church Fathers; subsequent Church leaders; and their great writings, commentaries, and creeds unanimously support a male headship interpretation of scripture, culminating to suggest that we are in good company with this conclusion. Furthermore,

It is interesting to note the agreement among a cross section of conservatives, centrist, and liberal commentators that, if these opening chapters of the Bible do not demonstrably promote a hierarchy of authority of the man over the woman, they at least leave the door open for such an interpretation. More pertinently, there is not evidence from ancient Jewish exegesis that Paul could have inherited an egalitarian interpretation of the beginnings of Genesis from his Jewish upbringing. Nor does a completely egalitarian interpretation of Paul appear in the writings of any ancient Christian commentator, suggesting that if Paul did articulate such a perspective, he was uniformly misunderstood in the extant sources.⁴⁹

Finally, I will not condemn those who disagree, but neither can I deny what appears in my own heart and mind to be a clear argument for male headship, and I admit that the future may change me. Whatever our theological leanings, I hope we can work together against all male chauvinism, sexism, and marginalizing of women in the church. Women are God’s blessing to the church, they are a blessing that I want to release and facilitate to the greatest of my ability and the full extent of my sphere. To my egalitarian friends I say, let’s not allow our differences to hinder our partnership in the Great Commission, and let’s embrace the attitude of Charles Simeon toward each other,

Many there are who cannot see these truths, who yet are in a state truly pleasing to God; yea many, at whose feet the best of us may be glad to be found in heaven. It is a great evil, when these doctrines are made a ground of separation one from another, and when the advocates of different systems anathematize each other? In reference to truths which are involved in so much obscurity as those which relate to the sovereignty of God, mutual kindness and concession are far better than vehement argumentation and uncharitable discussion.⁵⁰

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1 In short, complimentarians believe that the Bible outlines gender roles including male headship while egalitarians assert that God is gender blind, and no gender based distinctions apply for Christians today. See the attached Bibliography for examples.

2 Paul K Jewett, The Ordination of Women (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 2.

3 Gordon Fee, "Gender Issues: Reflection on the Perspective of the Apostle Paul," in *Listening To The Spirit In The Text* (Vancouver: Eerdmans, 2000) 61, 71, 72.

4 I know this statement presupposes and exegetical "disregard" for culture in this text, but I don't think there was a culture to speak of in Genesis 1-3 yet, as few communal or sociologic / anthropologic interactions had had chance to develop to the point of tradition or protocol.

5 Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: Norton & Co, 1996) 5.

6 I am not belittling the call to motherhood or the need for mothers in the family and society. However, some women work out of financial necessity, others work from choice, and I ask whether we shake our heads at their status.

7 Ibid, Robert Alter, 5.

8 I acknowledge that some insist on "but Paul says women can't?" and won't discuss this here, but still question our attitude and interactions with women, irrespective of theology. Our theology can be right while our hearts are wrong.

9 John Eldredge, *Wild At Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul* (Minneapolis: Thomas Nelson, 2001) 8.

10 Ibid, John Eldredge, 35.

11 John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response To Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991) 99.

12 Joseph Brean, *Playboy Study Shows Men's Tastes Tilting To Androgynous* (National Post, December 20, 2002).

13 Ibid.

14 What should concern us is that more subtly this asexual sentiment is slipping into the church. In the 1970s and 80s fashion encouraged men to look more feminine, more recently women appear masculine. Though I risk the danger of sounding Victorian, I am bothered by the clothing and hairstyles that increasing numbers of young women adopt. Too often as a youth pastor I cannot discern if someone is male or female, I have addressed someone with the wrong gender pronoun more than once. I am not arguing for skirts and dresses and long hair, but just for some sign (any?) of femininity! I'm not trying to get embroiled in a fight about the details of externals but the point remains: sexuality is being attacked and Christians need to demonstrate righteousness, not blend into the insanity of our surrounding culture. Masculinity and femininity are part of God's creation, not social or environmental afterthoughts. Expressions of masculinity and femininity can and will vary with culture, but the emphasis from Genesis One is that there is a God-ordained difference between male and female. Can you tell?

