

~Mens' and womens' roles in the church meetings~

Note: *The following article is a fairly long one! Therefore, we have provided a "downloadable version" in PDF format if you should so choose. To download this article, please [click here](#).*

"Women in the Church-John Laundstein"

Preface

It is with reluctant anticipation that I write this paper. Let me explain. Every time I open God's Word I anticipate great things. I'm rarely disappointed-and when I am, I know the fault lies not with the One being sought, but the one doing the seeking.

I anticipate that as I write, and you read, we'll encounter great things-the very words and counsel of Yahweh from His Word. The truth of our sovereign, omniscient God! What could be greater?

Yet I'm also reluctant. It seems that most times I encounter the words of God in the Word of God, it stretches me. It makes me uncomfortable. I'm forced to make the choice of letting my presuppositions and preferences shape the way I understand His words, or letting His Word shape me. And I'm sure no less will be true for us as we look at God's words on this issue.

But I'm reluctant for other reasons as well.

We've just come out of a scholarly, challenging, thought-provoking series of sermons by Pastor Art on the roles of men and women in marriage and in the church. Like you, I was moved by his passion and the depth of his study. I appreciate his boldness in tackling this subject and challenging traditional views in light of his understanding of key passages of Scripture. And I respect him as a friend, co-laborer in the Gospel, and my pastor and leader. So many times he has opened up God's Word to us in ways that teach us, refresh us, and compel us to life-change. I praise God for the privilege of serving with him here at Maple Ridge Baptist and learning from him.

But I cannot agree with the egalitarian position on the roles of men and women-both in the home and in the church!

And so I'm reluctant to write what I feel I must write. In all candor, it feels uncomfortable, as an associate pastor of limited experience, to differ with the teaching of my Senior Pastor-a man of deep wisdom and life-long ministry experience.

So, before I progress, allow me to tell you where I'm coming from and why you're reading these words typed with bold yet hesitant fingers and a heavy heart.

To begin with, I'm writing this after many countless hours of prayer and study these past 7 months. Those hours in God's Word on this issue have humbled me. They have reminded me that I'm fallible-I make mistakes; and I don't have everything all figured out-even on this issue! But they've also reminded me that God, and therefore His Word, is infallible. I'm so glad of that, aren't you? So, as I studied, I determined to leave my presuppositions behind (as much as humanly possible) and let my infallible God plainly speak through His Word. With the Psalmist, I cried out, "I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands... teach me your decrees. Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will

meditate on your wonders. Direct me in the path of your commands." (Ps. 119:10, 26b-27, 35)

Have I "heard from God" on this issue? Yes! I've heard the words He inspired human authors to write in the Bible. If you've spent time reading the passages we've been studying as a church, so have you. But no, I didn't hear God say, "John, thanks for your sincere quest. Let me make this all clear for you..."

However, I became increasingly concerned as I sensed God's Word said something different than that which we've been encouraged to consider. And so, somewhere along the line, with the permission of the church board and Pastor Art, I made the decision to write this paper.

If I do my job in the pages that follow, I will not proclaim new, uncommon discoveries of meaning of the texts. Unique, "never-before-discovered" meanings are not my aim-nor should they be the aim of any student of the Bible. Rather, together we will seek to come to an understanding of what the biblical authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit intended their words to plainly mean.

One more word about why I have made the difficult decision to write this paper. So often I've heard the explanation that there's great scholars in both of the differing views on this issue. It's just a matter of what you believe the texts say. That doesn't sit well with me. I'm pretty convinced that God knew what He wanted to say, and what He wanted us to understand and live by! I believe the crucial difference in the views isn't what one interprets the texts to mean, but how one approaches interpretation in the first place. Because of this conviction, we'll start our journey down this road with a look at the Bible's own model of interpretation, and how that affects our understanding. Then we'll look at some solid principles to sound interpretation. I know it's a long road-but I challenge you to take it with me! This is one of those journeys that really needs to be taken from start to finish-so, before we look at the passages that speak to this issue, consider with me how God asks each of us to "be diligent to present (ourselves) approved to God, (workers) who do not need to be ashamed, correctly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15; emphasis mine).

Finally, if you're like me, you're convinced this is a pretty crucial issue for us as believers and as a church-so will you join me in prayer?

Heavenly Father, thank You so much that You created us in Your image. Thank You that You chose us before the foundation of the world to be Your children, Your church. And thank You for our differences-differences that teach us to rely more fully on You and that balance and stretch us. God, we desperately need Your wisdom and guidance as we approach this issue as a church. We need Your Holy Spirit's illumination as we study Your Word. Please lead us in the path we should go!

