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GOD'S  
DESIGN  
*for*  
MAN  
*and*  
WOMAN



A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL SURVEY

MARGARET E. KÖSTENBERGER

STUDY GUIDE



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 **CROSSWAY**  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

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# Introduction

People in our culture have a great need to see role models of biblical manhood and womanhood that flesh out God's design for men and women. We don't need to tell you that our world is in great ferment on the issue of masculinity and femininity today. Terms such as *transgender*, *gender-fluid*, and *gender-variant* have made their way into the English language, and the past decades have witnessed an increasing trend toward an erosion of marital roles and male-female identity.

Today, many see marriage as little more than a convention, a social contract to be entered largely out of convenience. No longer is marriage viewed as a necessary and healthy relational context for conceiving children, and many women and men are indifferent toward what used to be standard societal expectations. Divorce is rampant, and the sins of fathers and mothers are visited upon their children. Comparatively few are concerned about the biblical teaching on the matter, even in the church.

We've entered a post-Christian, pluralistic, postmodern phase in Western culture's approach to gender roles. But the "new tolerance" of di-

versity on gender issues raises several important questions. Is marriage really best left to subjective social arrangement with no basis in divine truth? Are male-female relationships simply a matter of consensual patterns of relating that are subject to ever-changing societal preferences and values? Is gender merely a social phenomenon as many feminists and others insist?

Or does Scripture provide us with abiding truth based on God's plan for men and women? Is maleness or femaleness a characteristic with which we are born, an indelible mark of who we are that we can embrace, even celebrate, and live out to the glory of the God who gave it to us in the first place? What if our creation as male or female grounds us in a true and meaningful supernatural reality that we ignore to our loss and peril in both this life and the life to come?

And if so, what is this divine design?

In *God's Design for Man and Woman*, we take a closer look at what the Bible teaches about the way God designed male-female identity and relationships, in order to help us to get closer to this reality.

# God's Original Design and Its Corruption

## Genesis 1–3

Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?

—Matthew 19:4

### Chapter Summary

We start at the very beginning, with the biblical account of creation (Genesis 1–3). This part of the Bible lays the foundation for God's purpose in creating man and woman unique and different and shows the serious consequences of the fall on the male-female relationship.

Genesis 1 tells the story of God's creation of the universe, culminating in the creation of humanity as male and female in God's image. Genesis 2, then, elaborates on God's purpose and manner of creating the man and the woman and the divine design expressed in distinct male-female roles: the man is to serve as the leader while the woman is to come alongside him as his partner, his suitable helper. The fact that God made the man first constitutes a deliberate act and important indication of the man's primary responsibility to God for the marriage relationship.

Genesis 3 tells the story of an ominous role reversal at the fall of humanity where the Serpent (Satan) approaches the woman, who leads the man to join her in transgressing their Creator's command. This turns biblical lines of authority on their head, according to which God rules over the man who is responsible to lead and care for his wife and together with her is given

charge of the animal world. Consequently, God holds each party accountable and pronounces a series of judgments on the Serpent, the woman, and the man.

### Key Points

1. Genesis 1–3, cited by both Jesus and Paul, provides the foundational biblical teaching on men's and women's identities and roles.
2. Genesis 1 makes clear that humanity, male and female, was created in God's image to rule the earth jointly as God's representatives.
3. Genesis 2 indicates that men and women have different roles or functions in the fulfillment of God's creation mandate to humanity to multiply and subdue the earth. The man is ultimately responsible for leading in the marriage and the fulfillment of God's mandate while the woman is his partner, his suitable helper. Different functions or roles don't convey superiority or inferiority.
4. The Old Testament bears witness to several ways in which humanity compromised God's design for marriage, such as polygamy, divorce, adultery, and homosexuality.
5. Even after the fall, God's ideal for men and women continues unabated and constitutes the abiding standard for male-female relationships.

**Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. What does it mean that humanity was made in God's image?
2. What was God's creation mandate to the man and the woman? How were they to fulfill it?
3. Do you think it's significant that the term *ādām* is used for the man as well as for the human race? Why or why not? What are the implications of this pattern of usage for our understanding of God's design for men and women?
4. How does Genesis 2 provide additional information as to how mankind was to fulfill God's creation mandate? According to Genesis 2, what are the different roles of the man and woman?
5. Discuss humanity's rebellion in Genesis 3 in relation to role distinctions. Are role distinctions only the result of the fall? Why or why not?
6. What can you learn from the way in which the woman and the man acted at the fall? How does the scenario at the fall reinforce God's original design?
7. What manifestations do you see in your life or in the lives of those around you of consequences of the fall on male-female relationships?

