

KEVIN DEYOUNG

MEN AND WOMEN

IN THE

CHURCH

A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction

“I expect that this book—written clearly and wisely on many topics in a brief space—will now become the first book I recommend on men and women in the church. Even where I might not agree with every conclusion, all of the positions are represented fairly. Help yourself and your church: read this book and get some copies for others.”

Mark Dever, Pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church; President,
9marks.org

“Kevin DeYoung set out to write a book about the divinely designed complementarity of men and women that had exegetical integrity, used minimal technical jargon, and was weightier than a pamphlet and lighter than a doorstop. He has done just that and much more. *Men and Women in the Church* is readable, accessible, and—despite its brevity—covers all the main texts and common questions. It is an excellent introduction to the goodness of the Bible’s teaching about men and women, and about how to live faithfully today.”

Claire Smith, New Testament scholar; author, *God’s Good Design: What the Bible Really Says about Men and Women*

“This is the first book I will recommend to those who want to study what the Scriptures teach about the roles of men and women both in marriage and in the church. In our busy lives it is difficult to find time to read, but here is a concise survey that can be read in an evening. Don’t be fooled by the size. The book is vintage DeYoung and is packed with solid exegesis and faithful theology. I was amazed at how much wisdom is packed into this short book. Everything in the book is helpful, but the practical application section alone is worth the price of the book.”

Thomas R. Schreiner, James Buchanan Harrison Professor of
New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological
Seminary

“Kevin DeYoung engages forthrightly with the most relevant scriptural texts on men and women in the church, always eager to help us see and understand not only what God is saying in the text but also *why* what God says is for our good. He doesn’t avoid hard questions, nor does he apologize or squirm because God did things the way he did. In this book, you are invited to acknowledge that what God has said and done in making men and women for particular purposes is not only real, but good.”

Abigail Dodds, author, *(A) Typical Woman and Bread of Life*

“This book does not disappoint. It brings the discussion up to date and deals forthrightly and biblically with a number of current challenges to the Bible’s teaching about men and women in the church and in the home. Kevin DeYoung’s clear, biblical exposition and engaging style make this a joy to read. I cannot recommend this book highly enough.”

Denny Burk, Professor of Biblical Studies, Boyce College; author, *What Is the Meaning of Sex?*

Men and Women in the Church

Other Crossway Books by Kevin DeYoung

The Biggest Story: How the Snake Crusher Brings Us Back to the Garden
(2015)

The Biggest Story ABC (2017)

Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem
(2013)

Don't Call It a Comeback: The Old Faith for a New Day (editor; 2011)

*Grace Defined and Defended: What a 400-Year-Old Confession Teaches Us
about Sin, Salvation, and the Sovereignty of God* (2019)

*The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the
Pursuit of God* (2012)

*Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and
Enough, and What That Means for You and Me* (2014)

*The Ten Commandments: What They Mean, Why They Matter, and Why
We Should Obey Them* (2018)

What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality? (2015)

*What Is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice,
Shalom, and the Great Commission* (coauthor; 2011)

Men and Women in the Church

A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction

Kevin DeYoung

 **CROSSWAY**[®]
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Men and Women in the Church: A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction

Copyright © 2021 by Kevin DeYoung

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law. Crossway® is a registered trademark in the United States of America.

Published in association with the literary agency of Wolgemuth & Associates, Inc.

Cover design: Darren Welch

First printing 2021

Printed in the United States of America

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are from *The New American Standard Bible*®. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, a Division of Tyndale House Ministries, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NRSV are from *the New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked RSV are from *the Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-6653-0

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-6656-1

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-6654-7

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-6655-4

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: DeYoung, Kevin, author.

Title: Men and women in the church : a short, biblical, practical introduction / Kevin DeYoung.

Description: Wheaton, Illinois : Crossway, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020036376 (print) | LCCN 2020036377 (ebook) | ISBN 9781433566530

(trade paperback) | ISBN 9781433566547 (pdf) | ISBN 9781433566554 (mobipocket) |

ISBN 9781433566561 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Sex role--Biblical teaching. | Sex role--Religious aspects--Christianity. | Men (Christian theology) | Women--Religious aspects--Christianity.