Father, it is my earnest prayer that both men and women will come away from this study feeling affirmed and encouraged to be all they can be in Your design for them. Please use these words not to build division but to foster a spirit of mutual love and unity in the body of Christ as we seek to bring glory to You by following Jesus fully and helping others to do the same. In the name of the One who brought us from death unto life, from darkness into light-in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Humbly in Christ,
John Laundstein

Section 1: Considering God's word

Falling--Twisting--Spinning--Frantic, gravity-defying contortions and mental scrambling.

The world has turned upside down! Or is it me? The roar of the river beneath me is drowned out by my heart's pounding and the adrenaline rushing to my brain. Where there had been a beautiful, serene sky there was now raging water and ominous, jagged rocks. The cold steel suddenly felt white-hot as it burned my hands, clenched in a death grip around the cable, knuckles turning white to match the foaming water some thirty feet below.

This really hadn't been that good of an idea after all, I thought! I was suspended halfway across the rain-swollen headwaters of the Alouette River just a few hundred meters before cement and steel at the far end of the valley did their job and turned the river into a lake. Climbing Mt. Robie Reid had seemed like a rewarding challenge-but I hadn't counted on this!

"The trail isn't kept up," the old-timer who had shared his knowledge of the mountain with me had cautioned, "so you'll have to be careful." I thought I had been! Apparently the two steel cables that stretched across the chasm hadn't been maintained either! Just as I had neared the mid-point of the "bridge", the top cable shifted, producing enough slack for me to invert! Needless to say, many heartfelt prayers were issued from my lips in rapid succession as my friend worked at righting the cables, eventually succeeding and allowing us to continue our adventure.

On the north side of the river, the trail became virtually non-existent. We hacked our way thru the blackberries, devil's club and brush alder, sometimes losing the way and sometimes making our own as the dense undergrowth obscured our view of where we were headed. As the forest began to thin out, every opening looked like a potential path.

We had a compass and a map, but we needed some way of interpreting that two-dimensional piece of paper so it made sense in the three-dimensional forest. We needed a guidebook that said, "Turn here," or "Watch for this landmark," or, as my bridge-incident attests, "Be sure to take the slack out of the cables before proceeding!"

Life's a lot like that sometimes, isn't it? The right direction to head in isn't always very clear! We find ourselves hacking through issues and challenges as the world around us obscures our view of the glorious mountaintop. There are so many paths we can take. And sometimes, despite the best of intentions, we find ourselves with-well-a kind of upside-down perspective!

Often we forget that life really wasn't that much different in Bible times. Take Timothy, for example. Here's a young pastor with a pretty big mountain to climb-and the right path wasn't always very easy to find! Ministering in Ephesus, there were lots of ideas and philosophies that might be the direction for him to lead the church in. But not all of them would be the right way. In fact, really, only one way would be.

That's where God's Word comes in.

God wants His church to glorify Him by following His design for her. So, God moved the Apostle Paul along as he wrote Timothy a letter to give him some directions for the journey-and the place he points this young pastor (and the rest of us!) is straight to the Scripture. In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul proclaims, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

God's Word is our map and compass-and more! It teaches us. It lays out the true "map" of life and doctrine. It shows us where the right path is.

Of course, when we discover God's truth, we often discover that we've gotten off the trail a bit. That's the

second thing God's Word does: it says, "Hey! You took a wrong turn back there-you're off the right path!"
It rebukes us when we're out of line with God's plan!

Then it shows us the way back. It corrects our thinking and our practice so we can get our way back in line with God's.

But it does more. It trains us, Paul says. The word speaks of instructing a child in the way he should go. It's about life-change. God's Word, through teaching and discipline, equips us to find the right path and to stay on it.

Wouldn't it be great if that's all it took? Whenever we face an issue that's tough to know which way to turn on, we could just look to our "map" and proceed with confidence! Well, in some senses, it is that simple. But just as my friend and I had a hard time making sense of our map in the middle of the dense forest, we sometimes have a hard time interpreting God's Word.