# Patriarchs, Kings, Priests, and Prophets

## Old Testament

[The king] is to read from it [the Lord's instruction] all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to observe all the words of this instruction, and to do these statutes.

—Deuteronomy 17:18–19 (HCSB)

### Chapter Summary

We continue our journey through Scripture by walking through the remainder of the Old Testament. Specifically, we take a closer look at the major ancient patterns of leadership in ancient Israel: patriarchs, kings, and priests. We also attempt to develop a better understanding of the role of prophet during the same period. It is certainly interesting and highly instructive to see how God's creation design is played out in Israel's history in and through the lives of key players such as Abraham, Moses, David, and many others. Notable women of this period are addressed as well. We also discuss the status of women in Old Testament times and the nature of leadership and probe the implications of these observations for our own lives as women and men today.

### Key Points

1. The Old Testament continues to exhibit a pattern of male leadership, including patriarchs, kings, and priests.
2. As a rule, women didn't occupy governing offices in ancient Israel (Deborah, Esther, and Athaliah are no real exceptions).
3. Both men and women served as prophets (female prophets included Miriam, Deborah, and Hul-

dah), though the writing prophets were all men. Prophets had no institutional authority to command people's compliance with their prophetic utterances.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. With Genesis 1 and 2 as God's standard for gender roles, what are some examples from the Old Testament that either affirm the beauty of God's original design or show how humankind deviated from God's plan?
2. What does a close study of the Old Testament's portrayal of patriarchs, kings, priests, and prophets reveal about men and women in leadership?
3. How do you assess the relevance of the examples of Deborah and Esther for contemporary discussions on women in leadership?
4. What can you learn from biblical examples such as Hannah, the mother of Samuel?
5. Is the charge justified that women are treated poorly in the Old Testament? Why or why not?
6. How has the study of the nature of leadership in the Old Testament helped you to better appreciate the nature of authority exercised by heads of households and leaders in ancient Israel? What, if any, are implications for today?

# What Did Jesus Do?

## Gospels

He went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women.

—Luke 8:1–2

### Chapter Summary

The New Testament picks up the biblical narrative with the four Gospels, which recount the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. While the Gospels display a great deal of similarity, each Gospel is a literary work in its own right, and some of the Gospel writers focus more than others on the roles of men and women. Several important questions will guide our study. What does Jesus's teaching about men and women and his dealings with them contribute to the overall teaching of Scripture on the subject? Did Jesus affirm the original creation order or replace it with his own teaching? How does Jesus compare to other first-century Jewish teachers in his attitude toward women? How do Jesus's teaching and conduct relate to later New Testament teaching? Our expectation is that because the message of Scripture is unified, the practice of Jesus and the early Christians, including Paul, will ultimately be found in harmony.

In this chapter, we discuss the significance of the maleness and humanity of Jesus as well as of Jesus's choice of twelve male apostles. We take a look at Jesus's interaction with various men and women that are narrated in the biblical Gospels. This is highly instructive, as it gives us a feel for

how Jesus practiced and taught on the subject of male-female roles and identity. We also try to discern the respective emphasis on male-female relationships in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and take inventory of the contribution of the Gospels to our understanding of the Bible's teaching on what it means to be a man or woman in God's plan.

### Key Points

1. Jesus appointed twelve men to form the core leadership group for his new messianic community, the church.
2. Jesus treated women consistently with respect, dignity, and compassion and allowed them to learn from him as his disciples.
3. Jesus encouraged the participation of a few devoted women followers in his mission. These women showed their loyalty to him up to the cross and beyond.
4. Jesus affirmed the continuity of God's original design for men and women in Genesis 1–3.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What conclusions do you draw from the relevant Scripture passages cited on men and women from

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- the Gospels? Do you agree or disagree with the implications drawn above, and why or why not?
2. What's the significance of Jesus's maleness, and what are the implications of his maleness for our discussion of male-female identities and relationships in this chapter and the entire book?
  3. What's the significance of Jesus's choice of twelve men as apostles? What explanations for this choice have been advanced by those who question the significance of this fact?
  4. Which Gospel writer gives the most attention to women, and why?
  5. What kinds of men did Jesus choose as leaders? How does this help you understand God's desire for male leaders in your church?
  6. What can pastors do today to underscore that the gospel equally extends to men and women, rich and poor, black and white, young and old?