Classification: LCC BS680.S53 D4 2021 (print) | LCC BS680.S53 (ebook) | DDC 261.8/357--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020036376>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020036377>

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

BP 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Trisha

“For better, for worse”—and you make everything better.

Contents

Introduction: What If? How Come? Where Are
We Going? 11

PART 1: BIBLICAL EXPLORATION

- 1 A Very Good Place to Start (Genesis 1–3) 23
- 2 Patterns That Preach (Old Testament Survey) 35
- 3 Revolution and Repetition (Jesus and the Gospels) 43
- 4 Of Heads and Hair (1 Corinthians 11:2–16; 14:33–35) 49
- 5 A Marriage Made in Heaven (Ephesians 5:22–33) 63
- 6 The Heart of the Matter (1 Timothy 2:8–15) 75
- 7 Leaders, Servants, and Life Together (1 Timothy 3:1–13) 89

PART 2: QUESTIONS AND APPLICATIONS

- 8 Common Objections 101
- 9 Growing Up as Boys and Girls 117
- 10 Following Christ as Men and Women 131

Appendix: Should Complementarian Churches Allow a Woman
to Give the Sunday Sermon? 139

Notes 153

General Index 161

Scripture Index 167

Introduction

What If? How Come?

Where Are We Going?

WE GET SO USED TO the way things are that we rarely stop to consider how things could have been drastically different.

Kaiser Wilhelm II was the king of Prussia and the last German emperor. Reigning from June 1888 to November 1918, Wilhelm was an ambitious, volatile, and aggressive ruler whose policies in Europe were partly to blame for World War I.

In 1889, when Wilhelm had barely been on the throne for a year, a special event was taking place at Berlin's Charlottenburg Race Course: Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* show. The show had arrived from America and was touring all over Europe. At one point in the show, Annie Oakley announced that she was going to shoot the ashes off of a cigar with her Colt .45. Then, as was her custom, she asked if anyone from the audience wanted to volunteer to hold the cigar. The question was meant as a joke. People were supposed to laugh, and then, when no one came

forward, Annie would have her husband hold the cigar just like he always did.

But this time, at the Berlin race course, after Annie made the humorous announcement, an important man from the royal box walked into the arena and volunteered to hold the cigar. It was Kaiser Wilhelm. Some German policemen tried to stop him, but he waved them off. With a mixture of hubris, courage, and stupidity, Wilhelm insisted on holding the cigar. Annie Oakley couldn't back out now, so she paced off her usual distance and prepared to shoot.

And what happened next? According to one historian: "Sweating profusely under her buckskin, and regretful that she had consumed more than her usual amount of whiskey the night before, Annie raised her Colt, took aim, and blew away Wilhelm's ashes."¹ The same historian goes on to wonder how the world might have been different if she had missed the cigar and creased the Kaiser's head instead. Perhaps an entire world war would have been avoided.

Years later, after the First World War began, Annie Oakley wrote to Wilhelm asking if she could have a second shot. He never replied.

The Way Things Are (and Were Designed to Be)

The story above comes from *What If?*—an aptly titled book full of counterfactual history. Instead of analyzing what took place and why, in counterfactual history scholars imagine what might have been. What if Alexander the Great had lived to be an old man? What if the Spanish Armada had defeated the English? What if the fog had not rolled in, allowing George Washington's

army to escape Brooklyn after being badly beaten at the Battle of Long Island? What if the Soviets had invaded Japan at the close of World War II? We get so used to the way things are that we rarely consider how things could have been drastically different.

What is true for history is true for life more generally. Is there any one aspect of human life that has affected every other aspect of human life more than being male or female? While my life is certainly not reducible to being a man, everything about my life is shaped by the fact that I am male, not female. My wife's whole life is shaped by being a woman and not a man. Each of my nine children (yes, we wanted to start our own baseball team) are undeniably and monumentally shaped by being boys or girls. And yet how often do we stop to think that it didn't *have* to be this way? God didn't have to make two different kinds of human being. He didn't have to make us so that men and women, on average, come in different shapes and sizes and grow hair in different places and often think and feel in different ways. God could have propagated the human race in some other way besides the differentiated pair of male and female. He could have made Adam sufficient without an Eve. Or he could have made Eve without an Adam. But God decided to make not one man or one woman, or a group of men or a group of women; he made a man *and* a woman. The one feature of human existence that shapes life as much or more than any other—our biological sex—was God's choice.

