

# EGALITARIANISM AND THE MEANING OF SUBMISSION

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## INTRODUCTION

Oliver Thomas criticizes the church for its treatment of women in a USA Today article entitled “Have Faith in Women”:

In many facets of society, gender gaps have been narrowing. That’s the good news. The bad news? When it comes to women, the world of religion seems to be stuck in the past. Chicken Little was wrong. The sky isn’t falling, but the glass ceiling appears to be. In February, Harvard announced the appointment of its first female president. The month before, Nancy Pelosi was sworn in as the first female speaker of the House of Representatives. Bigger still, Sen. Hillary Clinton is the Democratic front runner for the presidency. In politics and academia, women are finally getting their due. Meanwhile, back at the religious ranch, the Roman Catholic Church, the world’s largest Christian organization, still hasn’t ordained one female priest, much less a bishop or cardinal. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the world’s largest graduate school for ministers, recently sent packing its only female professor who was teaching male students in the school’s department of theology. The seminary’s board chairman said hiring a woman to teach men theology had been a momentary lapse. Not all is gender amiss in the world of religion. The Episcopal church recently installed its first female presiding bishop. Sunday, hundred, if not thousands, of female clergy preached to America’s faithful. What’s puzzling is that the nation’s two largest denominations (Catholics and Southern Baptists) have managed to keep women down on the farm this far into the modern era. It’s even more surprising given that women perform the vast majority of work in churches. Stroll through the kitchen, choir rooms, offices, library, nursery and Sunday School rooms of your own church and see what you find. Does the New Testament really justify the church’s shabby treatment of women?<sup>1</sup>

Today if you visit many American churches you are likely to find a woman in the pulpit preaching the Sunday morning message.<sup>2</sup> It is not unusual to find women serving as

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<sup>1</sup> Oliver Thomas, “Having Faith in Women,” ([www.blogs.usatoday.com/oped/2007/04/post\\_21](http://www.blogs.usatoday.com/oped/2007/04/post_21))

<sup>2</sup> David Cloud writes, “The Bible clearly states that the man is to lead in the home and church, and the woman’s role is to submit to the man’s headship. There is widespread rebellion against this divine plan, though, and many women are being appointed to leadership positions in churches. Consider some facts from our files: There are almost 4000 licensed and ordained women in the Assemblies of God...The Fall 1997 edition of *Folio*, the newsletter of Baptist Women in Ministry, reported that there are 1225 ordained Southern Baptist women...The United Methodist Church has ordained women since 1956 and today has 4743 women clergy. The Presbyterian church (U.S.A.) has 2419 female elders. In 1979 the United Presbyterian Church adopted a resolution requiring their congregations to elect women elders. They also voted to ban the ordination of any man who opposed women clergy and gave such men 10 years to change their minds or get out....The United Church of Christ has 1803 female leaders. The Evangelical Lutheran

elders and deacons in their churches. Travis Buchanan has collected the policy statements of selected denominations and parachurch organizations regarding women in ministry. I have divided his alphabetical list into four groups (for, against, no statement, and individual churches decide).<sup>3</sup>

It is important for us to see that the controversial issue of women pastors is not a women versus men issue. There are Christian women who believe that a Christian woman should not serve as a pastor or elder in a church. Susan Foh has written an excellent critique of egalitarianism entitled *Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism*. There are Christian women who believe that a woman can serve as a pastor or elder. Paula White and her husband Randy White co-pastor the 26,000 member Without Walls International Church in Tampa, Florida. Her web site says “Paula White is a pastor, life coach, motivational speaker, author, philanthropist, TV personality, wife, mother, preacher and teacher.”<sup>4</sup> There are Christian men who believe that a Christian woman can serve as a pastor or elder in a church. Willow Creek Community Church led by Bill Hybels supports an egalitarian view of women elders. To become a member of Willow Creek Community Church you must be willing to follow the leadership of a

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Church in America has 1358 ordained women...The Episcopal Church of the United States which approved women’s ordination in 1976 has more than 1000...The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, though more conservative than other Lutheran bodies, is beginning to allow women to preach in regular worship. A survey showed that about 1000 LCMS clergymen maintain that the Bible is not opposed to the ordination of women ([www.wayoflife.org/fbns/womenpreachers.htm](http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/womenpreachers.htm)).

<sup>3</sup> The following denominations, associations and churches support the ordination of women to be pastors, elders and teachers of men in the church: Assemblies of God USA, American Baptist Churches USA, North American Baptist Conference, Alliance of Baptists, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Church of the Nazarene, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Covenant Church of America, International church of the Foursquare Gospel, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Free Methodist Church of North America, United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church in the USA, Christian Reformed Church, Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, Wesleyan Church and Willow Creek Community Church.

The following denominations, associations and churches reject the ordination of women to be pastors or elders and believe that women should not teach men in the church: General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, Southern Baptist Churches, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Evangelical Free Church of America, Independent Fundamental Churches of America, Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod, Evangelical Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren, Missionary Church USA, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and Presbyterian Church in America.

The following denominations, associations and churches have not made an official statement regarding the ordination of women: Baptist General Conference, Calvary Chapel, Christian Churches, Churches of Christ, African Methodist Episcopal, and African Methodist Episcopal Zion.

The following denominations, associations and churches leave the decision regarding women elders to individual churches: Association of Vineyard Churches, Conservative Baptists, Conservative Congregational, and Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* [Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 2004], 703-766).

<sup>4</sup> “Paula’s Life Story,” (<http://www.paulawhite.org>).

woman elder.<sup>5</sup> There are also Christian men who do not believe that a Christian woman should serve as a pastor or elder in the church. Wayne Grudem has defended the complementarian view in his books *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* and *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*.