# What Did the Early Church Do?

## Acts

All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

—Acts 1:14

### Chapter Summary

The book of Acts features a large number of men whose lives intersect the history of the early church at one time or another. Our survey focuses primarily on significant members of the Pauline circle. Both the book of Acts and Paul's letters make clear that the apostle gathered around himself a circle of faithful men, who were his coworkers and part of heading up the Pauline mission. In addition, Acts continues Luke's special emphasis on women, showing how they were included as active participants in the church. We look at several inspiring Christian women such as Dorcas, Mary the mother of John Mark, Lydia, and Priscilla and see what we can learn from the men and women featured in the book of Acts with regard to our own ministry in the local church and in missions today.

### Key Points

1. The pattern of male leadership, which is characteristic of the Old Testament and was perpetuated in Jesus's appointment of the Twelve, continued in the early church as exemplified by the men making up the Pauline circle.
2. The book of Acts continues Luke's special emphasis on women, showing women's active participa-

tion in the mission of the early church in a variety of ways (praying, witnessing, good works, targets of persecution), but without any clear indication of a change in the church's approach to women in leadership.

3. The woman mentioned most prominently in Acts, Priscilla, helped her husband, Aquila, to instruct Apollos in private, which indicates her significant partnership with Aquila in ministry (but doesn't show her in a pastoral role or position of local church oversight).
4. The reference to women as well as men prophesying in Acts 2 as well as Philip's prophesying daughters illustrate how women in both Testaments prophesied in the context of the body of believers (note, however, that "prophet" was probably not an authoritative church office).
5. The references to women in Acts indicate that women were integrally involved in the early church's witness and ministry. At the same time, there's no reference to female pastors or elders.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What are some examples of the way in which Luke continues in the book of Acts his special emphasis on women ?

2. What are some important considerations to keep in mind when discussing the role of Priscilla in the early church, and what was her likely role?
3. Which passage earlier in the book of Acts do Philip's four prophesying daughters illustrate, and what is the significance of this reference?
4. What must be kept in mind when discussing the men and women mentioned in the Pauline mission? What can we learn from these references, and how are they significant for understanding men's and women's roles in the church today?

# Paul's Message to the Churches

## First Ten Letters

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

—Galatians 3:28

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. . . . Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

—Ephesians 5:22–25

### Chapter Summary

As we continue our quest to discern the biblical teaching on what it means to be a man or woman according to God's design, we need to remember that the New Testament teaching on male and female identities and roles is firmly grounded in the creation narrative. While Paul and the other New Testament writers apply these foundational passages to Christian men and women in the church, they do not fundamentally change God's original design but rather develop it and extend it in a way that is faithful to the Old Testament teaching. God's image, they claim, which was imprinted on humanity as male and female in the beginning, and which was distorted at the fall, is now, in Christ, being restored to its original beauty, wisdom, goodness, and glory. God's original design does not need to be improved; it needs only to be restored, like an ancient masterpiece that has lost some of its beautiful original colors to the ravages of time.

In this chapter, we continue our journey to

see how Paul's writings contribute to our understanding of the biblical theology of manhood and womanhood. We proceed in chronological order of writing. Specifically, we look at four Pauline passages that have featured prominently in the debate on men's and women's roles in the church: (1) Galatians 3:28, where Paul teaches that in Christ there is neither male nor female but all are one in Christ; (2) 1 Corinthians 11:2–16, where the apostle discusses head coverings as a sign of women's submission to male authority in the church; (3) 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36, which deals with the evaluation of prophecies; and (4) Ephesians 5:21–33, the foremost passage on marriage in Paul's writings and in the New Testament where Paul speaks of husbands' headship and wives' submission.

### Key Points

1. Galatians 3:28 teaches that it doesn't matter whether a person is a Jew or a Gentile, a slave or a free person, or a man or a woman when

it comes to salvation and thus church membership. The passage doesn't address the question of church leadership roles, much less the equality of men and women in this regard.

