

Summaries of the Egalitarian and Complementarian Positions on the Role of Women in the Home and in Christian Ministry

By Bruce A. Ware

A Summary of the Egalitarian Position

I. A Broad Overview of The Egalitarian Position

A. Created Equality

God created male and female as equal in all respects. Gen. 1:26-27 makes no distinction between woman and man insofar as both are equally made in His image (i.e., ontological equality), and both are given the responsibility to rule over His creation (i.e., functional equality).

B. Fallen Disorder and Hierarchy

Sin introduced into God's created order many manifestations of disorder and corrupted relationships. Among the chief examples of sin's defilement is the introduction of an illegitimate hierarchy in the relationship between woman and man. Gen. 3:16 (the curse on the woman) suggests that, because of sin, the woman would have a disposition of subservience before the man, and the man would have, in contrary measure, a disposition of supremacy over the woman. Thus, the relationship of male/female equality intended by God in creation is now defiled by the presence of a sinful and harmful hierarchical tendency.

C. Restored Equality through Redemption in Christ

Gal. 3:28 expresses the grand truth that in Christ, the false and sinful basis of male/female hierarchy has been abolished, so there is no legitimate distinction, in God's kingdom, between female and male. Full male/female equality is restored, dignity is given back to women, and servant attitudes are called for in men and women alike.

II. Primary Rationale Supporting the Egalitarian Position

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

1. Gen. 1:26-27 – shows that man and woman share the same human nature, both are made in God's image, and both are given God's commission to rule the earth. Not only is there equality of being or nature between man and woman, there is also, importantly, equality of function or task – both are commanded to rule. And note: no distinction is made to give the man a superior position in this rulership.
2. Gen. 2:18 – woman as "helper" is best understood as one who comes to complement (i.e., make complete something that is incomplete). So, far from the woman being subordinate to the man, this shows how indebted man should be to the woman. Interestingly, the Hebrew word here for helper (ezer) is used most often of God (who in no sense is subordinate to those whom He helps) in His help of others. The point, then, is that man and woman need each other and so are equal partners in this relationship, not that the woman is in a subordinate relationship to the man.
3. Gen. 2:22-24 – they are one flesh, or the same flesh, indicating full equality of person.

4. Gal. 3:28 – if it is God's purpose through redemption to abolish false and sinful distinctions that separate men and woman into classes or into a hierarchy, then this must be understood as a return to what He intended in creation, an intent that was distorted by the fall and sin but now made real again in Christ.
5. 1 Cor. 12:7-11 – Clearly, God distributes His gifts to His people as He so wills, but one's gender is not a factor in His giving any particular gift to a person. Women and men alike are recipients of all of God's gifts (e.g., see 1 Cor. 11:5 for a statement of women having the gift of prophecy). Since God's spiritual gifting is gender-neutral, and since God expects His gifts to be used in the church, it follows that men and women alike are equal in their exercise of gifts in the church.

B. Biblical Examples of Female Equality with Males

Despite the introduction of a hierarchical disposition within human beings after the fall, there are indications that God endeavored to thwart this manifestation of sin and exhibit instead egalitarian relationships even in this fallen world.

1. Female leadership in Israel

Although Israel was largely patriarchal (in accord with most other sin-afflicted cultures of the time and through history), God saw fit to have in Israel some expressions of female leadership. Examples are: Miriam (Exod. 15), Huldah (2 Kings 22) and Deborah (Judges 4-5) who were prophetesses; and Deborah who was also a judge in Israel. Other examples of women who had prominent roles in the spiritual formation and development of Israel, but not in official religious offices, are Esther, Ruth and Naomi.

2. Prov. 31:10-31 – provides a commendation to this ideal woman who fears the Lord and who expresses her faithful service to the Lord through business dealings outside of the home as much as her provision inside the home.

3. Female participation in Jesus' ministry

There are numerous examples of significant roles women played in Jesus' ministry, roles which, although unacceptable to the culture of the day, nevertheless display Jesus' full endorsement of women and their desire to minister. Some examples:

Luke 8:1-3 – several women who provided financially to Jesus' ministry and who even traveled with Him, learning from Him as He taught from one city and village to another.

