



CHRIST the **KING**
CHURCH

GOD'S GOOD DESIGN:
A THEOLOGICAL VISION OF SEXUALITY

CTK's Statement on God's Good Design

Given the rapid pace of change taking place in the world regarding sexuality, the elders of CTK determined to publish a statement reaffirming our commitment to historic, biblical sexuality. Although issues of sexuality are complex and deeply personal, we are committed to scripture as our highest authority, for "all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17).

The doctrinal position articulated here is often known as "complementarianism," which holds that men and women share equal value and dignity before God and have complementary roles. While we have made every effort to align our principles and practice with a faithful exposition of scripture, we acknowledge that others in our church may take a different view. Some may find our position too conservative, and some may find it too progressive. Strict agreement on these views is not required for membership and meaningful involvement at CTK Church, but these views will be reflected in the church's teaching. Regardless of one's views, we ask for unity and charity from everyone.

We believe that complementarianism, when rightly practiced, will lead to the recognizable flourishing of both sexes. We strongly denounce distorted views of Scripture, or any version of complementarianism, that includes or permits sinful practices such as marginalization, subjugation, intimidation, neglect, or any form of abuse of any man or woman.

We also acknowledge that our complementarian principles will not result in uniform complementarian practice. Our aim is not to put limits on Christian freedom but rather to highlight the boundaries within which freedom operates. God has assigned unique purposes, vocations¹, and boundaries to men and women, which are the domains within which their freedom can be expressed. We do not wish to promote unbiblical stereotypes or cultural expressions of Christian sexuality from another time in the past. As Christian men and women who enjoy freedom in Christ, we believe these convictions can be faithfully expressed in a variety of ways (Gal 5:1). Although we are not free to oppose God's design, we recognize that God's design can be freely and faithfully expressed in broad and diverse ways.

As part of the larger complementarian movement, we recognize that some Christian leaders may share this general view but articulate it differently and with a different tone. Some take an aggressive posture in an attempt to push back against the world. Some take a more conciliatory approach in an attempt to persuade others or avoid controversy. By publishing this statement,

¹Throughout this document, the word "vocation" is used in its classical sense, meaning "calling." Vocation comes from the Latin word "vocare," which means "to call." Modern usage of "vocation" is often too narrow, limiting its meaning to "career" or "source of income." Our view is that Christians have an overlapping matrix of vocations to live out faithfully before God. This includes but is not limited to one's source of income. The vocations available for men and women always align with the purposes for which He created us.

we are speaking with our own voice. Although we are grateful for other complementarian leaders and organizations, they should not be regarded as representing CTK or our views.²

What follows is an introduction and two broad sections. The first contains our *Foundational Principles*, based on the creation accounts in Genesis, a biblical exposition of 1 Timothy 2:8-14, and the Danvers Statement (10 affirmations with our commentary).³ The second contains our *Application Principles*, which explains some guidelines for how we will apply these Foundational Principles at home and in the church.

²Some examples are the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, The Gospel Coalition, Acts 29, Together for the Gospel, the Presbyterian Church in America, Desiring God, 9Marks, some churches within the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Theology Seminary.

³The Danvers Statement was published in 1988 by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and supported by evangelical leaders such as Wayne Grudem and John Piper.

All Truth, Goodness, and Beauty Comes from God

Some truths are so beautiful and profound that they awaken within us a longing for God and eternity. God's essence is true, good, and beautiful; and all truth, goodness, and beauty comes down from him as a perfect gift (James 1:17).

When God created man and woman, he left his signature on them, granting them dignity as the only creatures made in his image. As such, humans have the unique ability to see and know true beauty. Being created for his glory, men and women are made to enjoy and delight in the Father and to reflect His own perfections back to him. The beautiful things we experience in this life are meant to stir up our hearts to desire God, who is the source of all beauty. One of the most profound ways God has written his beauty into creation is through human sexuality.

The Beauty of Human Sexuality

Genesis 1 tells of how God created by separating things into complementary pairs. He separated light from darkness, the heavens above from the waters below, the seas from the land, and the greater light from the lesser. Then he populated the sea and the land with life that would thrive in each environment, and it was good. This pattern culminated in God creating man as male and female—and it was *very* good.

In all of these complementary pairs, Peter Kreeft points out, the points of contrast are points of profound beauty. Sunsets are beautiful because they are where day touches night. Beaches are popular because they are where sea touches land. Fall is evocative because it marks the contrast between summer and winter. Human sexuality is wonderfully fascinating and mysterious because it marks the contrast between two kinds of people, uniquely created to bear his image.

This theme of human complementarity is not just a theme of Genesis. Although men and women are absolutely equal in essence, dignity, and value, the whole story of scripture moves to exaggerate, highlight, and glorify our distinctions.⁴ The final scene of that story culminates in the joining of a *new heavens* and a *new earth* with the marriage supper of the Groom and his bride. The entire narrative of scripture tells this story - God's original creation of man and woman points forward to God's intention for the new heavens and new earth.

In other words, God's design for sex represents truths not just about the goodness of sexual complementarity, but about redemption itself. When the Apostle Paul explains the marriage covenant, he concludes, "this mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church" (Eph 5:32).

⁴ William and Barbara Mouser, "The Story of Sex."

God designed sex and marriage to prophetically anticipate the gospel. The covenant of Jesus with his people is inextricably and eternally bound to our sexuality—and so how we confess our sexuality is inextricably and eternally bound to how we confess the gospel.