In an ultimate sense, of course, the world had to be made the way it was, in accordance with the immutable will of God and as a necessary expression of his character. I'm not suggesting God made Adam and Eve by a roll of the dice. Actually, I'm reminding us of the opposite. This whole wonderful, beautiful, complicated

business of a two-sexed humanity was God's idea. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). The whole human race is, always has been, and will be for the rest of time, comprised of two differentiated and complementary sexes. This perpetual bifurcated ordering of humanity is not by accident or by caprice but by God's good design.

And why? What is at stake in God making us male and female? Nothing less than the gospel, that's all. The mystery of marriage is profound, Paul says, and it refers to Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32). "Mystery" in the New Testament sense refers to something hidden and then revealed. The Bible is saying that God created men and women—two different sexes—so that he might paint a living picture of the differentiated and complementary union of Christ and the church. Ephesians 5 may be about marriage, but we can't make sense of the underlying logic unless we note God's intentions in creating marriage as a gospel-shaped union between a differentiated and complementary pair. Any move to abolish all distinctions between men and women is a move (whether intentionally or not) to tear down the building blocks of redemption itself.

Men and women are not interchangeable. The man and the woman—in marriage especially, but in the rest of life as well—complement each other, meaning they are supposed to function according to a divine fitted-ness. This is in keeping with the ordering of the entire cosmos. Think about the complementary nature of creation itself. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). And that's not the only pairing in creation. We find other sorts of couples, like the sun and the moon, morn-

ing and evening, day and night, the sea and the dry land, and plants and animals, before reaching the climactic couple, a man and a woman. In every pairing, each part belongs with the other, but neither is interchangeable. It makes perfect sense that the coming together of heaven and earth in Revelation 21–22 is preceded by the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19. That God created us male and female has cosmic and enduring significance. From start to finish, the biblical storyline—and design of creation itself—depends upon the distinction between male and female as different from one another yet fitted each for the other.²

Simple Book, Simple Aim

So what is this book about? In simplest terms, this book is about the divinely designed complementarity of men and women as it applies to life in general and especially to ministry in the church.³

You may be thinking, “How can we possibly need another book on this subject?” And it’s true—much has been written on this topic over the last generation, some of it forgettable and some of it quite good.⁴ You should read the books. I don’t claim mine is the best of the bunch. What I can claim is that this book is shorter than the rest. We need books that give a comprehensive survey of biblical passages about men and women. We need books that engage with history, science, and philosophy as they relate to manhood and womanhood. We need books that deal explicitly with the challenges of gender confusion and toxic masculinity and secular feminism. There is a lot that can be said about sex and gender, and a lot that needs to be said.

This is your fair warning that I’m not trying to say everything, or even a small fraction of a lot.

I have a very specific audience in mind in writing this book: my congregation and others like it. Our church has a book nook in the corner of our main lobby. I have often wished for a book there that explained the Bible's teaching about men and women in the church in a way that the interested layperson could understand and in a size that he or she could read in a few hours. I have wished for a book that would argue its case without being argumentative; a book I could give to other pastors wrestling with this issue; and a book pastors could give to their elders, deacons, and trustees that they would actually read; a book that displays exegetical integrity with minimal technical jargon; a book weightier than a pamphlet but lighter than a doorstop. You'll have to decide if I've written such a book, but that is the book I set out to write.

A Personal Note and the Plan Ahead

As far as I know my own heart, this is not an axe-to-grind kind of book. Or, if I can mix my metaphors, I'm hoping to give you meat and potatoes, not fire-hot salsa. If you are among those who are looking for an introductory and non-angsty walk through the requisite biblical texts on men and women in the church, with an eye toward clarification and application, then this might be the book for you.