Luke 10:38-42 – Mary was commended by Jesus for listening at His feet rather than helping the worried Martha with the household preparations. Again, Jesus encouraged women, as fully as men, to come and learn.

Matt. 15:21-28 and Luke 7:36-50 – examples of women whom Jesus held out as great examples of faith and love.

John 4:39-42 – The Samaritan woman became the first evangelist of the Gospel from among non-disciples of Jesus. This surely indicates that Jesus considered women able to teach others (men and women alike), for a witness instructs others about the central teaching, the gospel itself.

Matt. 28:1-10 and Mark 16:1-8 – Certainly God is capable of choosing those people He first wants to discover and report to others the resurrection of Jesus. Who should be those privileged people? Those first witnesses in history to the resurrection of

Jesus? The Gospels of Matthew and Mark both give the names of women (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome) who came to the empty tomb, and received the command from the angel to tell what they now know to "His disciples and Peter" (Mark 16:7). God chose, over Peter or any other of the disciples, women to be the first to witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, again indicating Jesus' full confidence in the role of women to tell others the most important message God has for people to know.

Matt. 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8 – Evangelicals uniformly understand Christ's commission to bear witness in the power of the Spirit and so make disciples as given to all of Christ's followers. Hence, proclamation of the gospel as mandated by Christ is not gender-specific.

4. Female involvement in the early Church

Acts 2 (esp. vv. 17-18) – women and men alike are recipients of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor. 12 – as mentioned above, women and men alike are gifted by the Holy Spirit, gifts commanded to be used in the church (1 Cor. 12:7).

1 Cor. 11:5 – mention is made here of women in the church "prophesying," clearly a speaking gift used to instruct and edify those in the church. (cf. Acts 21:9)

Acts 18:26 – Priscilla (named first) and Aquila took Apollos aside "and explained to him the way of God more accurately." Priscilla, then, was exercising a teaching gift and instructing a man, who was himself also a teacher. (cf. Rom. 16:3-5)

Rom. 16:1, 7 – Paul commends two other women (besides Prisca in 16:3): Phoebe, who is a servant, perhaps a deacon, in the church; and Junia, who (if in fact a woman) is named as "outstanding among the apostles."

III. Objections to the Egalitarian Position and Responses

- A. Objection: Israel's political and religious structures exhibit an almost exclusively male leadership, and this by God's calling and command. E.g., Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, 12 sons of Jacob as 12 tribes of Israel, male priests, stress on first-born sons, male kings (Athaliah, a wicked usurper of the throne, excepted).

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

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

Response: Jesus began the process of the restoration of women to their place of full equality, a process seen continuing in the early church (e.g., Gal. 3:28, 1 Cor. 12). Jesus knew that only a certain degree of break with tradition would be possible, still leaving Him the opportunity to teach and travel freely as He did. A parallel case can be seen when Paul fails to denounce slavery, although clearly he sees it to be at odds with the freedom of the gospel.

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Summary of the Complementarian Position

I. A Broad Overview of the Complementarian Position

A. Created Equality of Essence and Distinction of Role

Male and female were created by God as equal in dignity, value, essence and human nature, but also distinct in role whereby the male was given the responsibility of loving authority over the female, and the female was to offer willing, glad-hearted and submissive assistance to the man. Gen. 1:26-27 makes clear that male and female are equally created as God's image, and so are, by God's created design, equally and fully human. But, as Gen. 2 bears out (as seen in its own context and as understood by Paul in 1 Cor. 11 and 1 Tim. 2), their humanity would find expression differently, in a relationship of complementarity, with the female functioning in a submissive role under the leadership and authority of the male.

B. Fallen Disruption of God's Created Design

Sin introduced into God's created design many manifestations of disruption, among them a disruption in the proper role-relations between man and woman. As most complementarians understand it, Gen. 3:15-16 informs us that the male/female relationship would now, because of sin, be affected by mutual enmity. In particular, the woman would have a desire to usurp the authority given to man in creation, leading to man, for his part, ruling over woman in what can be either rightfully-corrective or wrongfully-abusive ways.