Human sexuality is no biological accident. Every cell in the human body is marked with male or female chromosomes. Likewise, the human soul is not sexless; it is itself either male or female. Therefore, we cannot detach our experience of God or the Christian life from the sex God has assigned to us. Faithfulness to God should be pursued according to the different purposes, vocations⁵, and boundaries God has assigned to each sex. Christians can “glorify God in [our bodies]” by embracing and cherishing our unique virtues and duties as men and women (1 Cor 6:20). Conversely, rejecting these sexual distinctions is not only rebellion against our bodies, but also rebellion against God and his gospel.

Our Modern Cultural Context

The modern world is rebelling against God’s good design for sexuality in unprecedented ways, promoting a vision of humanity where sexuality does not matter. The church needs to be prepared to not only remain faithful to God’s good design for sex, but to endure the world’s scorn for doing so. This rebellion is evident in at least the following ways:

- The promotion of “androgyny,” which is the blurring or elimination of sexual distinctions in the name of “equality;”
- The erosion of biblical marriage;
- The legal and cultural promotion of “gay marriage” as a legitimate union;
- The epidemic of fatherlessness, and men abandoning their children;
- The devaluing of motherhood, and ambivalence towards women who choose motherhood and homemaking as their primary occupation;
- The devaluing of the blessing of children, and the aborting of countless children;
- The pain of physical and emotional abuse in families;
- The increasing prevalence and use of pornography and its encroachment into more mainstream entertainment;
- The normalization of the distorted sexuality of the LGBTQ+ movement; and
- The linkage of personal identity with sinful sexual desires.

The world’s rebellion has also found its way into the church:

- The failure of many churches to faithfully obey the scriptures in appointing only biblically qualified men to the office of elder;
- The failure to teach and instruct members regarding biblical sexuality, gender roles, and the virtues that correspond with each;
- The failure to discipline members for sexual immorality in its various forms (1 Cor 5:1-2); and

⁵See our prior footnote on the usage of “vocation” in this document.

- The failure to resist the temptation to curry favor from the world by accommodating its demands.

Author Rod Dreher says that “American Christians are going to have to come to terms with the brute fact that we live in a culture in which our beliefs make increasingly little sense... We speak a language that the world more and more either cannot hear or finds offensive to its ears.” In the modern world, it is increasingly difficult for Christian men and women to find clear guidance on what it means to live virtuously as Christian men and women. God’s good design for sex revealed His truth, goodness, and beauty—but human sin and rebellion now obscures these from view.

Foundational Principles

The biblical account of creation in Genesis is critical for understanding sexuality because it reveals God's good design for sex before it was corrupted by the fall.

The First Creation Account of Genesis

There are two creation accounts in Genesis. The first account begins in Genesis 1 which describes the earth as "formless" and "void" (V2). God proceeded to *form it* by separating dark from light, heavens from the waters, and seas from dry land. God then continued to *fill it* with life - vegetation, plants, trees, aquatic life, birds, land creatures, livestock, creeping animals. God completed his work by creating two kinds of human beings, a *male kind* and a *female kind*. As a complementary pair, they image God together by continuing his "forming and filling" work. God's image is reflected in the man and woman together - neither of them could fully "image" God on their own. God tells them to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion," (V28). This command is called the "creation mandate." The man and woman were created to be creators.

The Second Creation Account

The second creation account beginning in Genesis 2:4 zooms in on the particulars of God's creation of man. When God "formed" man of the dust from the ground, he became "a living creature" (V7). The Hebrew literally means "living soul," indicating that man is a union of soul and body. God then put the man in the garden he had planted, commanded him "to work it and keep it" (V15), and also commanded him to not eat from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (V17) in the midst of the garden. At this point, the woman had not yet been created, an important point discussed further below.

Although Adam could begin the forming work (identifying, classifying, and naming the animals), he could not complete the task of filling the earth by himself. Thus, God created Eve to join him and help him. They were designed to be interdependent - neither could fulfill the creation mandate without the other.

When God said, "it is not good that the man should be alone," he is referring to man's inability to fulfill the creation mandate on his own. God commanded Adam to do something he could not do on his own. Eve was God's solution. God created her as his equal partner (Gen 2:18), his delight (Gen 2:23), his commitment (Gen 2:24), and his glory (1 Cor 11:7). Just as he needed her, she needed him. As the "weaker vessel⁶," she needed his protection and provision, as

⁶1 Peter 3:7 says, "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."

would the children God gave them. As she owed him her loyalty and submission, he owed her honor and understanding as a co-heir with him to the grace of life (1 Pet 3:7).

A natural division of labor is evident in this newly established household. Adam was given a stewardship of the creation mandate, and God gave him a helper fit for him to complete it. Adam's vocation would tend towards the "forming" tasks of the creation mandate: taking responsibility, leading, providing, and protecting. God gave him a body and mind suitable for this work. Eve's vocation would tend towards the "filling" tasks of the creation mandate: life-giving (bearing children), helping, beautifying, glorifying, nurturing, and establishing their home. These vocations are not mutually exclusive, however. The man is not excluded from nurturing children and the woman is not excluded from working the field. They were not called to work in isolated spheres, completely independent from one another, but to share the work together and specializing as needed. When the man and woman fell into sin (Gen 3), their respective vocations were cursed. The woman's vocation of being a helper and mother is cursed (V16) and the man's vocation of working the ground is cursed (V17).