2. First Corinthians 11:2–16 teaches that women may participate in praying and prophesying in church under male spiritual leadership and authority. While the principle of headship and submission is abiding, the cultural expression of submission to authority (such as first-century head coverings) may vary.
3. First Corinthians 14:33b–36 most likely teaches that women shouldn't participate in the authoritative function of evaluating prophecy in settings of public worship.
4. Ephesians 5:21–32 calls on wives to submit to their husbands and on husbands to love their wives. The word translated "head" (*kephalē*) conveys the sense of "authority" rather than "source." The earlier use of *kephalē* in Ephesians clearly supports an authoritative sense. Rather than teaching mutual submission, the passage suggests that the submission in view in marriage is from one group to another (wives to husbands; also children to parents, slaves to masters).

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Does Galatians 3:28 say anything relevant concerning male and female gender roles? If so, what is it? If not, what is Paul talking about?
2. Discuss the relationship between underlying principle and cultural expression in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16. What may be some culturally legitimate ways to express Paul's teaching in today's church?
3. What does the Greek word for "head" (*kephalē*) signify throughout the New Testament? How do we know this?
4. What are the three most important passages that set the larger and immediate context for interpreting Ephesians 5:21–33, and what is their significance?
5. How will Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians likely be received in today's culture? How has Paul's teaching on male-female roles been misrepresented or misunderstood?
6. How does Paul's teaching in this passage shape your understanding of biblical marital roles? If married, how can you live out Paul's instructions for wives and husbands in Ephesians 5:21–33?

# Paul's Legacy

## Letters to Timothy and Titus

I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man. . . . Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife.

—1 Timothy 2:12; 3:2

Train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

—Titus 2:4-5

### Chapter Summary

We continue our journey by looking at the primary passages in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus that relate directly to our subject, singling out the following six passages for closer attention: (1) 1 Timothy 2:12, where Paul addresses the issue of women teaching or having authority over men in the church; (2) 1 Timothy 2:15, which speaks to women's God-given family and domestic responsibilities; (3) 1 Timothy 3:2 and 12, stipulating that church leaders be faithful husbands; (4) 1 Timothy 3:4-5, requiring that church leaders manage their own households well; (5) 1 Timothy 3:11, which in the context of establishing qualifications for office holders in the church provides instructions on women deacons or deacons' wives; and (6) Titus 2:3-5, which addresses the need for older women in the church to train young women.

Along the way, we deal with questions such as: Should women teach and exercise authority in the

local church? What does Scripture teach regarding female elders or deacons? Are there biblical principles we can use to assess whether it is advisable for women to work outside the home in a given situation? What are scriptural requirements for church leaders? It is clear that Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus contain a wealth of information that is highly relevant for men and women in the church today.

### Key Points

1. First Timothy 2:12 indicates that Paul didn't allow women to serve as elders or overseers, including pastor-teachers, in local churches.
2. In 1 Timothy 2:15, "save" likely doesn't refer to salvation in our traditional, religious sense but rather to spiritual preservation, and "childbearing" most likely refers to a woman's broader domestic sphere; so a woman is understood to be protected spiritually by committing herself to and living out her role in the family and domestic sphere.

3. The “one-wife husband” requirement of church leaders in 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6 refers to marital faithfulness and isn’t directly aimed at addressing single, divorced, or polygamous candidates for elder, so candidates for church office must be examined as to their present faithfulness in marriage.
4. First Timothy 3:11 may refer to female deacons, a nonteaching, nonauthoritative, servant role, which the early church likely practiced (e.g., Phoebe); if so, women are biblically permitted to serve as deaconesses. Since this is a servant role, churches are free to encourage qualified women in this regard without compromising scriptural guidelines for male leadership.
5. Titus 2:3–5 contains instructions for older women in the church to train and mentor young women, particularly in their relationship to their husbands, children, and role in the home.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What is Paul’s main point in 1 Timothy 2:12? In what ways has this verse been reinterpreted, and what are some ways to answer these interpretations?
2. How do you think 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 should be translated? Does this interpretation challenge or affirm your original understanding of the verses?
3. What are some arguments for interpreting 1 Timothy 3:11 as referring to female deacons or deacons’ wives, respectively? Is this convincing in light of Romans 16:1? Does this interpretation challenge or affirm your original understanding of the verses?
4. How might your church better implement Paul’s instructions in 1 Timothy 3:11?
5. How might your church better implement Paul’s instructions in Titus 2:3–5?