C. Restored Role Differentiation through Redemption in Christ

Passages such as Eph. 5:22-33 and 1 Tim. 2:8-15 exhibit the fact that God's created intention of appropriate male leadership and authority should now, in Christ, be fully affirmed, both in the home and in the church. Wives are to submit to their husbands in the model of the Church's submission to Christ, and women are not to exercise authoritative roles of teaching in the Church in view of Eve's created relation to Adam. Male headship, then, is seen to be restored in the Christian community as men and women endeavor to express their common humanity according to God's originally-created and good hierarchical design.

II. Primary Rationale Supporting the Complementarian Position

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

1. Gen. 1:26-27 – shows that man and woman share the same human nature, both are made in God's image, and both are given God's commission to rule the earth. How they are, together, to rule the earth on God's behalf, is not here explained. Thus, at this point, neither egalitarianism nor complementarianism is demanded. Clearly, the thrust is that male and female are equal in essence (i.e., both fully human, both fully *imago Dei*, both of equal value and worth to God) and together commissioned to rule over the earth.
2. Gal. 3:28 – God's redemption and regeneration of those whom He would save involves no distinction between male and female. Gender is absolutely irrelevant regarding who may or may not be saved. The clear implication, then, is that men and women are equal in essence because their salvation comes to humans with no consideration given to gender.
3. 1 Cor. 12:7-11 – Clearly, God distributes His gifts to His people as He so wills, but one's gender is not a factor in His giving any particular gift to a person. Women and men alike are recipients of all of God's gifts (e.g., see 1 Cor. 11:5 for a statement of women having the gift of prophecy). Again, this indicates that women are equal in essence with men in God's sight, but it does not preclude the possibility that God may prescribe just how those gifts be used in the Church.
4. 1 Pet. 3:7b – Saved women (wives, in this text) are to be treated with honor, precisely because they, along with saved men, are fellow-heirs of the grace of life in Christ. It is so important for husbands to understand this principle and so respect their wives in this fashion that Peter warns that husbands who do not treat their wives with the honor accorded them by God will not be heard before God in their prayers.

B. Evidence that God's design was for male/female role differentiation

1. Gen. 2 – There are at least four features of this chapter which support the idea of male-headship (i.e., male God-given authority over female). 1) The order of creation (male created first) indicates God's design of male priority in the male/female

relationship. This is also Paul's observation both in 1 Cor. 11:8 and 1 Tim. 2:13. 2) God gives instructions to Adam, before the creation of Eve, not to eat fruit of the forbidden tree (2:16-17). Implied in this is Adam's responsibility to instruct his future wife and guard her from violating this prohibition (hence, the significance in 3:6 that the woman gave to the man "who was with her," showing he failed to guard his wife as he should have). 3) Eve was created to be Adam's helper. While it is true that this same Hebrew term is often used of God's "helping" people, it is clear that Paul understands Eve's role as helper to require that woman ought to be under the rightful authority of man (see 1 Cor. 11:9-10 – "man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head"). 4) Adam's naming of Eve indicates, in an OT cultural context, Adam's right of authority over the one whom he named. And interestingly, Adam named his wife twice, first when she was formed from his flesh (2:23), and second after they had both sinned (3:20), indicating that his rightful authority over her continued after sin had come.