Since much of the New Testament's teaching regarding the home and the church is based on these creation stories, the Genesis accounts can be summarized in this way: the Garden of Eden was the dwelling place of God with man. It was a place of prayer and worship, under the rule of God, and ordered according to His design. In this natural temple, God enjoyed fellowship with the man and woman, the garden was God's temple where he walked with them in the cool of the day, God fed them with food that sprouted from the ground, and God's holy food was in the center of the garden. Eden was a sanctuary from the uncharted wild of the broader world.

These themes and patterns are carried over into the worship of the tabernacle, the temple, and the church.

A Verse by Verse Exposition of 1 Timothy 2:8-14

The Apostle Paul contends that the structural order of the garden should be maintained in the church. The primary expression of God's rule in the church is through its teaching and its exercise of authority. This principle is most directly stated in 1 Timothy 2:8-14.

Liturgical Setting (V8-10)

"⁸ I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works."

The church gathering is where God's people assemble together for teaching, prayer, and worship. Like the garden of Eden, the church represents the rule of God on the earth, an outpost of his Kingdom, and ordered according to His design. Christian men are called to pray with uplifted hands instead of anger and quarreling. All Christian women are called to pursue

modesty, self-control, and good works instead of attracting attention to themselves through flashy or expensive clothing.

The Command (V11)

“11 Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.”

This command mirrors the role of Eve in the garden. Although Eve was equal to her husband, she was nevertheless submissive to him. Paul’s command is twofold. First, women are commanded to *learn*. They are to receive instruction in scripture and theology and never be denied access to it. The call for women to learn would have been unexpected in the ancient world, thus indicating women’s equality of status and intellect in the church. Second, they are commanded to be *modest* in their learning, marked by quietness and joyful submission.

The Prohibition (V12)

“12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.”

These words may sound strange or shocking to modern ears, but Paul’s intent is to promote something good. Verses 11 and 12 mirror each other by teaching parallel commands. It is good for a woman to *learn* the church’s theology and *submit* to the church’s authority, but not to *teach* the theology or *exercise* the authority. Paul does not say that women are incapable of teaching, or that women are less than equal, but rather that this sort of spiritual authority over the whole church goes against God’s design for women. Thus, Paul says that teaching and exercising authority over the church should be done by qualified men, as explained in the following chapter in the discussion of the office of elder.

The *office* and *functions* of eldership are closely related to Adam’s responsibility and headship in the garden. Eve was Adam’s *equal*, but not Adam’s *leader*, in either title or function. She was called to work alongside Adam, following his lead and helping him, but not exercising authority over him. This ordering of the garden should be maintained in the church. Paul prohibits women from the *functions* of an elder in 1 Tim 2:12, and from the *office* of elder in 1 Tim 3:2. This is not demeaning to women, but honoring to God’s design.

The designation of “helper” is an affirmation of women’s strength and value; it is not demeaning. The Hebrew root describing Eve as a helper is used elsewhere in scripture to describe God as helper. In Ps 20:2, David prays, “May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion.” In Ps 33:20, God is described as “our help and our shield.” In Hosea 13:9, God’s people are rebuked for turning against their help: “He destroys you, O Israel, for you are against me, against your helper.” God’s help is requested because he is strong and his people need it. Providing help does not devalue God, it demonstrates his covenant love for his people.

The Grounding (V13-14)

“¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”

This is where the context of Genesis is crucial. Paul’s commands are not arbitrary or based on human custom, but are more deeply rooted in God’s ordering of creation. Just as Adam was to take responsibility for Eve in the garden, elders are to take responsibility for the church. Paul’s point is based on two theological connections between the garden and the church.

First, *“Adam was formed first, then Eve.”* The sequence of events is key. In Gen 2:7-17, God commanded Adam to not eat of the forbidden tree *before* Eve was created. When Eve was created, she entered into a stewardship already established between God and Adam. She was not given her own mandate, but she was included in the existing mandate established with Adam before God created her. She *completes* the mandate as the bride, helper, and queen. She is equal to Adam in dignity and under him in authority.

Since God commanded Adam to not eat the tree before Eve was created, he was responsible to *teach* her the command and ensure that it was obeyed. Even though they had both sinned, God held Adam responsible (Rom 5:12). In a similar way, the elders are called to teach and exercise authority over the church, and God holds them responsible for their leadership. Like Adam in the garden, the elders are called to teach and exercise authority over the church. The elders are called to “guard the good deposit” of the gospel (2 Tim 1:14); to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight” (1 Peter 5:2); to “preach the word” and to “be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching;” to maintain the discipline of the church by delivering unrepentant Christians “to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that [their] spirit[s] may be saved in the day of the Lord” (1 Cor 5:5); and ultimately to “keep watch over [the] souls” of the church, knowing they will have to “give an account” (Heb 13:17). These are authoritative functions and God calls biblically qualified male elders to perform them.

Second, *“Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”* In this text, Paul does not *praise* Adam for avoiding deception, he *condemns* Adam for Eve’s *deception*. Adam was not himself deceivable, since he heard the command directly from God himself. Eve, however, was deceivable, since she was not present to hear God’s original command. She was dependent on Adam to teach her. Her deception was enabled by Adam’s failure to correct the record when the serpent questioned her. When the serpent tempted Eve with doubt and mistrust, Adam’s duty was to rebuke the serpent and teach Eve God’s command. Eve’s duty was to learn God’s command and commit herself to it. The duty of both was to trust and obey God. They both failed, but they failed in different ways.