This summer we've embarked on a journey as a church. The destination we intend to reach is a biblical understanding of the roles of men and women in marriage and the church. And, if you're like many of us, you found yourself a bit confused. Sometimes the way was easy and enjoyable. At other times, the going got a little more tough. And now, after all the hacking through the thorny passages and perspectives, we find ourselves with a number of potential paths to take. Which is the right one? We've been spending time studying the "map" of God's Word, trying to get our compass on true north, but in the midst of the forest of life and culture and logic and philosophy and emotion, the path may not seem as easy to see as we might have hoped.

It's my deep concern that we don't end up with an upside-down perspective, hanging over a river that could sweep us away from God's design. So, before we start interpreting God's "map for the journey", I believe we need to consider the map itself-what it is and how we need to read it-and then allow it to do exactly what God said it would: teach us His way, rebuke us if we're out of line, correct our thinking, and train us in following Him fully. And when we do, we'll discover it to be a "lamp to our feet, and a light to our path" (Ps. 119:105).

Our Map for the Journey: God's Word

When we looked at 2 Timothy 3:16 earlier, you probably noticed that the Bible doesn't call itself the Bible, but "the Scriptures". It comes from the Greek word, graphe, which means, "that which has been written". God saw to it that His Word would be written down. He put it in the language of the people. Paul tells us that all Scripture is God-breathed, or inspired by God. I'm so glad that's true! It's what gives the Bible its inerrancy, its steadfastness, its truth-and its authority. But that raises another question: how? How exactly did God inspire the Scriptures? Did He wake the prophets or apostles out of their sleep at night and say, "OK, we're ready for chapter 2. Got your quill ready? Oh-and by the way-remind me to teach to shorthand; you don't keep up too well!"

Well, not exactly. For one thing, you don't have to read too many books or genres in the Bible before you discover that the individual authors' personalities and styles of communicating shine through. God obviously didn't just dictate word for word, comma for comma.

Then how did God "breathe" Scripture into being? Peter answers the question pretty directly when he writes, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture is of any personal origin, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but men of God spoke [and wrote!] as they were moved along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21, authors' translation). Peter is giving us a great word picture here. The word he uses that is translated "moved along" is a nautical term-it describes the process where a sailboat

is out on the sea, unable to go anywhere on it's own, until the wind comes and moves it along in the direction it's blowing. That's what God did! He moved along the individual authors to write His revelation to humankind.

So, the Bible is both a divine book-the Word of God-and a human book-the Word through men to fellow human beings. Charles Ryrie describes the process this way: "God superintended the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded, without error, His revelation to man in the words of the original manuscripts."¹

And that which He has revealed is absolutely true. You know, that really shouldn't surprise us-God is truth, and because Scripture is God-breathed, it is true. Peter called it "pure" in 2 Peter 2:2. It is entirely consistent: never controverted, never compromised, never contradicted by other parts of the revelation.

Jesus proclaims to the Father in John 17:17, "Your word is truth!" It's not human counsel open to debate.

It is THE truth! Charles Swindoll concludes, "It is honest. It has integrity. It is as absolute as it is timeless...it is truth you can rely on, truth that will never shrivel up or turn sour, truth that will never backfire or mislead. That's the truth in this Book!...His Word provides the truth I need; it erases the doubts; it gives a sure footing."

And that's what we need, isn't it? Truth that doesn't mislead. Truth that gives a sure footing. Trust me, dangling over the Alouette River taught me a few lessons on the importance of keeping one's feet on a sure, solid foundation.

But, as we've admitted openly in the introduction, discovering exactly what that truth means and how it works out in our day to day lives and practice is sometimes challenging.

Understanding God's Word

Some people read God's Word and assume that because it's such a spiritual thing the words don't mean exactly what they seem to say-they mean something deeper, more "mystical". Others cite that because the Bible is filled with such figurative language, one shouldn't interpret passages too literally. Still others say that the truth of the Bible is the truth that God reveals to them when they "meet Him there".

One Bible scholar tells us to interpret this way, another that way. Sometimes it seems that if you don't have a detailed knowledge of world history in Bible times and have mastered the intricacies of Greek and Hebrew, the true meaning of the text is beyond you. It makes some want to just give up and let the scholars do it for them-and in a way, I don't blame them. But that's not what God wants! He wants each of us to delight in His Word! He wants us to see it as more than a map-even a treasure map-and run to it to hear from Him.

And if the Bible is truly to be the authority in our lives, even in this issue of God's design for men and women, coming to an accurate understanding of what He has told us in His Word must be considered our chief aim! But can it be done? Well, if God moved men along to write down what He inspired, then saw to it that it was preserved through all kinds of opposition & attack through the generations, it surely goes to reason that He intended us to understand it! So, a great place to start in seeking how to do that is to see if the Bible itself tells us anything about the approach we should take! Do we ever see a pattern for interpreting the Scripture modeled in the Bible itself?