# The Rest of the Story

## Other New Testament Teaching

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

—1 Peter 3:7

### Chapter Summary

Most biblically based discussions of the roles of men and women focus on the teaching of the apostle Paul. In addition, people may look at gender roles in the Old Testament—particularly, notable women such as Deborah or Esther—as well as consider Jesus’s approach to women and the practice of the early church according to Acts. Very seldom do interpreters consider the possible contribution of the General Epistles or of the book of Revelation to the question at hand.

While understandable, this focus on the major biblical voices and the neglect of what might be considered minor voices (i.e., the General Epistles and Revelation) is unfortunate, because a study of these latter writings yields some fruitful and unexpected returns. The General Epistles and Revelation do contribute to our understanding of the biblical teaching on the roles of men and women according to God’s design. Do these authors concur with previous writers?

### Key Points

1. Hebrews presents Jesus, the Son, in continuity with male leaders in Old Testament history such as Moses, Joshua, and the high priests. Two women, Sarah and Rahab, are included along with prominent Old Testament male characters in the “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11 because they trusted God’s promise.
2. James, similar to Hebrews, uses Old Testament characters as examples, whether men such as Abraham, Job, and Elijah or women such as Rahab. The continued use of the term “elders” (*presbyteroi*) for male leaders in James 5:14 indicates continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church.
3. First Peter 3:1–7 makes clear that the principles of submission and authority discussed by Paul were held broadly by the earliest Christians, including Peter. First Peter 5 confirms the pattern of a plurality of male elders, who are also called “shepherds” and “overseers.”
4. Second Peter draws an explicit connection between the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles, showing God’s continual plan in revealing himself through his appointed spokesmen.
5. John’s first epistle opens with a reference to apostolic eyewitness testimony (all apostles, i.e., the Twelve, were male). The church leaders mentioned in 3 John are all male (such as Gaius and Demetrius).

6. The author of 2 and 3 John—the apostle John—refers to himself as “the elder” (conveying advanced age as well as authority), while the recipient churches are metaphorically called “the elect lady” and her children, personifying the church as a woman without implications as to the gender of church leaders.
7. The book of Revelation affirms the pattern of male leadership in both Testaments by symbolically linking the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. Israel, the unbelieving world, and the church are all symbolically depicted as women, drawing on the images of a woman giving birth and of a bride joyfully submitting to her husband.

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. Have you ever considered the possible contribution of the General Epistles and Revelation to the biblical theology of manhood and womanhood? Why or why not?
2. What are some of the opportunities and challenges that come with a wife's submission to her unbelieving husband (see 1 Pet. 3:1–2)? Are you in this position? If not, do you know others who are, and if so, what can you learn from their situation?
3. As a woman, do you resonate with the biblical teaching that women's primary focus should be on their inner beauty rather than on external attractiveness? What are ways to nuance this biblical teaching, and how can it be applied specifically by women today?
4. As a husband, do you treat your wife habitually with sensitivity with regard to her femininity? Do you treat her with respect in light of the fact that she is your fellow heir of eternal life? Do you ever pray with your wife? And how can you grow in this area?
5. How would you summarize the respective contributions of Hebrews; James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; Jude; and Revelation to the subject at hand? In which ways do these writings cohere with and confirm the teaching of Scripture regarding God's design for men and women elsewhere?
6. What's one specific passage in the General Epistles or Revelation that you purpose to apply in your own life as you live out God's design for you as man or woman?
7. How would you summarize the biblical teaching on God's design for man and woman from Genesis to Revelation? Do you agree that Scripture's teaching on the subject is consistent and coherent, or do you perceive any tension or contradiction?

# God's Design Lived Out Today

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

—James 1:22–25

## Chapter Summary

We've surveyed the scriptural teaching on our topic and briefly summarized our major findings. We've connected the dots in a way that we believe is both coherent and consistent. But if we stop there—if we know what Scripture teaches on a particular subject but then fail to do it—our efforts have been in vain.