At the fall, the order of the garden was overthrown. The serpent ruled Eve through his deception, Eve ruled Adam through her influence, and Adam rejected God through his rebellion. Eve was deceived because she failed to follow Adam’s lead and trust his teaching. Adam failed to rebuke the serpent and teach his wife. The serpent exploited Adam’s passivity and Eve’s

vulnerability. And yet, her vulnerability was no excuse. Having heard one version of God's command from Adam and an alternate version from the serpent, she listened to the serpent, not her husband. Yet Eve's sin does not exonerate Adam. He was responsible for her, and God held him accountable for this failure. Therefore, Adam and Eve sinned differently at the fall. No one is innocent - all are guilty and condemned. Both of them failed, but they failed in different ways.

God's original design for the garden was redeemed at the cross and renewed in the structure and practice of the church. Qualified men are called upon to succeed where Adam failed - to teach God's word to the church and to humbly enforce it with the authority of the church. This is the role of elder. Likewise, the women of the church are called upon to succeed where Eve failed - to learn and submit to the commands of God, trusting God to work through the men who are charged with leading them.

Therefore, Paul does not permit women to teach or exercise authority over men because Adam and Eve sinned in precisely these ways. When Adam passively failed to lead Eve, he acted like less of a man. When Eve assertively led Adam to eat, she was acting like less of a woman.

Four Clarifications

At this point, a few clarifications are in order. First, Paul does not teach that *all* women should submit to *all* men. Rather, wives are called to submit to their own husbands, and both men and women are called to submit to the elders of the church. No men in the church are granted any degree of authority by the fact that they are male. Biblically qualified elders have authority in the church. Occasionally, qualified men who are not elders may be called upon to preach or teach in the church, but that authority only extends as far as the teaching itself.

Secondly, Paul's command for women to "remain silent" and "learn quietly" (1 Cor 14:34-35) does not mean absolute silence, for that would contradict Paul's instructions elsewhere regarding women praying and prophesying in church. The prophesying of 1 Cor 14 was not authoritative, since the prophecies were "judged" after they were given, and could have been rejected. Women were evidently free to pray or prophesy in the church of Corinth, as long as it was orderly, modest, and submissive. This submission was indicated by wearing a head covering according to ancient customs (1 Cor 11:5). Women were also commanded to teach other women and children in church (Titus 2:3-5). Therefore, the "silence" and "quiet" Paul has in view is not the total absence of female voices, but silence in regard to authoritative speaking in the church. Beyond this, there are many other ways that are appropriate for women to serve in the life of the church.

Thirdly, God does not call men to lead in the home and church because men are smarter, more spiritual, or more mature; nor is it due to some spiritual defect or immaturity in women. Both men and women can possess the full array of spiritual gifts and degrees of maturity. Men need spiritual maturity in order to lead well, and women need spiritual maturity in order to follow the lead of sinful men (1 Pet 3:5).

Fourthly, single men and women should be affirmed as equal members in the body of Christ. Neither singleness nor marriage in themselves indicate spiritual maturity or qualification for leadership positions in the church. Singleness does present, however, a great opportunity to give “undivided devotion to the Lord” (1 Cor 7:35) which would be difficult or impossible for those who are married. Just as husbands and wives must glorify God in the vocation of marriage, single men and women must glorify God in the vocation of singleness.

Biblical Principles of Complementarianism⁷

1. *Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).*

We affirm that at creation, both women and men inherently possess equal dignity and value before God. Both men and women have equal access to the saving mediation of Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28) through the power of the Holy Spirit. Both are gifted by the Holy Spirit and are called to participate in building up the Church (Eph 4:1-16). Scripture makes it clear from the beginning: men and women both manifest the image of God to the same degree of value and significance (Gen 1:26-28).

Furthermore, this manifestation of the image of God is legitimately equal between men and women while also being distinct from one another. Men and women are distinct in the way they portray the image of God through manhood and womanhood. This distinction is good and honorable. Men portray the image of God in ways that are distinctly male in both the home and Church – in ways that women should not. Women portray the image of God in ways that are distinctly female in both the home and Church – in ways that men should not. Both carry out this task of reflecting the image of God in unique but equally valuable and significant ways. Both are to be celebrated, appreciated, and admired when conformed to biblical realities. The creation, as seen in Genesis 1-2, demonstrates that male and female both reflect the image of God, yet their reflection is distinctly male or female, not a neutral or interchangeable gender. To collapse the distinction between the ways a man and woman differ in reflecting the image of God is to undermine the wisdom of God in their creation.