Yes! That's especially true in the New Testament where Jesus and later the Spirit-led authors of the inspired text quoted and interpreted the Old testament. Well, if you're anything like me, that's encouraging to have a pattern to follow-but a bit daunting to assume we could follow the lead of the incarnate God in interpreting the very words He Himself inspired! Still, if we're looking for a lesson on how to understand

His Word, rather than go to the school of human logic, shouldn't we go to God's teaching?

A Biblical Paradigm for Interpretation

One thing that becomes apparent as we look at the New Testament example of handling the Scriptures is that Jesus and the apostles viewed the Scripture as a document written by men, but also a document whose source was God Himself.²

It is crucial for us to notice that Christ and the apostles recognized that the Scriptures, while supernatural in source, were written with natural human communication using language in its common sense, and therefore they interpreted them quite literally.³ A reading of James, Acts, Hebrews and many of the Pauline epistles demonstrate the apostles took the historical, moral and theological teaching of the Old Testament in the original sense of the passages they referred to. Robertson McQuilkin, author of *Understanding and Applying the Bible* and renowned scholar in ethics and hermeneutics writes, "Christ and the apostles often found meanings in the Old Testament that the ordinary reader would not suspect were there [particularly in the fulfillment of prophecy], and thus treated the Old Testament as a supernatural book. But their overwhelming use of the Old Testament was in the original, manifest sense of the passage."⁴

Since God is the Author behind the authors, the Bible is inherently absolute in its authority for doctrine and life. Over and over again we see Jesus and the apostles quote the Scriptures as the final authority for human thought and behavior. McQuilkin puts it this way: "For Christ and the apostles, to quote the [Scriptures] was to settle an issue."⁵

Another observation that springs to our attention in looking at how Jesus and the apostles handled the teaching of the Scripture is that nowhere do they leave room for error in it. The Bible is wholly, absolutely trustworthy-as a whole and in all its parts.

I consider these three observations to be Biblical presuppositions we need to approach the Scripture with. They teach us how to handle God's Word correctly. And we need that, because time and distance are very real barriers between us and the Biblical writers. On the path up the mountain of God's truth, we have to work our way over language, cultural, and communication barriers. And at times the variety of literary terrain is incredible! So, as we approach each of the passages we'll be studying together, we'll follow our "guidebook" closely and seek to use a method of interpretation that is grounded solidly on these presuppositions.

Unfortunately, as we've already noted, there are many faulty approaches to interpreting the Bible that rage rampant today. Methods that take the interpreter off the right trail toward great peril. Because of the nature of this paper, we won't discuss these at length. However, I do want us to look at one approach in particular that could dramatically affect our understanding of God's Word in this issue under study.

A Dangerous Approach

One of the most destructive approaches to interpreting God's Word is to approach it dogmatically. To interpret dogmatically is to make all specific interpretation conform to a predetermined system of doctrine or external authority.⁶ McQuilkin is sadly all too accurate when he warns us, "some believers with otherwise sound approaches [of interpretation] may err in dogmatically setting aside the plain meaning of the text to make it conform to a system of doctrine, some human authority, or even a personal experience. Few would admit to espousing this approach, yet it is all too common."

Sadly, we're all guilty of this to some degree. Ernest Best writes, "All interpretation of Scripture is

controlled by the theology of the person who interprets. It may not be true that a particular interpreter has a consistent theological position; but his theology and world view always control his interpretation."⁷

It is crucial that we seek to harmonize all the biblical teaching on a given subject in order to grasp the unity of God's Word. However, Scripture must always control the system; the system must never be allowed to control the Scripture. When taken to an extreme, the dogmatic approach results in the Bible no longer being the authority! Even though it provided the raw material that the view was formed with, a great deal of logical deduction is also built into the system. That structure is then superimposed on any given passage, thus becoming the authority by which the normal meaning of the passage is set aside.⁸

While I am regrettably amongst the first to admit the tendency to go to a text, find sufficient "proof" for my argument and say, "See!", it was my very determination not to handle Scripture this way that raised red flags to me in the egalitarian argument. It is my firm conviction that when God's Word is allowed to speak plainly and we interpret it carefully, we will see clearly that God has indeed created men and women equal in value but distinct in role and responsibility both in the marriage relationship and in the work of the church. I believe that moving "beyond gender roles", as one author has phrased it-albeit attractive and popular-is moving beyond the clear teaching of God's Word.