## DEFINING THE TWO VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE HOME AND CHURCH

### Egalitarianism

Egalitarianism is described as gender equality, evangelical feminism, biblical equality, and even complementarity without hierarchy. The book *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy* gives a detailed exposition of egalitarianism.<sup>6</sup>

Egalitarians believe that God created men and women as equal in all respects. Both man and woman were made in the image of God and were given responsibility to rule over God's creation (Gen.1:26-27). Egalitarians believe that the Fall of man in Genesis 3 led to the sinful hierarchical relationship between man and woman. Sinful man now dominates sinful woman. Egalitarians believe that Jesus Christ has restored equality between the sexes as a result of his work on the cross. They believe that Galatians 3:28 teaches that the hierarchy between man and woman has been done away with in Christ. As a result mutual submission is to be practiced in marriage and Christian women can teach men and serve as elders in the church.

In 1987 Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) was started. Their 1989 Statement on Men, Women and Biblical Equality insisted on the full "biblical equality of men and

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<sup>5</sup> "It is and has historically been the position of Willow Creek Church that the Bible, when interpreted comprehensively, teaches the full equality of men and women in status, giftedness and opportunity for ministry. Therefore, Willow Creek affirms the participation of women in all levels of leadership, including elder positions and teaching positions (based on spiritual qualification and giftedness). We recognize that this is a complex issue and has historically been the subject of much debate among godly believers. While we respect the right of individuals to hold a different position, we ask that Participating Members of Willow Creek minimally be able to affirm with integrity the following: (1) that they can joyfully sit under the teaching of women teachers at Willow Creek, (2) that they can joyfully submit to the leadership of women in various leadership positions at Willow Creek, and (3) that they refrain from promoting personal views in ways that would be divisive or disruptive." (<http://www.willowcreek.org/membership.asp>).

<sup>6</sup> The editors state, "*Discovering Biblical Equality* is the first multi-authored volume to comprehensively, systematically and consistently articulate an egalitarian position based on the tenets of biblical teaching." (Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Ronald W. Pierce, "Introduction," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004], 18).

women of all races, ages, and economic classes.”<sup>7</sup> This paper will critique CBE’s Statement on Men, Women and Biblical Equality.

### **Complementarianism**

Complementarianism has been described as traditionalism, patriarchy, and hierarchy. The book *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* presents a detailed exposition of complementarianism.

Complementarians believe that God created man and woman in the image of God. They are equal in essence, but they have distinct roles. At creation, man was given a position of spiritual leadership in the home. God gave the commandment to the man and not the woman (Gen.2:16-17). God created the woman to be a helper for the man (Gen.2:18, 20). Man demonstrated his authority over the person God created for him by calling her “woman” (Gen.2:23). The complementarian aspect of their relationship is seen in that man and woman need each other and should meet each other’s needs. They are one flesh in marriage. The Fall of man happened when Eve sinned and then led Adam to sin (Gen.3:1-7). Eve gave the forbidden fruit to Adam and he deliberately disobeyed God and he ate it. Sin destroyed the perfect marriage relationship between Adam and Eve. As a result God predicted that the woman would desire to control her husband, but the husband would rule over her (Gen.3:16). Conflict in marriage was one of the results of the Fall. Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross began to reverse the effects of the Fall on marriage. Paul explains God’s blueprint for the Christian marriage in Ephesians 5:22-33. Paul explained that a Christian marriage was to reflect Christ’s relationship with the Church. As the Church submits to Christ, so a wife should submit to her husband. Christ is the head (or leader) of the Church and the husband is the head (or leader) of his wife. Husbands are not commanded to submit to their wives, but to love their wives as Christ loved the church and as their own bodies. In the church Christian women can exercise their spiritual gifts of ministry but they are not to teach men or have authority over men as elders (1 Tim.2:8-15). The office of pastor or elder is reserved for godly Christian men (1 Tim.3:2).

In 1987 the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) was established. In its Danvers Statement the CBMW argued for “equality in personhood and value, but difference in roles.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [www.cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org)

<sup>8</sup> [www.cbmw.org](http://www.cbmw.org)

**CHRISTIANS FOR BIBLICAL EQUALITY**  
**STATEMENT ON MEN, WOMEN AND BIBLICAL EQUALITY**

*The Bible teaches the full equality of men and women in Creation and in Redemption (Gen.1:26-28; 2:23; 5:1-2; 1 Cor.11:11-12; Gal.3:13, 28; 5:1)<sup>9</sup>*

Egalitarians believe that full equality means equal essence and equal roles. Both men and women were created in the image of God. The key passage for the evangelical feminist view is Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Paul King Jewett calls this passage “the Magna Carta of humanity.”<sup>10</sup> According to feminists, Galatians 3:28 teaches that God has created in Christ a whole new order of relationships. The hierarchical view of social relationships is viewed as a sinful social structure that has resulted from the Fall. Egalitarians believe that in Christ all discrimination based on race, economic status, or sex is to be eliminated. Thus gender becomes irrelevant in shaping social roles and relationships. Evangelical feminists insist that the apostle Paul is speaking in Galatians 3:28 not merely of ontological equality of men and women in their standing before God, but of the practical outworking of that standing in society. Men and women can fulfill interchangeable roles because they have an equal standing in Christ.

Alice Matthews argues for Galatians 3:28 as being the starting point for egalitarianism:

The biblical text one chooses for one’s starting point in the study of a doctrine or issue in Scripture becomes the lens through which one looks at all other texts. If, for example, an interpreter chooses 1 Timothy 2:12 as the starting point, then other texts will be evaluated and interpreted (consciously or unconsciously) in the light of Paul’s restrictive statement. On the other hand, if Galatians 3:28 is chosen as the starting point, texts such as 1 Timothy 2:12 will be read with Paul’s declaration of ‘no distinctions’ in mind.<sup>11</sup>

In Galatians 3:23-29 Paul contrasts bondage under the law with sonship through faith. Galatians 3:26-29 describes the unity of those who are sons. Galatians 3:28 does not teach that all differences of nationality, status and sex cease to exist at conversion. It is an error to say that “one in Christ” means that there are no distinctions within the body. Within the Church (the One Body of Christ) there are saved Jews and saved Gentiles. Salvation does not do away with one’s nationality. Salvation also does not change one’s work situation. Paul gave instructions to Christian slaves to obey their masters (cf. Eph.6:5-8). Paul told slaves to not be concerned about their status, but pursue freedom if that was possible (1 Cor.7:21-23). Salvation does not change one’s sex. There are male

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<sup>9</sup> The assertions of Christians for Biblical Equality will be made in italics and my critique of their assertions will follow.