How do we apply what we've learned in this book? In order to do this, we need to talk about the ins and outs of application. For those who consider Scripture authoritative, affirmations of the truth and commands given in it are binding. We're not at liberty to make decisions that conflict with or disregard the biblical teaching. For example, the Bible issues clear instructions on divorce, and though we may find ourselves in marital difficulty, we must do everything we can to sustain the marriage, balancing all the relevant concerns appropriately. We're given other permanent principles in Scripture to adhere to. At the same time, it's not always easy to take what Scripture says and just "do it."

In light of the complexity of applying on a personal level the teaching of Scripture on God's design for men and women, we talk about some

practical ways in which men and women can embark together on mission for God. We also discuss what it means for the church to be the family or household of God and consider what churches can do to help and strengthen families and to help men and women as individuals live out their God-given roles. Along with this, we take up several other important application issues, such as: What if I'm single? And: What about women in the workplace or in political office? We may not always have the final answer to all these questions, but we want to be sure that we make those kinds of decisions in light of biblical principles.

## Key Points

1. Men and women are created in God's image to be partners on mission for God. Scripture consistently reveals a pattern of male leadership in the home and the church. Women are complementary partners, confidants, and advisors.
2. Application of the biblical teaching on this topic is sometimes complex and involves a process of understanding the text through: (1) identifying the intended meaning of the author for the original recipients; (2) identifying the specificity of the teaching in the original context; (3) establishing

a universal timeless principle, if possible; (4) determining a specific contemporary application in light of four components: cultural, personal, circumstantial, and ethical.

3. The household or family of God is the pattern for the church to emulate in which believers are related to one another spiritually as members of the same family and male-female roles are to be lived out in the context of natural families.
4. Church leaders should strive to equip families to be worshiping communities that provide a context for the intentional ministries of mentoring and discipleship in the church. Mature men should disciple younger men, and mature women should invest in younger women.
5. Single believers, like those who are married, are called to live out their male or female identity in their natural family ties and in the local church, the spiritual "family of God."
6. Biblical roles and activities of men include worshiper, disciple, witness, husband, father, leader, provider, and protector. Qualified men may also serve as elder or deacon.
7. Biblical roles and activities of women include worshiper, disciple, witness, wife, and mother. Qualified women may also serve as deaconess.
8. True masculinity and femininity are grounded in a man's or woman's underlying God-given pur-

pose and roles. We should be careful to avoid stereotypes of masculinity and femininity that owe more to cultural perceptions than to biblical guidelines.

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. What steps can you take to begin putting into practice in your home and in the church what you are learning from reading this book?
2. What changes need to be made in your marriage and family in order to live out God's design for man and woman?
3. How do you plan to pass on these truths to your daughters and sons? Men, how will you begin or continue to grow as a disciple of Christ and to lead your family to become a worshiping community?
4. Women, what can you do to grow as a disciple and live out your God-given role more fully? How can you encourage your husband to do the same?
5. As a married couple, do you need to reevaluate your lifestyle choices to make sure that you're able to honor God in the way both husband and wife live out their God-given responsibilities?
6. Singles, how does all of this apply to you right now? How will you live out your masculinity or your femininity in your personal life and in the church?

## Appendix 1

# The Three Waves

## Women's History Survey

### Appendix Summary

There's no question that feminism—a movement concerned with the advancement of women's rights and with the achievement of women's complete parity with men in society, the home, and the church—has had many positive results since its inception almost two centuries ago. Women's status and experience in the Western world, in particular, have been altered for the better in many ways, ending discrimination in various spheres of life through newly instituted legislation and reform. In this way, justice has been served, and women have been lifted from second-class status to genuine equality with men in many ways. At the same time, Bible-believing Christians have come to ask themselves how this massive movement of feminism in its various phases relates to what Scripture teaches on the identity and roles of men and women. In this session, we'll look at the successive waves of the feminist movement in order to canvass the context for our interpretation of gender-related passages in Scripture.