So, how do we discover the meaning the Biblical author intended his recipients to understand (which must be our goal anytime we seek to understand the meaning of a passage)? I want us to consider some basic principles to interpretation that come directly from the presuppositions the Bible has about itself and are consistent with Christ and the apostles' model, and then we'll apply those principles to the passages under study.

Five Keys to Interpretation

As I was praying and thinking about ways to communicate the basic principles to sound interpretation, I kept coming back to Howard Hendricks' masterful, in fact life-changing teaching found in *Living by the Book*. For those of you who have never been exposed to Dr. Hendricks' teaching, you've been missing out! Regarded by many as one of the greatest teachers of Bible study of all time, Dr. Hendricks' passion for God's Word and sound approach to understanding it has forever shaped many of the great pastors-teachers of our day. So, I'll do my best to summarize some great principles from his book (as well as others) that I earnestly pray you will apply to your own study, and I will endeavor to apply in the pages that follow.

Content

Discovering the content of a passage has a lot to do with observation-and also starts us down the right trail right from the beginning. It's where we look for terms, structure, literary form and atmosphere. Asking questions like who, what, where, when, why, and wherefore explode meaning out of the text. And it's important to look for things that are emphasized, repeated, related, alike, unlike, true to life, etc.⁹ This is an important process that actually sheds a lot of light on the very passages we're going to study shortly.

Context

Do you remember the old song, "The knee bone's connected to the thigh bone; The thigh bone's connected to the hip bone; The hip bone's connected to the tail bone; Now hear the word of the Lord!"? Dr. Hendricks reminds us of the lyrics and concludes that's pretty good methodology when it comes to interpreting God's Word!¹⁰ Context determines meaning.

There's actually quite a lot to understanding the context of a passage, but it's absolutely crucial for a proper understanding of God's Word, so I hope you'll agree it's worth the effort! For starters, it's important

to remember the historical context, cultural context, geographic context, even the context of where this passage fits in the process of God's unfolding of His revelation to mankind. None of these should be minimized or ignored.

But, if there is one over-arching aspect that determines meaning, it's the literary context of the word or passage under study. Certainly that means looking closely at the words and verses that come before and after the text, but it's also bigger than that. Hendricks reminds us, "whenever you study a verse, a paragraph, a section, even an entire book-always consult the neighbours of that verse, that paragraph, that section, that book. Whenever you get lost, climb a contextual tree and gain some perspective... and given the unity of Scripture, the ultimate context... is the entire Bible."¹¹

Robertson McQuilkin fleshes this out a little more. He suggests that in studying the context of a passage, we need to start back at the first verse of the book and then read the whole thing through to determine the purpose of the author in writing his particular book. In most cases, especially the New Testament epistles, the chief purpose, central theme, or main thrust becomes apparent as one follows the flow of thought.¹²

This principle is especially important in determining the meaning the author intended, and will shed a great deal of light on the Galatians 3 "all one in Christ" passage (and others).

After purpose, the next aspect of literary context that needs to be studied is the plan of the book. A single thought cannot be interpreted in isolation from its connections to adjoining thoughts. To extract a verse and make it mean something other than the thrust of the entire section of the book is to miss the key point the author intended to make (see discussion on Galatians 3:28)!¹³ Outlining the flow of thought of the book can really help here-but we must remember not to place undue emphasis on the chapter and verse divisions! They were not in the original text, but added later. Instead, we need to work forward and backward and look for a change of thought. One passage in particular this guideline impacts is Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 2 and 3.

Finally, and really most importantly, we need to examine the immediate context of the verse(s) under study. The immediate context must control the interpretation of the passage.

A personal word of encouragement and one of caution as you apply this in your own study: first, you don't have to master the original languages to follow this critical guideline-anyone can do it-so use it! Second, DON'T VIOLATE THE CONTEXT-the consequences can be far reaching-in fact, that's how more than one cult found its roots!