<sup>10</sup> Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans., 1975), 142.

<sup>11</sup> Alice Matthews, “Toward Reconciliation,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 496-497.

Christians and female Christians. What Paul is saying in Galatians 3:28 is that there is an equal standing before God for Jewish Christians, Gentile Christians, Christians who are slaves and Christians who are free, male Christians and female Christians. However, oneness in Christ does not do away with these distinctions.

*The Bible teaches that God has revealed Himself in the totality of Scripture, the authoritative Word of God (Mt.5:18; John 10:35; 2 Tim.3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21). We believe that Scripture is to be interpreted holistically and thematically. We also recognize the necessity of making a distinction between inspiration and interpretation: inspiration relates to the divine impulse and control whereby the whole canonical Scripture is the Word of God; interpretation relates to the human activity whereby we seek to apprehend revealed truth in harmony with the totality of Scripture and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To be truly biblical, Christians must continually examine their faith and practice under the searchlight of Scripture.*

It is interesting that the evangelical feminists state that the “Scripture is to be interpreted holistically and thematically.” This statement does not say that their goal is to determine the meaning of verses using a literal, historical, grammatical hermeneutic. Evangelical feminists who have signed their name to this egalitarian statement include scholars such as F. F. Bruce, Ken Kantzer, and Gordon Fee. Their books and commentaries display a serious attempt to interpret the word of God in its historic context. Yet it seems that the evangelical feminists are guilty of eisegesis in many of the key texts that deny their view of egalitarianism. William Webb has written a book which reveals the redemptive movement hermeneutic of evangelical feminists. It is called *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*<sup>12</sup>. Evangelical feminists have even attempted to further their agenda by changing the wording of the text in their gender neutral translations.<sup>13</sup>

*1. The Bible teaches that both man and woman were created in God’s image, had a direct relationship with God, and shared jointly the responsibilities of bearing and rearing children and having dominion over the created order (Gen.1:26-28)*

It is true that both man and woman were created in God’s image and had a direct relationship with God (Gen.1:26-27). After creating the woman from the man, God brought the woman to the man (Gen.2:22). This was a beautiful wedding in the perfect garden in Eden. The fact that they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day may indicate that prior to the Fall the Lord God spent time walking and conversing with the man and his wife each day at that time (cf. Gen.3:8).

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<sup>12</sup> Mike Stallard has written a critique of the redemptive movement hermeneutic. See Mike Stallard, “The Implications of the Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic,” in *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 9.1 (Spring 2005), 5-29.

<sup>13</sup> Mike Stallard has written a critique of the gender neutral translations. See Mike Stallard, “Gender Neutral Translations: The Controversy over the TNIV,” in *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 7.1 (Spring 2003), 5-26.

Technically, women and not men have the responsibility of bearing children. God told the woman after the Fall that “in pain you shall bring forth children” (Gen.3:16). Genesis 4:1 says that “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the Lord.’” Genesis 4:2 says “Then she bore again.” Here we see a distinction of roles between the man and the woman. God specifically made the woman with the ability to bear children. The man is not able to bear children.

It is true that man and woman both have the responsibility of rearing children (Deut.6:1-9; Prov. 1:8). But Paul specifically addressed fathers as the spiritual leaders in the home in Ephesians 6:4, “And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

It is important to notice that man and woman were to have dominion over the animal kingdom. Ruling over the animal kingdom is not the same as ruling over the church. Egalitarians assume that since man and woman were co-rulers over the animal kingdom that they could also hold positions of authority in the church such as pastor or elder. But the realms are different.

*2. The Bible teaches that woman and man were created for full and equal partnership. The word “helper” is used to designate woman in Genesis 2:18, refers to God in most instances of Old Testament usage (e.g. 1 Sam.7:12; Ps.121:1-2). Consequently the word conveys no implication whatsoever of female subordination or inferiority.*

God stated his intention to make a suitable helper for man. “I will make him a helper comparable to him.” The Hebrew word for “helper” (עֵזֶר) is not a demeaning term. It is used to describe God in Psalm 33:20 and Psalm 70:5. It means that one supports the other in doing the will of God (Dt. 33:7; Ps.33:20). God created the woman to help the man. He did not create the man to help the woman. The woman was to assist the man in the task of being fruitful and multiplying, filling the earth and subduing it (Gen.1:18) and in tending the garden and keeping it (Gen.2:15).

The Danvers Statement emphasizes the distinctions in roles between men and women: “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). 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).”

*3. The Bible teaches that the forming of woman from man demonstrates the fundamental unity and equality of human beings (Gen.2:21-23). In Genesis 2:18, 20 the word “suitable” denotes equality and adequacy.*

The egalitarian statement emphasizes unity and equality of Adam and Eve in regards to their both being human beings. But nothing is said in their statement regarding the fact that Adam was created before Eve. The order of creation is significant. Paul uses the order of creation as a reason why a woman is not to teach or have authority over a man. He writes, “Let a woman learn in silence withal submission. And I do not permit a

woman to teach or have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.” (1 Tim. 2:11-13).

Adam demonstrated his authority by naming the animals (Gen.2:19). He demonstrated his authority over woman by naming her. “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.” (Gen.2:23). After the Fall and the promise given to Adam by God (in Gen.3:15), we see that “Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20).