2. *Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).*

Biblically complementary masculine and feminine roles are not accidental or insignificant to life in the home or Church. Rather, from the beginning God ordained the unique and cherished differences between the role of women and the role of men. Genesis 1-2 celebrates these differences as good, beautiful, essential, unchangeable, given by God, designed by God, and for his glory. These differences reflect the interdependence of man and women. They complement each other, bringing greater glory to God in the beautiful diversity of being male and female. Paul points to the created order as the starting point for the roles of men and women in the home and the church in both 1 Cor 11:7-9 and 1 Tim 2:12-14. We were designed by God to bring him maximum glory through the way we live in distinct, but equally valuable ways as men and women. Men will find rest and significance when conformed to God's intended

⁷These 10 affirmations are from the Danvers Statement, published by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) in Wheaton, IL in November 1988. The commentary is adapted from Dr. Michael Lyons of Evangelical Community Church in Cincinnati, OH. They are used here with his permission.

desires for masculinity. Women will find rest and significance when conformed to God's intended desires for femininity. When men and women resist God's wise ordering of masculinity or femininity, they move against the grain of their inherent design, pushing in an opposite direction that invites confusion, disorder, and frustration. We see this especially illustrated in modern culture with the breakdown of the family and the Church.

3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).

In the God ordained distinctions between men and women and marriage, he assigned the role of headship to husbands. Male headship is not a consequence of the Fall, but rather instituted in creation itself. Genesis 2 teaches that God designed Adam to be the head of his family. God designed the woman to submit to and support her husband's leadership of the family; she is his helpmate (Gen 2:18). The husband is called to take responsibility for his wife and children and to lead with strength and wisdom; the wife is called to follow and support her husband with intelligent and joyful submission. Paul echoes this reading of Genesis particularly in 1 Cor 11:7-9. Furthermore, these distinctions between man and woman are lived out in the life of the Church, with qualified men called to the role of headship as elder.

Perhaps even more significant, Paul reveals in Ephesians 5 that the headship of a husband portrays something far greater than just temporary, earthly marriage. From the beginning, God created marriage as a prophetic anticipation of the gospel. Human marriage was intended to portray to all creation the greater reality of Christ and the Church, his bride. Marriage exists not only for our own happiness, but so that the relationship between husbands and wives can reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church to the world. The role of Christ and the Church is not interchangeable; neither is the role of a husband and wife. When a husband wisely leads, bearing the burden of responsibility for his family even at the expense of himself, he actually manifests to the world the way Jesus loves and leads his Church. Similarly, when a wife follows with glad submission, trusting her husband to bear that responsibility, she manifests to the world how the Church should submit to the headship of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Adam's headship is God's original design and not a result of sin or the Fall. Adam's headship is the result of God's good and wise plan to image and anticipate the glorious and beautiful headship of Christ over his bride, the church.

4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).

The Fall directly distorts the God-designed complementary relationship between a man and a woman. Genesis 3 in many ways depicts a failure of Adam's responsibility to protect and shepherd his family. In the garden, God confronts Adam first (not Eve), reprimanding him for the sinful action of both him and his wife (3:9). Then as part of the consequences for their actions, God indicates that the relationship between a husband and wife will forever be a struggle

(3:16b). The complementarity of their relationship has been turned into a competition. Now, each will sinfully struggle for control and power in the relationship.

A. In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.

The failure of the husband to practice humble headship over his wife and family will be in one of two directions (or a combination of both) – with both being sinful and harmful. Some men will gravitate towards domination. They may appear strong or courageous, but are actually lording power over their wives, demanding that his desires be accepted, and refusing to listen to her wisdom. These men will be tempted to selfishly consider themselves first when leading and making decisions. Some of these men may act in a predatory manner, seeking to rule over all women and regarding them as objects for sexual lust. Other men will gravitate towards passivity. They may appear peaceable and humble, but are actually distancing themselves from the responsibility of leading the family. Some of these men, in their abdication of the duties of headship, will compel their wives to step into the vacuum to lead the family.

The failure of the wife to practice intelligent, willing submission to her husband will also be in one of two directions (or a combination of both) - with both being sinful and harmful. Some women will gravitate towards undermining their husband's headship rather than encouraging it. These women may appear outwardly to be actively helping their husbands but are actually using their influence over him to manipulate or control him. These women will be tempted to distrust God's design and, often motivated by fear and lack of faith (1 Peter 3:5), grab responsibilities that God has called her husband to bear. Other women will gravitate towards servility. They may appear submissive and modest, but having a low view of themselves, they fail to help, advise, challenge, or rebuke their husbands. These women believe that submission means weakness, believing they are ill-equipped and lack the wisdom to serve their families well.

As a result of our sin, we each are tempted to one side or the other, rejecting the biblical balance of a husband's humble leadership and a wife's intelligent submission.

B. In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.

Just as in the home, sin inclines men and women toward one of two directions within the Church. A male-led eldership will be continually tempted to rule and teach harshly or to passively give up teaching and ruling responsibilities which they alone should be bearing. Some men will be inclined to grasp for power and push through their agendas, sacrificing the needs of others for their own ambitions (Phlp 1:15). These men may

appear to be leading the church with strength and courage, but are actually leading for “shameful gain” and “domineering over those in [their] charge,” (1 Peter 5:2-3). Some men in the church, who are neither called nor qualified to be elders, nevertheless regard themselves as having authority over all women, which is neither right nor good. Other men will be inclined to passivity by allowing women or unqualified men to do the difficult labor of overseeing the teaching and shepherding of the flock of God. These men may appear to be humble by empowering and elevating women, but are actually demonstrating their weakness and failure to truly love and protect them by encouraging both men and women to violate biblical norms for the church.