Comparison

One way we can prevent misunderstanding the teaching of a text is to compare it with other Biblical teaching on the issue. Quite simply, the more we compare Scripture with Scripture, the more the meaning of the Bible becomes apparent-and this offers a great safety net, because the greatest interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself.¹⁴

Remember our statements as we considered the awesome truth of the Bible-that it is "pure" and never contradicts itself? God's book is integrated-it's whole and perfect. So comparison can help prevent us from arriving at an interpretation that contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture given elsewhere. The Bible must be interpreted by the Bible. McQuilkin insists, "To compare a passage under study with other passages of Scripture will often clarify meaning, correct an initial misunderstanding, or bring the teaching to completion as a part of the Biblical whole."¹⁵

Another incredible benefit from this principle comes our way when we compare how a specific word is used in Scripture. To do that, we need to start with a solid exhaustive concordance-one that gives not just

the English word but also the original word or a number representing that word (i.e. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, The NIV Exhaustive Concordance, etc.). The reason for this is that different Hebrew and Greek words are sometimes translated as the same English word, which can be misleading (although can later add an extra dimension to our understanding if each is pursued). The guideline we will use in our "word studies" comes from recognizing the importance of context. We'll start with looking at the same original word used by the same author in the same book. This is the critical place to start, because as we've said, context determines meaning. Next, we'll look at how the same original word is used by the same author in different book. This helps flesh out the full (or different) nuance(s) the author has in using the word. Then, we'll study how the same original word is used by different authors in the same Testament. For example, Paul, Peter, James, and John (and others) all used the same Greek words sometimes-and exploring the meaning of each usage in its context provides a rich treasure of additional understanding. Furthermore, when the Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint), additional usage of the word may pop up, further increasing our understanding of the meaning(s) of the word.

Again, the immediate context of the passage under study will control our understanding, but looking outside to other uses by men who were moved along by God as they wrote can bring amazing clarity to the meaning of the passage.

Culture

We briefly mentioned the importance of considering the cultural context of the passage earlier, but want to emphasize how critical this is to understanding what the author intended to mean. Studying, if at all possible, the factors that led to the writing of the passage and the influences they had on the text help to re-create the culture and the context the writer and his recipients were in.

McQuilkin underscores that since Scripture is rooted in history and claims to be a historical document-the record of God's self-revelation to man-we must understand it in the context of its history.¹⁶ Further, a study of the social, religious, and legal customs of the time helps to unravel many implications of the author's teaching.

Consultation

Once we study the content and context of the text, compare the teaching with other passages on the subject, and consider the culture of the writer and recipients, it's time to consult secondary resources. In the two thousand years since Christ walked the earth, God has blessed the church with many fantastic students of the Bible, and as we head down the sometimes-confusing trail of sound doctrine, it makes a lot of sense to follow the trail-markers they've left for us! The key is to always study the text first, then look at secondary sources.

Some of the resources I've used in this study include concordances, Bible dictionaries, Bible handbooks, commentaries, and a number of scholarly books from a variety of perspectives on this issue. Other great resources to consult include the vast collection of literature that survives from the New Testament era.

However, the use of extra biblical resources should never be a substitute for personal Bible study, but rather supplement it, filling in some of the color and flavor of the day.

Conclusion: God's Word is a great gift.

Many of you joined me when I preached this summer on "Sweeter than Strawberries, Better than Diamonds: On Delighting in God's Word", in which I pulled out a bottle of Buckley's Cough & Cold and asked a pertinent question: is this how you view God's Word? Pretty bitter to swallow, but it's supposed to be good for what ails you, so it's good to have on hand for when you need it.

Or, is it more like Shredded Wheat? Do you find it a bit dry and tasteless, but try to keep a regular diet of it-just for nutrition's sake?

I hope not.

I hope you look at God's Word the way David did. He wrote in Psalm 19,

*The revelation of God is whole
and pulls our lives together.
The signposts of God are clear
and point out the right road.
The life-maps of God are right,
showing the way to joy.
The directions of God are plain
and easy on the eyes.
God's reputation is twenty-four carat gold,
with a lifetime guarantee.
The decisions of God are accurate
down to the nth degree.
God's Word is better than a diamond,
better than a diamond set between emeralds.
You'll like it better than strawberries in spring,
better than red, ripe strawberries.
There's more: God's Word warns us of danger
and directs us to hidden treasure.
Otherwise, how will we find our way?
Psalm 19:7-12a, The Message*

Sound worth studying? I sure think so! I don't want to take any wrong trails in my life-and I don't want us to as a church, either. So, let's look to God's Word for some signposts that point out the right road-life-maps that show the way to joy. After all, as Eugene Peterson has paraphrased it: otherwise, how will we find our way?