The word “suitable” (תָּאָוִן) means “in front of, or corresponding to.”<sup>14</sup> Man and woman both have the same nature. What he lacks she supplies and what she lacks he supplies. They would be opposites in some way that would complement and meet the needs of the other. Equality of essence does not mean equality of role.

*4. The Bible teaches that man and woman were co-participants in the Fall: Adam was no less culpable than Eve (Gen.3:6; Rom.5:12-21; 1 Cor.15:21-22).*

Moses records the historical Fall of man in Genesis 3:1-7. It is true that Adam and Eve both sinned against God by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen.2:16-17; 3:1-7). It is true that Adam was no less culpable than Eve. In fact Adam was more responsible since he was to be the spiritual leader in the family. God gave the commandment to Adam and not to Eve (Gen.2:16-17). The text does not say if God told Eve the commandment. The fact that Eve knew the prohibition to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is seen in her discussion with the serpent. If you look carefully at the words, you see that Eve did not know the exact wording of the commandment. She diminished God’s provision by saying that they could “eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden” (Gen.3:2) when God said that they could “freely eat” (Gen.2:16). She added to the prohibition by saying that they were not to touch the fruit (Gen.3:3). She also expressed some doubt regarding the penalty for eating of the forbidden fruit. She said “lest you die” (Gen.3:4), but God had stressed the certainty of punishment: “You shall surely die” (Gen.2:17). Eve was responsible for her sin and God held her accountable as he confronted her with her sin (“What is this you have done?” cf. Gen.3:13). Adam was also responsible for his sin and God confronted him as well (“Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” cf. Gen.3:11). It is interesting that God confronted Adam first with his sin even though Eve was the first to sin. This shows that God viewed Adam as the spiritual leader of his home. Eve was deceived by the serpent, but Adam deliberately disobeyed God. The fact that Adam was possibly with Eve when she was tempted by the serpent and said nothing is significant (Gen.3:6).

Paul emphasized that Adam was the head of the human race and that “through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin.” (Romans 5:12). In Romans 5:12-21 Paul does not mention Eve as responsible for bringing sin and death into the world.

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<sup>14</sup> BDB, 617.

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come” (Rom.5:14). “For if by the one man’s offense many died...” (Rom.5:15). “For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation” (Rom.5:16). “For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one...” (Rom.5:17). “Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men resulting in condemnation...” (Rom.5:18). “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners...” (Rom.5:19). The emphasis in Romans 5:12-21 is not on the sin of Eve, but on the sin of Adam. Why? Adam was the “federal head” or representative of the human race and his act of disobedience was charged to the account of all people.

While it is true that both Adam and Eve sinned, 1 Timothy 2:14 points out a difference in the way that they fell. Adam was not deceived by Satan. He deliberately disobeyed God. Eve was deceived by Satan and fell into transgression. Paul gives this historical event as a reason why a woman is not to teach or have authority over a man (1 Tim.2:11-15).

*5. The Bible teaches that the rulership of Adam over Eve resulted from the Fall and was therefore not a part of the original created order. Genesis 3:16 is a prediction of the effects of the Fall rather than a prescription of God’s ideal order.*

Egalitarians believe that the judgment of the woman (Gen.3:16) led to a sinful hierarchical relationship between man and woman after the Fall. Complementarians disagree with the statement that the rulership of Adam over Eve resulted from the Fall. Complementarians believe that God created marriage with a hierarchy. Adam was the spiritual leader of Eve before the Fall. This is evidenced in three facts: (1) God created Adam before Eve and not at the same time, (2) God gave the commandment specifically to Adam (Gen.2:16) and (3) Adam gave the name “woman” to his wife before the Fall (Gen.2:23).

God punished the woman for her sin with labor pains in giving birth to children and with marital conflicts. Genesis 3:16 says “To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception. In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” These conditions are a result of the Fall. Women would experience labor pains in child birth. Women would also have a desire for their husbands. The word “desire” (תְּשׁוּקָתָךְ) does not refer to sexual desire, but a desire to control. The same Hebrew word is used in Genesis 4:7 to describe sin’s desire to control Cain. The punishment on the woman would be a power struggle between husbands and wives in marriage. Marriage conflicts are a result of the curse. The battle of the sexes is a result of the Fall. Foh writes,

The curse here describes the beginning of the battle of the sexes. After the Fall, the husband no longer rules easily; he must fight for his headship. The woman’s desire is to control her husband (to usurp his divinely appointed headship) and he must master her, if he can. Sin had corrupted both the willing submission of the

wife and the loving headship of the husband. And so the rule of love founded in paradise is replaced by struggle, tyranny, domination, and manipulation.<sup>15</sup>

Another consequence was that husbands would rule over their wives. Egalitarians have misinterpreted this verse to teach that headship for husbands was a result of the fall and that it has been done away with in Christ. The word “rule” (רָשָׁה) here means to dominate or control. The same word is used in Genesis 4:7 where God told Cain that he must master or control his anger. This verse does not teach that hierarchy is a result of the Fall. It teaches that there would be a conflict over control in marriage. One result of the Fall is that husbands misuse their authority and dominate their wives.<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 5:22-33 gives the remedy for the fall. Husbands and wives do not need to struggle to control one another. A godly wife will submit to her husband and follow his spiritual leadership. A godly husband will love his wife as Christ loved the church.

The Danvers Statement emphasizes that the Fall led to a distortion of the roles in marriage. “The Fall introduced distortions into the relationship between men and women (Gen.3:1-7, 12, 16). 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. 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.”

*6. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ came to redeem women as well as men. Through faith in Christ we all become children of God, one in Christ, and heirs to the blessings of salvation without reference to racial, social or gender distinctives (John 1:12-13; Rom.8:14-17; 2 Cor.5:17; Gal.3:26-28).*

Jesus came into the world to save sinners: men and women alike (1 Tim.1:15). The gift of salvation is received through faith in Christ (John 1:12; Eph.2:8-9). The Danvers Statement shows that salvation affects the marriage relationship and the church, “Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse. 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 husband’s authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husband’s leadership (Eph.5:21-33; Col.3:18-19; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7). In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal

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<sup>15</sup> Susan Foh, “What is the Woman’s Desire?” *Westminster Theological Journal* 37.3 (Spring 1975), 376.