15 Center For Parent and Youth Understanding, www.cpyu.org (site search for gay + homosexuality, November 15, 2003).

16 Of course God can cause the gospel to overcome any cultural boundary, but nonetheless this seems, in my estimation, to be an accurate prediction of the outcome of the currently androgynous trend.

17 Op cit, Robert Alter, 7.

18 Ibid.

19 Please understand that due to space limitations, I cannot evaluate the many arguments and comments surrounding the issue of gender roles in chapter 2 and 3. I have rather chosen to emphasize the details that are most pertinent to this discussion while largely ignoring other comments and theories that I find extraneous, unconvincing or too speculative.

20 James Beck and Craig L. Blomberg, eds, *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan Zondervan, 2001) 202.

21 Torrey pointed out that Jewish firstborn males received: Precedence in the family Gen_48:13; Gen_48:14; Authority over the younger children Gen_27:29; 1Sa_20:29; Special blessing by the father Gen_27:4; Gen_27:35; The father's title and power 2Ch_21:3; A double portion of inheritance Deu_21:17; In case of death the next brother to raise up seed to Deu_25:5; Deu_25:6; Mat_22:24-28; Not to be alienated by parents through caprice Deu_21:15; Deu_21:16; Could be forfeited by misconduct Gen_49:3; Gen_49:4; Gen_49:8; 1Ch_5:1; Could be sold Gen_25:31; Gen_25:33; Heb_12:16; Heb_12:17;

- 22 For a detailed discussion of headship and the Greek word kephale, see Micklefield's article entitled Kephale?, for a copy, contact Calvary Chapel in Steinbach at 1.204.326.1095
- 23 Ed Silvano, Women: God's Secret Weapon; God's Inspiring Message to Women of Power, Purpose and Destiny (Ventura: Regal, 2001) 100.
- 24 Op Cit, James Beck and Craig L. Blomberg, 140
- 25 Wayne Grudem, ed, Biblical Foundations for Manhood And Womanhood (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2002) 27.
- 26 Genesis 4:25-26; 5:3, 29; 16:15; 19:37-38; 21:3
- 27 Genesis 17:5, 15
- 28 Op cit, Wayne Grudem, 28.
- 29 Op cit, Robert Alter, 9.
- 30 Op cit, John Eldredge, 51.
- 31 Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse, Women in Ministry, Four Views (Downers Grove, Intervarsity Press, 1989) 183.
- 32 Op cit, Wayne Grudem, 32.
- 33 Op cit, Wayne Grudem, 59.
- 34 Many have rightly pointed out that Eve added "and you must not touch it" to the instructions, an interesting detail, but bearing no significance that I am aware of on our discussion of headship or gender role.
- 35 Op cit, James Beck and Craig L. Blomberg, 209.
- 36 Op cit, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, 107-108
- 37 Ibid, 110
- 38 Ibid, Wayne Grudem, 26.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid, Wayne Grudem, 37.
- 41 Gen 45:26
- 42 Judges 14:4, 15:11
- 43 1 Kings 4:21
- 44 Psalm 89:9, 66:7
- 45 Neh 9:37, Isa 19:4
- 46 Op cit, Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse, 41.
- 47 Op cit, Wayne Grudem, 37.
- 48 cf 1 Cor 11:3. I am aware of the "kephale wars" and assert that whatever "source" reading egalitarians suggest for 1 Cor 11:3 must also work for Ephesians 5, which is much more difficult to do.
- 49 Op cit, James Beck and Craig L. Blomberg, 331.
- 50 John Piper, The Roots of Endurance, Invincible Perseverance in the Lives of John Newton, Charles Simeon, and William Wilberforce (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002) 87.