Having said that, I want to speak directly to two types of people. First, I want single people to know this is not a book about marriage. True, the chapter on Ephesians 5 is about marriage, and many of the patterns of God-given sexual difference find their clearest expression in marriage. And yet I'd be loathe for anyone to conclude that you can't *really* be manly or womanly unless you are married. By the same token, I hope no one concludes

that if we are single, the Bible doesn't *really* have a lot to say to us about being a man or a woman. As we will see, the fact that God created man as a plurality—male and female, a complementary pair—ought to shape not only how we conceive of marriage but how we conceive of ourselves.

Second, I want to say something to the men and women—no doubt, mostly women—who have been hurt in contexts where the truths I'm going to lay out in this book were affirmed. Oftentimes, the biggest hindrances to believing and resting in biblical truth are not objections of the mind but objections of the heart and of the eyes. It's one thing to be convinced that complementarian exegesis is correct; it's another to be sure that it is good. Like any biblical teaching, the truths about men and women can be misapplied, mishandled, or used as an excuse to mistreat others. This danger is especially poignant when the truths in question affirm the man as leader and head and the woman as helper and nurturer. The biblical pattern of male leadership is *never* an excuse for ignoring women, belittling women, overlooking the contributions of women, or abusing women in any way. The truest form of biblical complementarity calls on men to protect women, honor women, speak kindly and thoughtfully to women, and to find every appropriate way to learn from them and include them in life and ministry—in the home and in the church.

It's important for me to recognize that I've seen in my life mainly healthy gender dynamics. My parents love each other. My churches have been full of godly, intelligent, flourishing, strongly complementarian women. Most of my friends have very good marriages. Whatever I know to be true in my head about abuse or whatever I've seen of sin and dysfunction in marriages

in nearly twenty years of pastoral ministry, there's no doubt that it still *feels* deep in my psyche like most husbands are bound to be pretty good and most complementarian men are apt to be fundamentally decent. I don't have a bunch of stories of boneheaded complementarians. But I don't deny they are out there—men in our circles saying and doing awkward, offensive, or genuinely sinful things toward women in the church. That I don't see them doesn't make them unreal, and that other people have seen them does not make them ubiquitous. My point is we should all be aware that we tend to assume our experiences are normative and the divergent experiences of others are exceptional. This should make us quick to sympathize and slow to accuse.

So what *is* the most pressing issue facing the church today when it comes to men and women?

There is no scientific answer to that question. It may seem obvious to you that gender confusion is the big issue, or abuse or runaway feminism or a wrongheaded complementarianism or the worth of women or the war on boys. I would be foolish to say you aren't seeing what you think you are seeing. For all I know, you've been surrounded by male creeps your whole life. Our assessment of what surely everyone knows and what surely everyone must be warned against may be understandably different.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not calling for an easy intellectual relativism that says, "I guess we are all equally right (or wrong)." I'm suggesting that we should be honest—first of all with ourselves—about what we perceive to be the biggest dangers and why. In recognizing our own inclinations, hopefully we will be less likely to project the worst of the dangers we see upon those who rightfully see other dangers.

The Case to Be Made

I do not write this book hesitating between two opinions. I am a convinced complementarian. I know some people are tired of that word, *complementarian*, and you'll see me use the words *traditional* or *historic* as well. But there is something important about the word *complementarity* in all its forms. As we've already seen, it's hard to tell the story of the Bible without a word that communicates "different but fitting together." *Complementary*—though I cringe every time I have to text such a long word on my phone—is a good word toward that end. I'm not writing because I think everyone has to use the word. But we have to start somewhere, so I might as well tell you where I am coming from and where this book is going.

As a complementarian, I believe that God's design is for men to lead, serve, and protect, and that, in the church, women can thrive under this leadership as they too labor with biblical faithfulness and fidelity according to the wisdom and beauty of God's created order. It goes without saying that I hope to make a convincing case for the complementarian position. Authors do not write books unless they want to persuade people.