<sup>16</sup> One of the reasons why feminism has impacted our society and the church is that men have failed to love and respect their wives. Feminism is a backlash against men who have sex outside of marriage and leave women with unwanted pregnancies. Feminists encourage unwed mothers to have abortions. Feminists hate men who have sexually and verbally abused women. Feminists hate men who use pornography and then demand that their wives have sex with them. Feminists despise men who tell demeaning jokes and stories about women. Evangelical feminists have reacted to restrictions placed on women by the church. Christian pastors and men who teach that it is sinful for women to work outside the home or who expect women to discipline and teach the children and never help at home lead Christian women to become resentful.

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

*7. The Bible teaches that at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came on men and women alike. Without distinction, the Holy Spirit indwells women and men, and sovereignly distributes gifts without preference as to gender (Acts 2:1-21; 1 Cor.12:7,11; 14:31).*

Scholars differ on whether the Holy Spirit came upon men and women at Pentecost or just the apostles.<sup>17</sup> The Holy Spirit did come upon the apostles. Only men were leaders in the early church of Jerusalem.

Paul makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is involved in distributing spiritual gifts to all Christians. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” 1 Corinthians 12:11 says “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”

The New Testament teaches that there is a spiritual gift of teaching (Rom.12:7) and there are teachers (1 Cor.12:29). Women can be teachers of good things to other women (Titus 2:3-5). Egalitarians assume that since women can be given the spiritual gifts of teaching that they can serve as pastors and teachers of men in the church. That assumption rejects the teaching of other scriptures which restrict women from teaching men in the church (1 Tim.2:12).

*8. The Bible teaches that both women and men are called to develop their spiritual gifts and to use them as stewards of the grace of God (1 Peter 4:10-11). Both men and women are divinely gifted and empowered to minister to the whole Body of Christ under His authority (Acts 1:14; 18:26; 21:9; Rom.16:1-7, 12-13,15; Phil.4:2-3; Col.4:15; see also Mark 15:40-41, 16:1-7; Luke 8:1-3; John 20:17-18; compare also Old Testament examples: Judges 4:4-14, 5:7; 2 Chron.34:22-28; Prov.31:30-31; Micah 6:4)*

Egalitarians believe that women as well as men should use their spiritual gifts to minister to “the whole Body of Christ.” This would imply that Christian women can use their spiritual gift of teaching to teach men or that Christian women can serve as pastor-teachers over the local church made up of men and women.

Evangelical feminists like to argue that women can teach men because Priscilla taught Apollos. Acts 18:26 says “So he (Apollos) began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” The husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla explained to the Jewish preacher Apollos the gospel and he became a Christian.

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<sup>17</sup> The antecedent referent for “they” in Acts 2:1 is the “eleven apostles” in Acts 1:26. It is true that the apostles were praying “with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus” in the upper room after the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:14). There were 120 disciples meeting in the upper room (Acts 1:15). The question is: were there 120 disciples in the upper room when the Spirit came? Peter answered the charge that the disciples were speaking in tongues because they were drunk. Acts 2:14 says “But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them...”

Evangelical feminists argue that this is evidence that women can teach the word of God to men.

It is important to note that Priscilla did not instruct Apollos by herself. She was with her husband who instructed Apollos along with her. Aquilla and Priscilla did not instruct Apollos in a public setting, but rather took him aside privately to instruct him. Nothing is said in the text of Priscilla serving as a co-pastor with Aquilla. No negative comment is made by Luke about Priscilla's involvement in instructing Apollos in this way. So this must not be a violation of the prohibition that Paul gave in 1 Timothy 2.

Complementarians believe that Christian women can have the spiritual gift of teaching, but they are limited in the scriptures to teaching women and children and not men in the church. Christian women can teach children the word of God. Lois and Eunice taught Timothy the word of God (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15). Paul told Titus to tell the older Christian women to be "teachers of good things: that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (Titus 2:3b-5). God desires that older Christian women teach younger Christian women how to be a godly wife and mother. The content of their teaching focuses on homemaking and not on doctrine.

Churches should encourage mentoring relationships between older Christian women and younger Christian women. Older Christian mothers should disciple younger Christian mothers with children at home. Christian wives who have been married for some time should disciple newly married Christian women.

*9. The Bible teaches that, in the New Testament economy, women as well as men exercise the prophetic, priestly and royal functions (Acts 2:17-18; 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Rev. 1:6, 5:10). Therefore, the few isolated texts that appear to restrict the full redemptive freedom of women must not be interpreted simplistically and in contradiction to the rest of Scripture, but their interpretation must take into account their relation to the broader teaching of Scripture and their total context (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-36; 1 Tim. 2:9-15).*

Evangelical feminists believe that the universal priesthood of believers qualifies women to be pastors as well. It is true that all Christian women are believer-priests (1 Pet. 2:5). Each Christian woman can come directly into the presence of God through the finished work of Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:19-22). Being a believer-priest is not the same as holding the office of pastor-teacher. If that were the case, then every Christian would be a pastor. The Bible recognizes a distinction between church leaders (elders) and other Christians in that commands are given to Christians in the church to recognize and follow their leaders (cf. 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Heb. 13:7).

*10. The Bible defines the function of leadership as the empowerment of others for service rather than the exercise of power over them (Matt. 20:25-28, 23:8; Mark 10:42-45; John 13:13-17; Gal. 5:13; 1 Peter 5:2-3).*

Jesus condemned the abuse of power and leadership among the rulers of the Gentiles. Jesus demonstrated his leadership by washing his disciples' feet (John 13:13-17). Paul told the Galatians that they were to serve one another through love (Gal.5:13). Peter told the elders to shepherd the flock of God. They were to serve as overseers. They were not to be lords but examples to the flock (1 Pet.5:2-3).