Section 2: Listening To God's Word

It is now our great privilege to turn our attention to God's Word. Consider that for a moment. Our Almighty, sovereign, omniscient God chose to reveal His will to us, and saw to it that it was written down and preserved through thousands of years! It is a privilege. We must never forget that and simply use the Bible as a resource text to solidify our argument. The Bible is the living Word of God! It's as true today as the day it was written! And it has a lot to say about how we are to live in the here and now. Which, in fact, brings us to the here and now!

What does God reveal about His design for men and women in a marriage relationship and in the church?

Well, the logical place to start is "In the beginning..."

Genesis 1 & 2--Darkness--Earth--Formlessness--Spirit--A Voice.

A single, powerful statement. More than a statement really, a defining command. A command that conveyed the authority of the Voice from whence it came. "Let there be light!" And there was. An Artist was at work. An Artist that knew no bounds, no limits. An Artist that created in the medium of water and rock and space and elements and life. Land formed where there had been water. Grass and flowers and trees-trees would be a costly creation, He knew, but they were strong and useful and beautiful. Even when one would loom larger than any other, would loom over history, it would still be

strong and useful-strong enough to hold the arms of its Creator. Useful enough to bridge heaven and earth. And the result would be beautiful. So grass and flowers and trees came into being where there had been dirt.

Dirt--The Artist smiled. Lots of good things could be created from dirt. His eyes twinkled as He saw the masterpiece He would create... but that was still days away.

He spoke again and the twinkling in His eyes was mirrored as a billion stars and planets roared through space and burned with a heat matched only by the Love in His heart for the one He would personally shape. He would save the best for last.

Another day came and went and fins cut through water and feathers through air, and the Artist smiled again. Tomorrow, He dreamed, tomorrow would be the day.

Dawn--The Artist went to work. He started with mammals and reptiles and all kinds of creatures, each more spectacular than the one before. He was building to a crescendo.

But wait. A decision that was made in eternity past was spoken into existence. A dream that had never been born but always been dreamt was about to become.

The Artist bent to the ground and scooped dirt into His hands. He sensed the dirt of a stall floor thousands of years ahead. Dirt under fingernails He did not yet wear but must. Or had chosen to. Dirt thrown on Him. Thrown by the creature He was about to create. Dirt He would be buried in. Dirt that could not hold Him...

The Artist resumed His work and a form lay lifeless on the ground. He looked at what He had shaped and paused.

Eternity hung in the balance.

He knew.

He knew what this breath would mean.

The Artist looked forward in time into the eyes of the one who was about to become. And He knew. He looked forward in time into the eyes of the ones who would come after. He looked into Mary's eyes. And Judas'. And John's and Peter's and Paul's. And yours and mine.

And He knelt and breathed as a tear fell from His eyes. Slowly, almost as if suspended in time, it fell toward the form. And as it fell, dirt became flesh and bone and tissue and blood. It softly landed on the cheek of the one who had been given the ultimate gift. Not just life-the Artist had given of Himself. He would bear his Creator's image.

Darkness. A Voice--Light--Eyelids opened and looked into the Giver of Life--And the Artist knew He had found His ultimate medium--Life.

He would create life. Shape life. Love life. And He would give His life so that we might have life.

"For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will-to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment-to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." Ephesians 1:4-10

OK, OK-I know. I'm supposed to be writing about Genesis. It's just that I started reading and writing and ended up in Ephesians! And that's probably alright, because in a lot of ways, Genesis is all about Ephesians-at least the Person and Work that is central to Ephesians! There's such an amazing unity and coherence to this story!

And right from the word go, we're introduced to the main character of the story: God. "In the beginning God..." the writer of Genesis proclaims. Our Creator God. A God powerful enough to speak light and life into existence. Reading through the creation account, we sense the climax building, until, in v. 26, God reveals the plans for the zenith of His creation. A creature that would bear His image. Man.

Male and female.

God created them in His image, and then blessed them and commissioned them. One cannot help but see the uniqueness of these image bearers to the rest of creation. In fact, He gives the man and the woman the charge to subdue the earth and have dominion over all that is in it.

Genesis 2 gives us a detailed account of God creating mankind. God created man (Adam) first (2:7), setting him in the garden to take care of it (v. 15). He could eat of the trees, with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (vv.16-17).

Then, in v. 18, we're introduced to a shocking statement. After the goodness of all that God had created, He concludes, "It is not good that man should be alone!" Well, the fact is that man wasn't alone in a literal sense-there were evidently a great many animals on the earth with him! It's just that none of them measured up to him in God's eyes. So, He resolved to make man a "helper suitable for him."