But besides convincing, I also hope my case is considerate. The Lord's servant "must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness" (2 Tim. 2:24–25). My aim is to treat others, whether in person or in writing, as I would want to be treated—fairly, honestly, and with respect. Even as I write, I see in my mind the faces of friends, family, and collaborators I love who don't see eye to eye with me on this issue—sometimes on first principles and

more often in practice. I may disagree with their position and even think they are wrong on important interpretive points, but I do not want to disparage their person or demean their sincerity in following Christ.

My overriding desire is to put into the hands of churches, leaders, and curious Christians a work that is intelligent and readable. In hopes of being an intelligent help for congregations, I work through the pertinent Scripture passages, including several chapters of fairly detailed exegesis, and a smattering of (transliterated) Greek and Hebrew words. In hopes of being readable, I have tried to be concise, brief, and informed of the current debates without getting bogged down in footnotes except where attribution is necessary.

Our road map is simple. We'll start with biblical exploration in part 1 and then move to questions and applications in part 2. Along the way I hope you will be convinced, as I am, that God made men and women not only to worship, serve, and obey him, but to worship, serve, and obey him *as* men and women.

PART 1

BIBLICAL
EXPLORATION

A Very Good Place to Start

Genesis 1–3

I'VE HEARD IT SAID that “all good theology starts in Genesis.” That’s not far off the mark. In Genesis, we see how God started things. We have the beginning of the story. In the first two chapters of Genesis, God gives us a stunning picture of paradise, a portrait of the good life—the way things were, the way they are supposed to be, and the way they will be again.

In Eden, all was very good. The natural world was good, with its striking beauty and peaceful cooperation. The creation of man—from the dust of the earth to the crown of creation—was good. Work was good. No broken tractors, no computer viruses, no coronaviruses, no thorns and thistles, no anxious deadlines, no cranky bosses, no incompetent employees, no power plays; just an honest day’s work under the smiling face of God. And the garden, as a kind of temple in which God’s presence dwelt, was good.

But even before the fall, even in this paradise, there was one thing which, if left undone, would not have been good: leaving man alone. That's what Genesis 2 tell us as it zooms in on Genesis 1:27 on the sixth day before the pronouncement of Genesis 1:31 at the close of the day.

We do not know that Adam was lonely or that he felt isolated. The text never suggests a psychologized problem. As we will see, the problem with Adam's aloneness was something else. But it was a problem. There is no record of the man complaining to God that he was alone. Instead, God himself declared that Adam's situation was not good (Gen. 2:18). Every other aspect of creation had its counterpart. The day had its sun, the night its moon, the waters its fish, the sky its birds, and the ground its animals, but the man did not have his helpmate. "So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man" (Gen. 2:21–22). This was very good.

Male and Female from the Beginning

The Bible gives us only two chapters on the creation of the world before the fall. If we're honest, most of us would like more information. Where exactly was the garden of Eden? What did it look like? What did it smell like? Were the days normal twenty-four-hour days? How old did Adam appear to be? How old did the trees appear to be? Were there mosquitoes? But of all the things we might want to know more clearly, it's worth noting what God *does* tell us about in some detail. He tells us quite a bit about the

man and the woman—how they are the same, how they are different, and how they were made for each other.

If we are to think rightly and feel rightly and embrace rightly what it means to be male and female, we need to appreciate that God doesn't give arbitrary rules for men and women to follow. Whatever "rules" there are for men and women in the church are never mere rules; they reflect the sort of differentiated and complementary image bearers God designed us to be from the beginning. Once we understand the first chapters of Genesis, and how God has embedded sexual differentiation and sexual union (in marriage) in the natural order of the created world, everything else we see in the Bible about being a man or being a woman makes more sense. All good theology starts in Genesis, but it never stops there.

The Start of It All

And how much do the opening chapters of Genesis really say about manhood and womanhood? I'll limit myself to fifteen observations.

First, the man and the woman were both created in the image of God. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Men and women, as distinct from all else in creation, are image bearers. We are like statues or icons placed in creation to testify to the world that God has dominion over this place. As image bearers, not to mention coheirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7), men and women possess equal worth and dignity. Eve was not a lesser creature. She was not an inferior being. Although God has revealed himself in masculine language (e.g., father, king,

husband), he is neither male nor female. To be faithful to God's revelation, we should speak of God only in the masculine terms he has given us, but to call God "Father" is not the same as saying God is a man (though he became a man in the incarnation). Maleness, therefore, is not a higher order of being than femaleness. Both men and women were made to represent God in the world.