### Key Points

1. Our identity as male and female must inevitably be lived out in the context of the culture in which we live, a culture that typically rejects what Scripture teaches on biblical manhood and womanhood.
2. It's helpful to understand the impact of feminism on our culture in order to identify its past and present influence on male-female roles in the family and in the church. Feminism's rise came in three major waves: the first from the 1830s to 1920, the second from the 1960s to the 1990s, and the third from the 1990s to the present.
3. Except for secular feminists, who exist primarily outside the church and don't address Scripture at all, modern feminists who use Scripture to define male-female roles differ in their approach. They fall into three basic categories: radical (rejection of Scripture), reformist (revision of Scripture), and evangelical (high view of Scripture).
4. Evangelical feminists, while professing a high view of Scripture, nonetheless share certain affinities in method as well as basic belief with other feminists.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What is your assessment of the life story of some of the architects of the feminist movement? Take one feminist from each wave of feminism and show how a given feminist's life story epitomizes that particular wave of feminism as a whole.
2. How do you assess the legacy of feminism for women (and men) today? Which positive and negative contributions can you identify?
3. How has feminism impacted you, your family, and those around you? Do you know people who espouse or lean toward feminism? Have you had a chance to talk with them about this topic, or

would you like to talk with them now after reading this book? If so, what will you say to them?

4. How do the various kinds of social and religious feminism view and treat the Bible? What about the satirical variety?
5. How should we engage and interact with individuals from each of these groups?

## Appendix 2

# The Rules of the Game

## Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology

### Appendix Summary

Here we discuss important ground rules for studying the biblical teaching on male–female roles and identity. Specifically, we look at hermeneutics and biblical theology. The overarching principle in biblical interpretation, within the overall framework of pursuing authorial intent, is this: interpret every passage in its proper context. Context can be divided into three types: historical, literary, and theological. The historical context has to do with the background of a particular book and answers questions such as: Who wrote the book and when, where, and why? The literary context indicates the placement and function of particular words and sentences within the larger framework of the entire text. The theological aspect of interpretation requires that we seek to understand a particular passage in terms of the theology of a particular author or book within the overall teaching of the larger biblical canon (biblical theology).

### Key Points

1. Hermeneutics is the science and art of interpretation of a text with the goal of determining the biblical author's original meaning.
2. Interpreting the Bible involves the study of a given passage in its individual historical, literary, and theological contexts in dependence on the illumination of the Holy Spirit.
3. Biblical theology seeks to ascertain the unified biblical teaching on a particular topic such as

manhood and womanhood by tracing the development of the topic in various biblical books across the entire Bible.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What is the proper goal of hermeneutics? Is it possible to attain this goal, and if so, how?
2. Why is context so important for accurate interpretation? Give some examples of what kind of relevant information might be included in each of a text's three primary contexts: historical, literary, and theological.
3. How does a biblical-theological analysis differ from the study of individual verses? What is the benefit of a biblical-theological approach to our subject?
4. Is there anything you can take away and apply from this appendix in the way in which you habitually study Scripture in your personal or devotional life?

## Appendix 3

# Proceed with Caution

## Special Issues in Interpreting Gender Passages

### Appendix Summary

In this appendix we take a closer look at several important, more advanced hermeneutical issues: (1) three general overarching hermeneutical principles (a listening hermeneutic, the two horizons of Scripture, and the need for interpretive restraint); (2) six particular interpretive issues related to the interpretation of gender-related passages in Scripture (reconstructed history, epistemology, the role of the reader, the biblical canon, patriarchy, and evangelicalism vs. fundamentalism); and (3) six common hermeneutical fallacies in dealing with biblical gender passages (invalid distinctions, setting the Testaments in conflict, questionable presuppositions, improper use of background data, unlikely word meanings, and improper trajectories).

### Key Points

1. Special hermeneutical issues related to feminism and the interpretation of gender passages include the reconstruction of history, epistemology, the role of the reader, the biblical canon, the alleged patriarchal nature of Scripture, and the difference between evangelicalism and fundamentalism.
2. Hermeneutical pitfalls in feminist interpretation include drawing invalid distinctions, interpreting the Old Testament apart from the New, questionable presuppositions, improper use of historical background material, and drawing on unlikely word meanings.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Which one of the particular issues raised by feminists seems most difficult to address and why?
2. Do any of the concerns raised by feminists resonate with you, and if so, which ones and why?
3. Do you disagree with anything said in appendix 3? If so, elaborate and discuss.
4. Have you heard before now any arguments from Scripture that fall into one or more of the hermeneutical fallacies discussed?
5. How is appendix 3 helpful in your study of gender-related passages in Scripture?