2. Gen. 3:1-7 – Eve was tempted and deceived by the serpent and ate the forbidden fruit, and then gave it also to Adam. Eve, that is, sinned first. Despite this fact, God seeks out Adam after their sin to inquire why they were hiding (3:8ff). God approaches Adam, not Eve, as the one ultimately responsible for the sin. Likewise, Paul clearly teaches that the line of sin in the human race begins with Adam (Rom. 5:12ff; 1 Cor. 15:22). But he does this in full recognition of the fact that Eve sinned first (1 Tim. 2:14). Adam only rightly bears the responsibility as the head of the sinful human race, when Eve sinned first, if he is viewed by God and Paul as having authority and ultimate responsibility over the woman.
3. Gen. 3:16 – Sin brought about, not the beginning of a male/female relational hierarchy, but a disruption of the God-intended role of male-headship and female submission in the male-female relationship. Most complementarians understand the curse of the woman in 3:16 to mean that sin would bring about in Eve a wrongful desire to rule over her husband (contrary to God's created design), and that in response, Adam would have to assert his rule over her. This understanding comes from comparing the sentence structure and terms of Gen. 3:16 with Gen. 4:7. In 4:7, God tells Cain that sin is seeking to destroy him, and so He says "its [sin's] desire is for you, but you must master it." This means, of course, sin desires to rule over you, but you in response must rule over it. Now, the exact sentence structure is found in 3:16, where Eve is told "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." This means, in light of 4:7, Eve's desire will be to rule illegitimately over Adam (note: certainly sin could not be credited with giving Eve a loving or caring desire for Adam, could it?), and in response Adam will have to assert his rightful rulership over her. Most complementarians hold, then, that sin produced a disruption in God's order of male headship and female submission, in which a) the woman would be inclined now to usurp the man's rightful place of authority over her, and man may be required, in response, to reestablish his God-given rulership over the woman, and b) the man would be inclined to misuse his rights of rulership, either by sinful abdication of his God-given authority, acquiescing to the woman's desire to rule over him (and so fail to lead as he should), or by abusing his rights to rule through harsh, cruel and exploitative domination of the woman.
4. 1 Cor. 11:1-16 – As already noted, Paul uses Gen. 2 to support his contention that women need to display, in the church, their submission to male leadership. The

woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head (11:10), because she is the glory of man (11:7), because she originated from man (11:8), and because she was created for the man's sake (11:9). Because Paul links the woman's submissive role in the Church to God's created design, it is evident that these instructions to the church at Corinth are not applicable only there, but instead are applicable universally in the Church.

5. 1 Cor. 14:34-36 – Clearly this prohibition on women speaking cannot be absolute, for Paul previously acknowledged women prophesying (1 Cor. 11:5). What complementarians hold on this, though, is usually one of two positions: either that women may never be involved in an official capacity of teaching the corporate assembly, presumably with men present, or that women may not function in the elder role of judging prophecies (a la Grudem, Carson). In either case, what is clear is the principle that women are to display their submission to male headship and learn quietly from those (qualified males only) responsible for the teaching ministry of the church.
6. 1 Tim. 2:8-15 – Again here, Paul links his command that women receive instruction with submissiveness rather than teaching or exercising authority over men (2:11-12) with God's created design for man and woman. Women are to submit to male leadership and teaching because Adam was created first (2:13), and because Eve was deceived and sinned first (2:14). And again, it is evident that these instructions can only rightly be seen as universally applicable for the Church, because the basis for them is God's created design.
7. Eph. 5:22-33 – Wives are to be subject to their husbands in response to their submission to the Lordship of Christ (5:22). The reason for this, says Paul, is that the husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the Church (5:23). The next verse makes the matter even more explicit: "as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives to their husbands in everything" (5:24). The key notion here is the parallel of the headship of the husband with the headship of Christ. As the Church submits to Christ as the one who has rightful authority over her, so the wife is to submit to her husband as the one who has rightful authority over her. Husbands, for their part, are to love their wives as Christ loves the Church (5:25-29). When husbands truly love their wives and wives submit to their husbands, we see the sinful distortion of the male-female relationship defeated and a return, then, to what God intended in his creation of man and woman.
8. 1 Pet. 3:7a – While the second half of this verse stresses the equal honor accorded to women along with men (as fellow-heirs of the grace of life), the first half of the verse clearly indicates the fundamental gender difference between a husband and his wife. She, according to Peter, is a "weaker vessel," and she needs to be treated with tenderness and understanding as such. This implies that 1) while she is fully equal in essence (3:7b), she likewise is constitutionally different from him as a woman (3:7a), and 2) the husband bears particular God-sanctioned responsibility to care for his wife, indicating his leadership and primary responsibility in their relationship.
9. Trinitarian Analogy – Complementarians understand the Trinity to present an analogy to the male/female relationship, as God designed it. God is one in essence and three in persons. The three persons of the God-head are absolutely equal in essence (in fact, they each share fully, simultaneously and without division the one divine essence), but they are distinct in function. Specifically, their distinction of function is