Second, man has both singularity and plurality.¹ Humanity can be named singularly as *adam* ("man" not "woman"), but humanity is at the same time male and female. There is a "him" and a "them" (Gen. 1:27). The way the creation account spells out sexual difference is so obvious that we can miss its importance. God does not mention the difference of, say, height or hair color or temperament or gifting. The one identity marker emphasized at the beginning is maleness and femaleness.

Third, the man and the woman were given joint rule over creation. Together they were to fill the earth and subdue it. God blessed *them*, and God told *them* to have dominion over every living thing (Gen. 1:28).

Fourth, within this joint rule, the man and woman were given different tasks and created in different realms. "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). Adam was created outside of the garden and charged with cultivating it and protecting it, a protection under which the woman was meant to flourish. Eve was created within the garden, suggesting "a special relationship to the inner world of the Garden."² The creation mandate—filling the earth and subduing it—applies to both sexes, but asymmetrically. The man, endowed with greater biological strength, is fitted especially for tilling the soil and taming the garden, while the woman,

possessing within her the capacity to cultivate new life, is fitted especially for filling the earth and tending to the communal aspects of the garden.

Fifth, man was given the priest-like task of maintaining the holiness of the garden. To the man alone God gave the command: “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not” (Gen. 2:16–17). In working and keeping the garden (2:15), the man was responsible for establishing God’s command on the earth and guarding God’s moral boundaries. His obedience to this task would mean blessing, while his disobedience would mean death.

Sixth, man was created before the woman. Famously, Paul grounded his prohibition against women teaching in the church based on this order. “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim. 2:12–13). The point is not “first equals best,” as if God was picking sides for his kickball team. After all, God made blue jays and beavers and salamanders before he made man. The order matters because it indicates Adam’s position in the creation narrative as priest and protector and Eve’s position as coming under the man’s protection, made from his side and for his support.

Seventh, the woman was given as a helper to the man. Eve was created *from* man (Gen. 2:22)—equal in worth—and she was also created *for* man (2:20)—different in function. The male leadership, which the text hints at in Genesis 1:27 by calling male and female “man,” is spoken plainly in chapter 2 when Eve is given to Adam as his “helper” (2:18, 20). Being a helper carries no connotations of diminished worth or status; for God is

sometimes called the helper of Israel (Ex. 18:4; Pss. 33:20; 146:5). *Ezer* (helper) is a functional term, not a demeaning one. Just as God at times comes alongside to help his people, so the role of the woman in relationship to her husband is that of a helper. “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Cor. 11:8).

We tend to psychologize Adam’s aloneness and interpret “helper” along the lines of comfort and companionship. This is one possible aspect of the term. Calvin said Eve was God’s gift to Adam “to assist him to live well.” But “helper” cannot be divorced from the broader concerns of the creation mandate. It was not good for man to be alone because by himself he could not “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28). Here again we see the ordered complementarity of male and female. Another man could have helped Adam till the soil. Another man could have provided relational respite and energy for Adam. God could have gifted Adam a plow or a team of oxen or a fraternity of manly friends—all of which would have been useful, even delightful. But none would have been a helper fit for the crucial task of producing and rearing children. If mankind is to have dominion on the earth, there must be a man to work the garden and a woman to be his helpmate.

Eighth, the man was given the responsibility for naming every living creature. It is telling that Adam alone was given this exercise of dominion and that he was able to fulfill this responsibility prior to the creation of Eve. Twice Adam named the woman (2:23; 3:20), indicating his leadership. In receiving their names from Adam, the rest of the living creatures, including the woman, benefit from the man’s creative cultivation and authority.