Christian leaders (elders) may exercise authority over other Christians. The writer to the Hebrews wrote that Christians are told to obey their elders. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."

*11. The Bible teaches that husbands and wives are heirs together of the grace of life and that they are bound together in a relationship of mutual submission and responsibility (1 Cor.7:3-5; Eph.5:21; 1 Pet.3:1-7; Gen.21:12). The husband's function as "head" is to be understood as self giving love and service within this relationship of mutual submission (Eph.5:21-33; Col.3:19; 1 Pet.3:7).*

Egalitarians emphasize mutual submission in marriage based on Ephesians 5:21. Ephesians 5:21 gives one of the results of being filled by the Spirit: "submitting to one another in the fear of God." Egalitarians believe that there are times when a husband should submit to his wife and other times when the wife should submit to her husband. John Kohlenberger III argues for mutual submission in marriage:

As to submission in marriage, I'd heard many sermons on wives submitting to husbands, but never heard anyone deal with the fact that in Ephesians 5:21, submission is to one another; in other words, husbands were to submit to wives as well. I had actually heard over the course of 23 years of marriage the wisdom of submitting to my wife in her areas of expertise, but only recently realized submission was a biblical imperative. And as to church ministry, only very recently have I realized the extreme significance of Paul naming women as his partners in ministry in Romans 16:3-15, as sharing his struggles in Philippians 4:3; calling Phoebe a deacon in Romans 16:1 (NRSV) and Junia an "apostle" in Romans 16:7 (NRSV). Paul practiced what he preached that "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."<sup>18</sup>

Egalitarian Gilbert Bilezikian rejects the normal meaning of "submit" in Ephesians 5:21-22.

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<sup>18</sup> John R. Kohlenberger III, "From Male Superiority to Mutual Submission," in *Christian Management Report* (March-April, 2000), 15.

Therefore, “submit” means to make oneself subordinate to the authority of a higher power, to be dependent for direction on the desires and orders of a superior in rank or position, to yield to rulership. This is the natural meaning of submit wherever the word appears in the New Testament, except where its meaning is deliberately changed by a modifier such as in verse 21 of our text. The addition to “being submitted” of the reciprocal pronoun “to each other” changes its meaning entirely. “Being subject to one another” is a very different relationship from “being subject to the other.” For instance, two soldiers may be told by their officer to be subject to one another and to help each other in their assignment by making themselves available to each other. But the officer is not subject to the soldiers. By definition, mutual submission rules out hierarchical differences. Being subject to one another is only possible among equals. It is a mutual (two way) process that excludes unilateral (one way) subordination implicit in the concept of subjection without the reciprocal pronoun. Mutual submission is a horizontal relationship among equals. Subjection is a vertical relationship between ruler and subject.<sup>19</sup>

Complementarians believe that wives are to submit to their husbands and husbands are to love their wives. Husbands are not commanded in Ephesians 5:22-33 to submit to their wives.

### The Meaning of Submission

(1) Submission does not mean that the wife becomes a slave. She is not to be ordered around by her husband like a sergeant orders a private. (2) Submission does not mean that the wife never gives her opinion to her husband. A wife should express her views and her husband should listen to her. (3) Submission does not mean that the wife is inferior to her husband. Jesus was not inferior to Mary or Joseph and yet the Scriptures say of him that as a child “he continued in subjection to them.” (Lk.2:51). (4) Submission does not mean blind obedience. If a husband tells his wife to sin, she is not obligated to obey him. She is to obey God rather than her husband. A wife must never follow her husband into sin. (5) Submission does not mean that the wife is a “doormat” to be walked on. She should not allow her husband to physically or verbally abuse her. A wife should separate from her abusive husband for a period of time as they both seek professional counseling help. (6) Submission does not imply spiritual inequality. Both men and women are made in the image of God. Men and women are saved in the same way- by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Eph.2:8-9).

What does submission mean then for the wife? The word “submit” (uJpotavssesqe) means to place yourself under authority. All of us are to submit to the authorities God has placed over us.<sup>20</sup> Paul addressed the wives (vocative AiJ gunaike~)

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 154.

<sup>20</sup> Submission is not just a response that wives are to have to their husbands. Children are to submit to their parents (Eph.6:1-2; Lk.2:51). Believers are to submit to those in government (Rom.13:1). Believers are to submit to one another (Eph.5:21). Slaves are to submit to their masters (Titus 2:9; 1

and commanded them to submit to their own husbands (toi~ ijdivoi~ ajndravsin). Submission is a voluntary decision on the part of the wife to place herself under her husband's authority and to allow him to lead. It is a disposition to recognize and honor her husband's responsibility to lead the home. Submission is a command for wives to obey. The text does not say that husbands are to force their wives to obey. Submission is a gift that a wife gives to her husband. Submission is a habitual decision. It is an attitude as well as an action. Submission is to her husband. The text does not say that she must submit to all men.

Submission is to be done as to the Lord (wJ~ tw/ kurivw/). The wife's submission to her husband shows her respect for the authority of the Lord. The Lord is the one who has placed the husband in a position of authority over the wife. Submission is to be done in everything and not just some things. This does not mean that she submits to do sinful activities with or for her husband. Submission means that the wife uses all of her abilities under the management of her husband to meet the needs of her husband and children. She works together with her husband to serve the family.