marked by an intrinsic relation of authority within the God-head, by which the Son is subject to the Father, and the Spirit to the Son. 1 Cor. 11:3 states part of this: "God is the head of Christ." The clearest biblical example of Christ's subjection to the Father is in 1 Cor. 15:28 where the exalted and victorious Son "will also be subject to the One who subjected all things to Him." Given this understanding of the Trinity, it makes sense for Paul to say what He does in 1 Cor. 11:3. He speaks here of three authority lines that exist: Christ is the authority (head) over every man, man is the authority (head) over a woman, and God (the Father) is authority (head) over Christ. Just as the persons of God are equal in essence and yet they relate within a structure of lines of authority, so too men and women are equal in essence while relating within a similar structure of lines of authority.

C. Biblical Examples of Male/Female Role Differentiation

Despite the fact that sin has produced in woman an illegitimate desire to usurp the rightful authority God gave to man (Gen. 3:16), God has worked in Israel and in the Church to establish male-headship as the consistent and approved pattern for religious and home life.

1. Male leadership in Israel

From the Garden of Eden on, God has called out men and held men responsible for religious leadership. Think of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the 12 sons of Jacob as heads of the 12 tribes of Israel, Moses, Joshua, David, the male priestly order, the prophets to Israel and Judah, etc. Clearly, God purposely called out and intended to work through male leadership in Israel.

2. Male leadership with Christ

Clearly Jesus was not at all averse to challenging customs and traditions of men which ran contrary to the values of the kingdom of God. He lacked no courage to challenge humanly fabricated restrictions upon the wise and good purposes of God (e.g., Matt. 15:3-9; 23:1-36). And his taking of women with him during his itinerant ministry testifies to this. But what Jesus never did, though He clearly could have and was *not* constrained by social convention not so to do, is to choose any women to be among the twelve. His choice of 12 men continues the pattern we observe in the OT, of distinguishing a certain level of spiritual leadership as gender-restrictive.

3. Male leadership in the Church

As observed above, Paul explicitly restricts women from a certain level of spiritual leadership and instruction in the Church. 1 Cor. 11:1-16, 1 Cor. 14:34-36, and 1 Tim. 2:8-15 consistently require that the church's ultimate human spiritual leadership be gender-restrictive. This is reinforced by qualifications for the position of eldership which requires that one be "the husband of one wife" (see 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:6), obviously indicating that only qualified men may serve as elders.

4. Male leadership in the home

Eph. 5:22-33, Col. 3:18-20, and 1 Pet. 3:1-7 each establishes the correctness of male-leadership in the home. The passage in 1 Peter is instructive in a particular way not described above. Here Peter envisions situations where a believing wife is married to an unbelieving husband. One might expect Peter to say to the wife, "because you know Christ and your husband doesn't, you need to take over the leadership in your home. Don't leave the leadership up to your husband, because he won't lead your home in a Christ-like manner." But, to the contrary, Peter says even

to these believing wives of unbelieving husbands, "be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives."

III. Objections to the Complementarian Position and Responses

- A. Objection: This complementarian understanding is in reality a fully hierarchical view, with women subordinate to men, and as such it is intolerable and contrary to the freedom of the gospel. While it claims to uphold the essential equality of women with men, it in fact leads inevitably to seeing women as inferior, as second-class citizens, who are not as important to God and His purposes as are men.

Response: Would you feel the same way about a parent/child relationship? Or of the relationship between an employee and his/her supervisor? Do you believe we should eliminate all manifestations of relational hierarchy, as demeaning to those under the authority of another? Relationships within authority structures surround us. We live and work in them every day. We would have utter chaos without them. But such authority structures do not entail the greater human value or essential superiority of those in charge, or minimize the human value or imply the essential inferiority of those under their charge. Furthermore, if we are correct to think of the Trinity as analogous to the male/female relationship, consider this: surely the Scriptures do not intend to suggest Christ is inferior in value to the Father because He came only to do His Father's will. Likewise, the Scriptures do not intend to suggest that women are inferior to men because of male-headship. In fact, just the opposite is true, viz., men and women only experience their full humanity when they function in the manner God intended in His creation of them. We are most free as humans when we affirm the legitimate authority structure God intended, and work within that.