Ninth, the man and the woman were created in different ways. Genesis 1 describes the making of male and female as a generic act of creation (1:27). In the zoom lens of Genesis 2, however, we see that God created each in its own way. The Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground (2:7), while the Lord God built the woman from the rib he had taken from the man. Not surprisingly, the man is tasked with tending to the health and vitality of the ground from which he came, while the woman is tasked with helping the man from whom she came. The way in which each was created suggests the special work they will do in the wider world—the man in the establishment of the external world of industry, and the woman in the nurture of the inner world of the family that will come from her as helpmate.

Tenth, the names “man” and “woman” suggest interdependence. In Genesis 2:23, Adam exclaimed, “She shall be called Woman [*ishah*], because she was taken out of Man [*ish*].” Providentially, our English words show the connection that is there in the Hebrew. We lose something deeply important in the awkward intersectional neologisms that turn *woman* into *womxn* and *women* into *womyn*. We lose all verbal recognition that the woman came from the man and that the man was irreversibly connected to the woman. “In the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman” (1 Cor. 11:11–12).

Eleventh, in marriage, the man leaves his family and holds fast to his wife. Given everything we’ve seen up to this point, we expect that the wife would leave her family and cling to her husband. Wasn’t he created first? Isn’t he the keeper of the garden and protector of all therein? Didn’t he exercise authority in naming the

woman? Surely the helper leaves her family to join her husband. But we are told the opposite, that the man shall leave his father and mother (Gen. 2:24). This makes sense when we realize that sexual differentiation is not about first place and second place, but about natural order and design. The inner world of the garden, radiating out from the family, is shaped by the help and nurture of the woman. Emotional intimacy and communion will be fostered and formed in a unique way by the woman. As such, in a relational sense (even if not in a geographic or legal sense), her familial order takes precedence over the man's.

Don't we see this reality even today? When a daughter gets married, you gain a son more than you lose a daughter. When a son gets married, you lose a son more than you gain a daughter. Not true across the board, of course. And yet even when both bride and groom come from healthy, loving families, the daughter almost always maintains her familial relationships better than the son. The Genesis account is not telling men to renounce their families of origin, but it is telling us something significant about the way relational bonds are typically formed and maintained through women.

Twelfth, the two came from one flesh and became one flesh. Eve was bone of Adam's bone and flesh of his flesh. Men and women are made of the same stuff and meant for each other, not so that one dissolves into the other, but that the two become one. Marriage must be, and can only be, between a man and a woman, because marriage is not just the union of two persons but the reunion of a complementary pair. As Calvin puts it, "Something was taken from Adam, in order that he might embrace, with greater benevolence, a part of himself." Adam may have lost a rib, but he

gained a far richer reward, “since he obtained a faithful associate of life; for he now saw himself, who had before been imperfect, rendered complete in his wife.”³

Thirteenth, Adam is reckoned as the head and representative of the couple. Adam is given the initial command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16–17). And even though Eve, tempted by the serpent, commits the initial crime, Adam is addressed first (3:9). The Lord called to the man and asked, “Where are you?” for Adam was the designated leader and representative. Romans 5 makes this indisputably clear: “Therefore, just as sin came into the world *through one man*, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (5:12). In other words, Adam, not Eve, was the federal head.

Fourteenth, the man and the woman experience the curse in different ways, each in their fundamental area of responsibility. In the fall—and subsequently as a result of the fall—the divinely designed complementarity of men and women is perverted. Eve, who was deceived into sin, did so acting independently of the man, while Adam abandoned his responsibilities as a leader (Gen. 3:6). He stood idly by while Eve sinned (3:1–5), followed her into sin (3:6), and then blamed God for giving him Eve in the first place (3:12). Adam’s sin was not only in disobeying God’s command (2:17), but also in throwing off his responsibility as familial head, playing the coward, and following his wife’s influence instead of God’s word.

So in the end, both are punished for their disobedience. For man, his unique domain—working the ground—is cursed (3:17). From now on, he will have thorns and thistles to deal with (3:18), and he will live by the sweat of his brow (3:19). For woman, her

unique domain—childbearing—will bear the effects of the curse (3:16a). From now on, the miracle and gift of physical birth will be attended with pain and suffering. Technically, only the snake and the ground are cursed, not the man and the woman, but all of creation bears the effects of the fall. Men and women are subjected to frustration in their unique spheres of responsibility.