### The Motive of Submission

Wives should submit to their husbands because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church (Eph.5:23). Egalitarians and complementarians differ on the meaning of "head." Egalitarians believe that the word "head" means source (like the source of a river). Bilezikian writes,

This passage offers a succinct, formula like definition that goes to the heart of the matter: "Christ is the head of the church." To help his readers understand properly the significance of this statement, Paul adds this explanation: "He is himself the Savior of the body." The emphatic pronoun rendered here by "himself" indicates that Paul makes a point of the fact that saviorhood pertains to Christ's headship. This servant-ministry of the Savior receives further elaboration in verse 25: "Christ loved the church and gave himself for her," and in verse 29: "For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church" (RSV). The motif of Christ as the source of nurture appears again in this passage. In this development on the meaning of headship, there is nothing in the text to suggest that head might have implications of rulership or authority. Had this been the case, Paul would have more appropriately stated, "Christ is the head of the church. He is himself the Lord of the body" instead of "the Savior of the body." However, the terminology of authority is not used in reference to Christ and His headship. To the contrary, His headship is clearly defined in terms of saviorhood, servanthood, and nurturance. Again, head designates the source of life ("Savior"), of servanthood ("gave himself up") and of growth ("nourishes it").<sup>21</sup>

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Pet.2:18). Believers are to submit to God (Heb.12:9; James 4:7). Believers are to submit to elders (1 Peter 5:5). These verses show us that wives are not the only ones that have to submit. Ephesians 5 tells that wives are to submit to their own husbands (Eph.5:22, 24; Col.3:18; Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 3:1,5).

<sup>21</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 158.

Complementarians believe that the word “head” refers to a person with authority.<sup>22</sup> Paul used the word “head” to refer to Jesus Christ in the book of Ephesians. Ephesians 1:22 says “And he put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church.” One evidence of the power of God is that the Father has placed all things under the authority of Jesus Christ. He is head over all things. He is also head of the universal church. Jesus told his disciples, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth” (Matt.28:18). Christ is the Head of the Church. He is the Leader of the Church. The Church has a responsibility to submit to Christ and his leadership. The fact that Jesus is Lord of the church shows a hierarchical relationship with Jesus possessing authority over the church.

### The Model of Submission

Wives should submit to their husbands just as the church submits to Christ (Eph.5:24). The Church is commanded to be under the authority of Christ. Christians are responsible to obey all that Christ has commanded us to do (Mt.28:18-20). The relationship of the Church to Christ should model for wives how they are to relate to their husbands.

*12. The Bible teaches that both mothers and fathers are to exercise leadership in the nurture, training, discipline and teaching of their children (Exod.20:12; Lev.19:3; Deut.6:6-9; 21:18-21; 27:16; Prov.1:8, 6:20; Eph.6:1-4; Col.3:20; 2 Tim.1:5; see also Luke 2:51).*

It is true that fathers and mothers are to be honored by their children as they have a responsibility to teach their children the ways of the Lord. Children are to obey both their father and mother (Eph.6:1; Col.3:20). Both fathers and mothers can teach their children the word of God (Deut.6:6-9; Prov.1:8; 6:20).

It is important to notice that God specifically addresses fathers (notice the vocative *pater*) as being responsible to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph.6:4). God holds fathers accountable because they are the spiritual leaders in their homes. Paul could have stated that mothers are to bring their children up in the training and admonition of the Lord, but he did not.

It is true that in some households where the father is not a believer that the mother or grandmother has to teach their children to follow the Lord. Timothy came from a home

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<sup>22</sup> Wayne Grudem has written an excellent word study of *kephalē* in which he shows that the word means “ruler, authority over” rather than “source.” All of the major lexicons give this meaning. BDAG defines *kephalē* as “a being of high status, head” for these scripture references: 1 Cor.11:3; Eph.1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col.2:10. The omission of the meaning “authority over” from the Liddell-Scott Lexicon is an oversight that Grudem says needs to be corrected. The meaning “source” is not found except for possibly in Herodotus 4.91 where *kephalē* could refer to the source of a river. A search of 2336 examples of *kephalē* from a wide range of Greek literature produced no examples where the word meant “source” (Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of *Kephale* (“Head”): A Response to Recent Studies,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991], 425-468).

where his unsaved father was an uncircumcised Greek and his mother was Jewish (Acts 16:1, 3). Timothy had a godly mother Eunice and a godly grandmother Lois who passed the baton of genuine faith to him (2 Tim.1:5). They taught Timothy the scriptures during his childhood (2 Tim.3:15). Paul mentored Timothy and called him “a true son in the faith” (1 Tim.1:2).

*CHRISTIANS FOR BIBLICAL EQUALITY: APPLICATION STATEMENTS*<sup>23</sup>

*1. In the church, spiritual gifts of women and men are to be recognized, developed and used in serving and teaching ministries at all levels of involvement: as small group leaders, counselors, facilitators, administrators, ushers, communion servers, and board members, and in pastoral care, teaching, preaching and worship. In so doing, the church will honor God as the source of spiritual gifts. The church will also fulfill God’s mandate of stewardship without the appalling loss to God’s kingdom that results when half of the church’s members are excluded from positions of responsibility.*

Egalitarians believe that women can be pastors or elders, preach the word in churches and lead worship. Evangelical feminist Virginia Mollenkott writes, ‘If a woman has been called and gifted by God to be a pastor or priest, it is a fearful thing for the organized church to block her from that ministry. And if a Christian woman has been called and gifted for some career outside of the home, and her husband blocks her by refusing to assist with the care of their mutual home and their mutual children, isn’t he frustrating the work of the Holy Spirit?’<sup>24</sup>

I would agree with the egalitarians that all Christians (men and women alike) need to discover and use their spiritual gifts in ministry in the church (1 Pet.4:10-11). The New Testament does not teach that all Christians are to be spiritual leaders. Ephesians 4:11-12 says “And He himself gave *some* to be apostles, *some* prophets, *some* evangelists, and *some* pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” All Christians cannot be pastors or deacons. Christian women can serve as small group leaders (of women or children), counselors (of women), facilitators (of special events), administrators (of various programs), ushers, and communion servers. Women can serve as members of mission boards or Christian education boards. They can help with pastoral care of women, teach women’s Bible studies and serve on a worship team.