Likewise, some women will be inclined to resist limitations placed upon them by God in scripture concerning their role in the Church and grasp for roles reserved for qualified men. In an effort to gain these positions, some women may make strong appeals to the giftedness of women teachers and the need for equality, even though qualified male headship in the church does not deny equality of men and women nor the usefulness of women teachers in certain contexts (Titus 2:3-5). Further, some women resort to hermeneutical oddities, relegating the scripture’s teaching on gender roles in the church to cultural differences between the ancient and modern times, or accusations of misogyny. Other women, from a sincere and godly desire to obey scripture, end up withdrawing from legitimate and good opportunities to use their gifts to serve the body of Christ. These women may appear to be humble and submissive to the authority of the church, but actually deprive the church of their much needed and Spirit given talents to advance the gospel.

5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

Scripture consistently praises the goodness and beauty of God’s design for men and women, affirming the necessity and value of both. The principle of male headship is not just a cultural relic, but rather designed by God from the beginning. In scripture, God is depicted as Father and King, not Mother and Queen. The man, Adam, is created as the head of his family and as the chosen representative of the human race. God is identified with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The twelve tribes of Israel are representatively headed by twelve sons from the line of Jacob. The pattern continues with the leadership of Moses and Joshua (Num 27:18-23), along with the tribal leaders and elders who were all male leaders of the covenant community (Exod 18:21-22, 25; Num 2; 10; 11:16, 24-25). The male-only priesthood led the religious center of authoritative teaching and sacrifice in the tabernacle/temple.

In the New Testament, these patterns of male headship continue. Jesus is the Son of God, not Daughter. Jesus becomes the Second Adam (Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22), the head of all (Col 1:18). Jesus selects twelve male disciples as the leaders to lay the foundation of his

Church. Men are called to lead in humility as the heads of their homes, with wives submitting in humility to their husband's leadership (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1-7). Only men are depicted as Elders in churches (Acts 20) and the qualifications for Elders are given in male terms (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Furthermore, scripture calls women to submit to the leadership of their husbands at home and Elders in the church (1 Cor 14:33-35; 1 Tim 2:11-15). Paul not only prohibits women from holding the office of elder but also the function of elder, prohibiting women from teaching and exercising authority over men (1 Tim 2:12).

Throughout the story of the Bible, both men and women are needed and valued within the covenant community they are establishing together. The story of the OT prominently features the life-giving strength of women in the many biblical birth narratives. God announced that the Messiah would come through an ongoing, fierce conflict between the woman and her offspring, but God would ultimately prevail. This theme continues throughout the OT, through barrenness, trials, and other threats to the line of promise. The woman in Proverbs 31 is praised for all the ways she uses her various gifts to love and serve others. In the NT, women are encouraged to use their gifts to build up their homes and serve the body of Christ. In Acts 16, Lydia opened her home to believers to gather, helping establish the church in Philippi. In Titus 2 women are commanded to “teach what is good” by training younger women in the skills and character necessary for godly womanhood. In 1 Corinthians Paul demonstrates how the gifts of both men and women are needed and indispensable in the life of the church. Neither men’s or women’s gifts are to be regarded as more valuable than the other. Rather, the church should be diligent to “bestow the greater honor” on those gifts that “we think less honorable” so that “there may be no division in the body” (1 Cor 12:22-26).

6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.

The tragic reality is that in this broken world, male headship is distorted and fallen. Many have witnessed horrific abuses of male headship – abuses that must be confronted and exposed both in the home and Church. However, these experiences do not negate God's wise plan for biblical masculinity and femininity. One of the outcomes of the work of Christ on the cross is to restore true images of biblical manhood and womanhood that were distorted by the Fall. Those who are “in Christ” are now new creations who are able, through the gospel, to display properly the image of God in biblical gender. These distinct, godly roles as male and female are only possible when one repents and submits to the work of the gospel through the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God alone overcomes the sinful resistance to these God ordained distinctions.

A. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands’ authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands’ leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).

Husbands are called to display to the world a living illustration of Christ leading and caring for the Church. With humility and continual repentance, husbands should take

responsibility to love and lead their wives, even at their own expense (Eph 5:33). They are to take initiative for the benefit of their wives and family, not “lord it over them” for their own benefit (Matt 20:25). Abiding in Christ and being filled with the Spirit empowers a man to successfully resist the sinful tendencies toward harsh rule on the one hand or passivity on the other. The gospel works in men to produce a repentance that leads to new motivations to love their wives with gentle and courageous headship that takes initiative in the family.

Likewise, in Christ, wives are called to display to the world a picture of the Church, joyfully submitting to the head, Jesus Christ. With humility and continual repentance, women should submit respectfully to their husbands' headship, forsaking either the desire to seize the reigns of leadership or the false belief that ministering to their family is a role of lesser value (Eph 5:33). This in turn beckons husbands to lead in areas of the family where they presently are not. This submission is rooted in portraying correctly to the world the relationship between the Church and Christ, so that the “word of God may not be reviled” (Titus 2:5).

B. In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

In terms of status in Christ, no distinction exists between men and women. Both equally share in the inheritance of Jesus, the Son of God. Both equally participate in the covenant membership of the body of Christ. At the same time, just as men and women have distinct, yet godly roles in marriage, men and women continue to live out the distinctions of masculinity and femininity within the covenant body, the Church. Biblically qualified elders are to model biblical masculinity through their courageous and gentle leadership of the church, bearing responsibility for governing the church, and bearing the additional weight of public criticism as leaders of the church.

7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission -- domestic, religious, or civil -- ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).