Fifteenth, the relational wholeness between the man and the woman had been ruptured by the curse. God said to the woman, “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (3:16b NIV). The word *desire* there does not mean romantic desire, as if God cursed the woman by making her need a man. Rather, the desire is a desire for mastery. This is the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 4:7b (NIV): “Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.” That the meaning of *desire* in 3:16 is the same as the *desire* in 4:7 is clear from the obvious verbal parallel between the two verses:

3:16b. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. *w'el-ishek tishuqatek wehu yimshal-bak*

4:7b. It desires to have you, but you must rule over it. *w'elek teshuqatu w'atah timshal-bo*

Just as sin desired to have mastery over Cain, so the woman, tainted by sin, desires to have mastery over her husband. Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, God says to the man, you will get what you deserve, and she will try to master you (3:17).

The sinful husband, for his part, seeks to rule over his wife. Female subordination itself is not God's judgment on the woman.

As Gordon Wenham notes, the fact “that woman was made from man to be his helper and is twice named by man (2:23; 3:20) indicates his authority over her.” Consequently, Adam’s rule in verse 16 “represents harsh exploitative subjugation.”⁴ Wherever husbands are domineering or abusive toward their wives, this is not a reflection of God’s design but a sinister perversion of it. The marriage relationship, which was supposed to be marked by mutually beneficial headship and helping, becomes a fight over sinful rebellion and ruling. God designed sexual difference *for* one another; sin takes sexual difference and makes it *opposed* to one another.

Summary

The importance of the first three chapters of Genesis for understanding what it means to be male and female cannot be overstated. To be clear, Genesis does not give men and women their marching orders. There aren’t a lot of explicit oughts laid down for manhood and womanhood. What we have instead are a host of divine patterns and assumptions. Think creational capacities for men and women, not ironclad constraints. The man’s primary vocation is “naming, taming, dividing, and ruling.” The women’s primary vocation involves “filling, glorifying, generating, establishing communion, and bringing forth new life.”⁵ While it’s true that these callings find a unique and powerful expression in marriage, the lessons from Genesis 1–3 are not just for married couples. The opening chapters of the Bible establish the shape of sexual differentiation and complementarity that will be lived out, applied, and safeguarded in the rest of Scripture.

The phrase “biblical manhood and womanhood” has fallen on hard times, and perhaps some of the wounds have been self-inflicted. But at its best, biblical manhood and womanhood is about nothing less than the joyful appropriation of all that God meant for us to be in the garden, divinely fitted for working and helping, for protecting and flourishing, for leaving and cleaving, for filling the earth and subduing it. That’s what God saw at the close of the sixth day, and behold, it was very good.

*God made humanity male and female,
and recognizing this truth has never been more important.*

Created for one another yet distinct from each other, a man and a woman are not interchangeable—they are designed to function according to a divine fittedness. This design is ultimately a living picture of something greater: the different yet complementary union of Christ and his church.

In *Men and Women in the Church*, Kevin DeYoung clarifies and applies the biblical texts that reveal this divinely designed complementarity, showing how God made us to worship, serve, and obey him—in both life and ministry—as men and women.

“This is the first book I will recommend to those who want to study what the Scriptures teach about the roles of men and women both in marriage and the church. The book is vintage DeYoung and is packed with solid exegesis and faithful theology.”

THOMAS R. SCHREINER, James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“*Men and Women in the Church* is readable, accessible and—despite its brevity—covers all the main texts and common questions. It is an excellent introduction to the goodness of the Bible’s teaching about men and women, and about how to live faithfully today.”

CLAIRE SMITH, New Testament scholar; author, *God’s Good Design: What the Bible Really Says about Men and Women*

KEVIN DEYOUNG (PhD, University of Leicester) is the senior pastor at Christ Covenant Church in Matthews, North Carolina, and assistant professor of systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte. He serves as board chairman of the Gospel Coalition and blogs at *DeYoung, Restless, and Reformed*. He is the author of several books, including *Just Do Something*; *Crazy Busy*; and *The Biggest Story*. Kevin and his wife, Trisha, have nine children.