- B. Objection: Your interpretation of Gen. 2, by which you see three indicators of male authority, is wrong. What difference does it make whom God created first? He had to create one or the other first, and it just happened to be Adam. Furthermore, remember God created animals before creating human beings, but this certainly does not indicate an animal priority over humans. And, yes, the woman was created to complete the man, but this speaks of her equality with him, not her subordination to him. Remember, God is our helper. Is He subordinate to us? And the fact that he named Eve is no proof of his authority over her. Women in Israel often name their sons, but does this, then, that females (mothers) are authority over males (sons)?

Response: Were it not for the fact that Paul understood Gen. 2 as the complementarian does, your objections might have some force. But it is Paul who observes the importance of Adam's creation first, and Paul who notes Eve was created for Adam's sake. Therefore, the complementarian stands with Scripture's interpretation of itself on this issue. The one point Paul does not address is Adam's naming of Eve. The support for this rests, then, entirely on the significance of naming in ancient near-eastern culture. Yes, a mother's naming a son shows, in part, her authority over him – until he leaves home. And remember, although animals were created before Adam, Adam was told to name the animals and this clearly indicates his headship over them. It seems best, then, in light both of cultural considerations and Paul's understanding of Gen. 2, to sustain these three points as legitimate interpretations of the male/female relationship at creation.

- C. Objection: Gen. 3:16 says nothing about Eve ruling Adam, but it speaks explicitly to Adam ruling Eve. You have twisted the clear meaning of this text. Sin effected in Adam an illegitimate desire to dominate his wife, despite her continued longing for equal companionship.

Response: The two major problems with the egalitarian view here are: 1) Explaining Eve's desire as a positive or caring desire fails to account for the fact that this is part of the curse on Eve. Certainly God would not give to her the curse of caring for Adam. Rather, her desire, because it is connected with what sin has done to her, is best understood as a negative, wrongful one. 2) But if her desire is negative, then, it accords exactly with sin's desire in Gen. 4:7, i.e., a desire to usurp rulership. This, coupled with the identical sentence structure and parallel terminology between the two passages, and their close proximity to each other, leads the complementarians to their conclusion on this important text.

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

Response: Yes, women do play significant religious, and at times leadership, roles throughout the Bible. But consider two things: 1) Most of the examples of female leadership appear in roles other than those of highest human religious authority. That is, there are some prophetesses and female teachers in Old and New Testaments, but where are there any women priests, women heads of tribes of Israel, women kings of Israel (Athaliah wrongly usurped the throne), women apostles (Junia of Rom. 16:7 is highly disputed), women elders in the early church? The point is that at the level of highest human religious authority, the Bible gives a clear and uniform picture of male leadership. 2) The most notable apparent exception to the above is Deborah (Judg. 4-5), who was both prophetess and judge of Israel. Given the spiritual state of Israel at the time, most see Judges not as illustrating well God's ideal for His people. Quite probably, then, Deborah's judgeship demonstrates, not how God endorses female leadership, but rather just how far from God's design and purposes Israel had strayed. In any case, it is difficult to accept the case of Deborah as normative, in light of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

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

Response: For lexical and exegetical reasons, this understanding of kephale is completely unacceptable. The strongest lexical evidence suggests that while kephale is sometimes used of impersonal objects to mean "source" (e.g., the "head", i.e., "source" of a river) its predominate, if not exclusive, use as it relates to human beings is as "authority over," not "source." Exegetically, it becomes difficult to understand how Paul could mean anything other than "authority over" in particular passages. Eph. 5:23, for example ("the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church") is followed in v. 24 with this statement, "as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives to their husbands in everything." Here, then, subjection of wives to their husbands is linked with the husband being head of his wife. Likewise in 1 Cor. 11:3 ("Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ"), it seems impossible to take kephale as "source," for to do so requires that God be the

source of Christ as Adam is the source of Eve and Christ is the source of man. But did Christ ever originate from the Father as both man and woman originated? Furthermore, the following context of this verse clearly deals with woman wearing head covering "as a symbol of authority" (11:10). Therefore, for lexical, exegetical and contextual reasons, it appears clearly best to understand male "headship" as denoting male authority in the home and the church.

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