As Jesus is preeminent over all things (Col 1:18) and the final authority, no earthly leadership should be followed when violating the will of God as expressed in scripture. We furthermore deny that women are called to submit to men in general, but according to their covenant relationships in the home to their husbands and the church to their Elders. The principle of male headship does not indicate that wives should blindly follow their husbands into sin. Nor does it indicate that a male-led Elder board is somehow above the seduction of sin when leading a church. In both cases, we should confront sin in the home or in the Church with humility through godly steps of confrontation (Gal 6:1; Matt 18:15-20).

8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.

1 Tim 3:1 indicates that it is an excellent thing when someone feels a desire to take responsibility for the church and serve in the office of elder. However, the passage then proceeds to distinguish the qualifications of someone for this office, signifying that the inner, subjective desire for ministry or a heartfelt sense of call to ministry is not an adequate reason for becoming an elder. Christian men and women do not receive automatic acceptance of any church office – they must be tested and fulfill proper qualifications as laid out in scripture (1 Tim 2:11-15; 3:1-13; and Titus 1:5-9). Much attention is given to the prohibition of women from the ministerial role of serving as Elder, but one should also note that most men are also prohibited from the same office if they do not qualify according to 1 Tim 3:1-13. These prohibitions should govern how we understand and guide those with a heartfelt sense of call to ministry.

9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, mental illnesses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).

The Bible depicts a vision of men and women laboring alongside one another in the world and the Church for the sake of the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 12:4-31). When we don't empower both sexes to engage and use their gifts, in complementarian partnership, both genders suffer, and the mission of the Church—to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of all nations—suffers.

Although biblical femininity is not expressed through the role of an Elder, it is expressed in innumerable, valuable ways to bless the Church. For example, younger women are longing for godly, experienced women to teach, invest in and mentor them, a primary ministry in which women can richly bless the lives of other women (Titus 2:3-5). Opportunities abound in nearly every kind of ministry for women to serve and lead, playing a critical part in exalting Jesus Christ to our city, country, and the nations.

10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

To walk according to these created roles as male and female is a sign of wisdom, aligning oneself to the pattern God instituted at creation. When one seeks to untie and collapse these God-ordained roles (whether intentionally or unintentionally), one invites judgment. When men fail to lead in the home and in the Church, an undue burden is placed on wives, mothers, and women in the Church. Because our culture is shaping passive men, husbands are struggling to take the initiative to lead in their homes. This compels wives to bear an additional burden, as

they have to step into the role of spiritual and practical leadership, further eroding the health of relationships within the home. Likewise, when men struggle to lead courageously as Elders in the Church, this tends to compel women to step into a role for which they were not created. As our society increasingly resists the God-ordained roles of masculinity and femininity, Christians must resist the seductive call of culture to abandon these God-exalting, beautiful distinctions between men and women in both the home and Church.

Application Principles

The remainder of this document will address matters of application in the home and in the church. Although manhood and womanhood are rooted in creation's design, the particular ways in which both are expressed by individual men and women can vary greatly. Our aim is not to reduce human complexity to a set of rigid traits that everyone will apply in exactly the same way. Rather, we aim to promote the goodness of masculinity and femininity in all its beauty and variety.

In the Home

Many of the scripture's instructions to men and women in the home are broad and general. For example, Colossians 3:18-19 says, "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them." The general principle is stated, but the particulars of what this means in everyday life is not given. These particulars must be worked out in one's own Spirit led conscience, with scripture, grace, wisdom, and in community.

We deny any desire to promote unbiblical stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Unbiblical stereotypes needlessly reduce the complexity of God's good design for sexuality to rigid and unrealistic caricatures. Masculine strength is not merely physical, but a call for Christian men to "be strong" (1 Cor 16:13) in various ways, such as courage, steadfastness, humility, patience through trial, or physical strength. Strong men can be nurturing, just as nurturing women can be strong. Feminine beauty is not merely physical either, but a call for Christian women to exhibit their beauty in various ways, including wisdom, influence, strength, and leadership.

Our aim is to promote a recognition of the created goodness of masculinity and femininity, a heart posture of obedience to scripture, and for all to be done to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). Our aim is also to resist the impulse of the world towards androgyny, which seeks to eliminate sexual distinctions. We do recognize, however, that there will be great variety in the particular ways men and women will do this. Therefore, we do not aim to bind consciences where Scripture does not bind.

In the Church

Generally, gender complementarity in the church can be expressed in ways similar to the family. The "household of God" (Eph 2:19) is actually a network of individual households, reflecting the familial nature of the body of Christ. In the church, men should aspire to be brothers, husbands, and fathers to the rest of the congregation. Even though most men will not become elders, they are called to follow the example of the elders in their personal character by taking on responsibility and leading with strength and courage. Likewise, the women should aspire to be sisters, wives, and mothers. They are called to learn truth, exhibit holiness and modesty, and train other women in godly femininity.

We affirm that all men and women have been created in the image of God, whether single or married. We deny that single men and women must be married to be meaningful participants in the corporate life of the church. We further deny that single men possess any authority over single women. The way that they love and serve their sisters should not patronize, victimize or show force, but rather should be the fruit of brotherly love, and vice versa.