Here are some areas that I (as a complementarian) believe that Christian women should not serve: president of a denomination, district superintendent of a denomination, pastor or elder in a local church, teach adult Bible class which includes men, teach Bible and/or theology in Bible college or seminary, lead a worship team, preach or teach the word in church or in chapel, and teach or lead a home Bible study with men and women.

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<sup>23</sup> These egalitarian application statements (in italics) are from Christians for Biblical Equality.

<sup>24</sup> Virginia Mollenkott, *Women, Men and the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977), 136-137.

I believe that Christian women can use their spiritual gifts and serve in the church in the following possible ways: chair a committee of women, church treasurer, evangelist, professional counselor, administrative assistant to pastor, sing in a choir, sing hymns and praise choruses with the congregation, play the piano or other musical instruments in the worship service, sing on a worship team, teach a women's Bible study, write a commentary on a book of the Bible, teach the Bible to a women's class, give a personal testimony in church, collect the offering, give announcements, read scripture in the worship service, welcome people as a greeter, edit a church newsletter, and serve as a church secretary.

*2. In the church, public recognition is to be given to both women and men who exercise ministries of service and leadership. In so doing, the church will model the unity and harmony that should characterize the community of believers. In a world fractured by discrimination and segregation, the church will dissociate itself from worldly or pagan devices designed to make women feel inferior for being female. It will help prevent their departure from the church or their rejection of the Christian faith.*

I agree that Christian leaders need to recognize faithful service in the local church by both women and men. This is an encouragement to others and builds a positive church team atmosphere in doing the Lord's work together. Christians for Biblical Equality do not define or describe the "worldly or pagan devices designed to make women feel inferior for being female." If they are referring to a refusal to ordain women or a refusal to allow women to teach men in the church, then this is a gross exaggeration and attempt at guilt by association.

*3. In the Christian home, husband and wife are to defer to each other in seeking to fulfill each other's preferences, desires and aspirations. Neither spouse is to seek to dominate the other but each is to act as servant of the other, in humility considering the other as better than oneself. In case of decisional deadlock they should seek resolution through biblical methods of conflict resolution rather than by one spouse imposing a decision upon the other. In so doing, husband and wife will help the Christian home stand against improper use of power and authority by spouses and will protect the home from wife and child abuse that sometimes tragically follows a hierarchical interpretation of the husband's leadership.*

Husbands do need to listen to their wives and live with them in an understanding way. Wives need to listen to their husbands and seek to meet their needs. A Christian husband and wife should discuss their finances, pray about future plans, and serve the Lord together as a team. Biblical methods of conflict resolution involve listening and working through differences without becoming bitter or angry (Eph.4:31-32). After a careful deliberation, a plan of action should be decided upon. The husband should lead his wife in doing God's will. If God leads a husband to a new ministry, his wife should follow him. God told Joseph and not Mary to take the young child and his mother to Egypt (Mt.2:13). Joseph was the leader of the family even though the virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus. Later an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in Egypt and told him to take the young child Jesus and his mother and return to the land of Israel (Mt.2:19).

Again Joseph obeyed (Mt.2:21). Peter said that he had the right as an apostle “to take along a believing wife” (1 Cor.9:5).

*4. In the Christian home, spouses are to learn to share the responsibilities of leadership on the basis of gifts, expertise and availability, with due regard for the partner most affected by the decision under consideration. In so doing, spouses will learn to respect their competencies and their complementarity. This will prevent one spouse from becoming the perennial loser, often forced to practice ingratiating or deceitful manipulation to protect self esteem. By establishing their marriage on a partnership basis, the couple will protect it from joining the tide of dead or broken marriages resulting from marital inequities.*

A spouse should never become a perennial loser or be forced to practice ingratiating or deceitful manipulation to protect self esteem. There are two extremes for women to avoid in relating to their husbands: manipulation to get their own way and being a doormat.<sup>25</sup> Men must avoid the two extremes of physical abuse or passivity.

*5. In the Christian home, couples who share a lifestyle characterized by the freedom they find in Christ will do so without experiencing feelings of guilt or resorting to hypocrisy. They are freed to emerge from an unbiblical “traditionalism” and can rejoice in their mutual accountability in Christ. In so doing, they will openly express their obedience to Scripture, will model an example for other couples in quest of freedom in Christ, and will stand against patterns of domination and inequality sometimes imposed upon church and family.*

The Bible does not teach that men are to dominate women. This is a sad result of the Fall. Christ does not dominate his church. He loves his church and leads it (Eph.5:22-33). Husbands are to love their wives and lead them. Contrary to CBE, a husband who lovingly leads his wife is not guilty of “unbiblical traditionalism.”

## **Conclusion**

Egalitarians have formed an organization called Christians for Biblical Equality and are writing articles and books to defend their views of mutual submission in marriage and women teaching men in the church. This paper has critiqued their statement of beliefs. Complementarians have formed an organization called the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. Complementarians recognize that men and women are created equal, but God has given each specific roles. God created a husband to be the spiritual leader of his wife. The relationship of a man and his wife should reflect the

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<sup>25</sup> It is interesting that Sarah who is held up as one who was submissive to her husband and even obeyed Abraham calling him Lord (1 Peter 3:5-6) was possibly guilty of both of these extremes. In Genesis 12 Sarai listened to Abram when he told her to say to the Egyptians that she was Abram’s sister. As a result the promise was endangered as Pharaoh took Sarai into his harem. The Lord protected Sarai by sending great plagues on Pharaoh and his house. Later the barren Sarai insisted that Abram take her servant Hagar and obtain children by her (Gen.16:1-3). Abram listened to the voice of Sarai and that led to a conflict between Sarai and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, and today between the Jews and Arabs.

relationship of Christ and his Church. The wife is to submit to her husband as the Church submits to Christ and his authority.