Teaching and Authority Roles

In matters of teaching or exercising authority at CTK, the application principle we will use is as follows: *The need for a biblically qualified male leader increases as the level of spiritual authority of a particular ministry role increases.*⁸

As stated previously, Paul’s primary concern in 1 Timothy 2 is to preserve the spiritual authority of qualified male leadership in the church. “Teaching” is the activity in question, since this is the most direct way authority is exercised in the church. Yet as a modern church with various ministries and teaching venues, CTK must also take different kinds of teaching into account. Therefore, we draw a distinction between “teaching Bible” and “teaching skills.” For teaching in a mixed group of men and women, *teaching the Bible will be considered more authoritative, and teaching skills will generally be considered less authoritative.* It is helpful to think of a teaching and authority along a continuum, consisting of high, medium, and low levels of authority being exercised by a particular ministry role in the church (figure 1).

High Authority Roles

The office and function of elders are at the “high” end of the authority continuum. The office of elder is inherently authoritative and the scriptures explicitly limit this office to qualified men. High

⁸ For the purposes of these application principles, when discussing a “qualified male leader” who is not an elder, the qualifications in view are those of a deacon (1 Tim 3:8-15).

authority roles involve the spiritual authority of the elders to govern and give instruction to the church body. This includes the authority to teach and apply God's word to individual members or the church as a whole with the expectation of obedience (Heb 13:17). These authoritative duties at CTK will be carried out by qualified men. The ministry of preaching at the Sunday worship gatherings is also "high" in authoritative content, so only qualified male preachers will teach the word at the Sunday gatherings.

Low Authority Roles

The "low" end of the authority continuum includes typical interactions between Christian men and women who challenge each other with the word of God and spur each other on in their faith. For example, a conversation between a theologically trained woman and a newly converted Christian man is non-authoritative. It can be good and appropriate for her to teach him in this sense, because she is teaching in a non-authoritative way and in a non-authoritative setting. A biblical example of this is found in Acts 18:26, where Priscilla and Aquilla heard Apollos' teaching, but later "took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." Another example could be a Christian man who reads the exegetical work of a female Christian scholar. Since he is reading her work in a book and there is no authority being exercised, it can be good and appropriate for her to teach in this sense.

Medium Authority Roles

At the "medium" level of the authority continuum are those roles where there is some gray area or ambiguity regarding the degree and nature of authority being exercised. These are instances that require a great deal of wisdom and grace, and judgment calls will be made by the elders as needed.

For example, City Group leaders are not pastors, but the elders do desire to equip and train City Group leaders in some shepherding skills. For this reason, City Groups will have a City Group Leader (a qualified man who is responsible for overseeing the whole group), and a City Group Women's Leader (a qualified woman who works with the City Group Leader and also helps lead the women).

Another example is Element Academy classes. The long term goal of Element Academy is to provide a robust variety of classes. Classes that are oriented to teaching the Bible will be considered more authoritative and will thus be taught by qualified male teachers. Examples of this could be Old and New Testament classes, Systematic Theology, Biblical Theology, and so on. Classes that are oriented to teaching skills will be considered less authoritative and can be taught by men or women. Examples of this could be trainings on outreach, hospitality, evangelism, mercy ministry, orphan care, and so on.

Some ministry leadership roles can also be in the "low" or "medium" authority range, such as deacons, team leaders, ministry leaders, and staff positions. They are in the "middle" of the continuum because there is some degree of *practical* authority in the role, but not *spiritual*

authority. For example, deacons are male and female leaders who serve by taking care of practical aspects of church life, such as finances, facilities, administration, and outreach. Team leaders, such as welcome team, outreach, or children's ministry leaders, can be led by men or women since the authority of the role is not a spiritual or "bible teaching" authority over men. There is no biblical restriction on women teaching scripture and theology to other women or children. In such cases, a qualified woman will be free to teach.

Another example of this sort of ministry is the College Nights at CTK. This ministry has been developed by women who desired to meet a need to help students get better connected at the church. Women have taken the initiative to lead and organize these events for college students, but asked elders to come and teach. This is a great way for women to use their leadership and organizational gifts in the church, while also deferring to the elders in those aspects of the ministry that involved teaching a mixed audience.

Conclusion

This is the beauty of God's design that Paul is calling the church to protect and enjoy for God's glory. These roles are not arbitrary but have been embedded into the fabric of creation itself from the very beginning. Therefore, we conclude that the church is built up when men and women use their gifts to serve the church according to the different purposes, vocations, and boundaries God has assigned to each sex.

God has given CTK many gifted men and women who can build up the church in various ways. The elders desire to encourage, promote, and pursue both men and women to fully utilize their spiritual gifts the building up of the body in every appropriate way according to God's design. It is not our desire to restrict women from teaching where appropriate, but rather to encourage it. It is also not our desire to ask women to teach and exercise authority in areas where it is more appropriate for qualified men to be doing so, thus mis-leading women to take on roles prohibited by scripture.

Since not every situation is easy and clear, the elders will need to make judgments in some cases, but these are precisely the sort of authoritative judgments that elders are called upon to make.

Additional Resources

1. [CTK Theological Vision and Mission Statement](#)
2. [Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood](#), Piper and Grudem
3. [The Story of Sex in Scripture](#), by William and Barbara Mouser
4. [A Word of Empathy, Warning, and Counsel for "Narrow" Complementarians](#), by Jonathan Leeman
5. [The Beauty of Complementarity Goes Beyond Gender](#), by Brett McCracken
6. [Women Teaching Men: How Far is Too Far](#), by Mary Kassian
7. [The Role of Women at The Village Church](#)