Interestingly, God didn't set right to work. Instead, He paraded the animals before Adam to name. I think it's reasonable to conclude that there was something deeper than the mere task-God wanted to show Adam his uniqueness and therefore aloneness. It must have been a profoundly incredible experience for Adam to realize that there was no creature that shared his nature. Judging from his response to the woman in v. 23, this process awakened an intense longing for a suitable companion. The privilege of naming all of God's creatures also implies Adam's superiority over the animals.

Verses 21-22 tell us that because no suitable helper for Adam was found, God puts him to sleep and creates the woman from him.

When God introduces Adam to her, he is ecstatic! "At last!" he cries! The match was perfect. Finally, he had found an equal that he could identify with-a partner. Interestingly, Adam names her. The same responsibility God gave him with the animals, he is given here.

Then, in v. 24, we discover that marriage is a divinely-created, pre-fall institution as a perfect union between a man and a woman. What was once one flesh had become two, but now had become one again in the wonder of God's design.

And in this sinless world, it was perfect, honest-the relationship had inherent integrity (cf. v. 25).

It's a beautiful story! I pray that in our effort to come to a Biblical understanding of God's design for men and women, we don't miss the beauty and power of Scripture. With just a little imagination, we see Adam staring incredulously at the woman he would later name Eve, then speaking the first human words ever recorded, he bursts into beautiful poetry.

"This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of man."

Throughout the chapter, the uniqueness of mankind as God's image bearers and their place over all

creation, as well as the inherent equality of man and woman are emphasized.

Yet, seemingly paradoxically, I believe in Genesis 2 God also begins to reveal to us His design of male headship-and this is prior to the fall. It is vital for us to understand what a Biblical definition of headship would be. Headship, according to everything we see in the Bible, is not domination-that is an abuse of man's God-given role and responsibility. In fact, it's sin. Raymond Ortlund, in his excellent article in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (edited by renowned theologians John Piper and Wayne Grudem) defines Biblical male headship this way: "In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction."¹⁷ I think that's a fairly good understanding of the teaching throughout the Bible, as we will see, and it's a definition we need to keep in mind when we refer to headship.

Coming back to the creation account, we notice that man was created first. I have often heard that this means nothing in this issue. Well, it meant something to the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit! On two occasions he pointed back to this pre-fall order as the paradigm for male headship (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:8-9; 1 Timothy 2:14). If we believe that the whole Bible is God's Word, then we have to say that the New Testament's own interpretation of Genesis 2 is correct!¹⁸ God did not create male and female from the ground at the same time and for one another without distinction. I believe God intended for the very nature of His design for manhood and womanhood to be clear even in the creation order and events.

In Genesis 2 we're told that God created woman as a "helper suitable" to Adam. We've already learned from Pastor Art's scholarship on this passage that the term "helper" is in no means a demeaning, "lesser" role-in fact, the same Hebrew word is used to describe God. It simply means "one who helps". But a helper for what? Well, for one thing, to be obedient to what God had commanded back in 1:28-to be fruitful, subdue the earth and have dominion over it. In a very real sense, the woman was to help the man in his task to glorify God by fulfilling his responsibility. It is not reading anything into the text to note that the woman was created to help man, not the reverse. In fact, Paul implies the same in 1 Corinthians 11:9, stating that woman was created for the man, not the other way around. While I am in no way implying that a man should not be fully committed to helping his wife-after all, husbands are to "love their wives just as Christ also loved the church" (Eph. 5:25)-the distinction between man and woman is there nonetheless. Ortlund writes, "So, was Eve Adam's equal? Yes and no. She was his spiritual equal and, unlike the animals, 'suitable for him'. But she was not his equal in that she was his 'helper'. God did not create man and woman in an undifferentiated way, and [even] their mere maleness and femaleness identify their respective roles. A man, just by virtue of his manhood, is called to lead for God. A woman, just by virtue of her womanhood, is called to help for God."¹⁹

As already noted, Adam named all the animals because of his unique position, then named woman. God allowed Adam to define her. In fact, the verb translated in context "she shall be called..." is the "naming verb" used to describe God calling the light "day" and the darkness "night" (1:5); the firmament "Heaven" (1:8); the dry land "earth", and the waters "seas" (1:10); and, in the very context of this verse, when Adam calls each animal by its own name (2:19-20). Wayne Grudem concludes, "Thus, when Adam said, 'She shall be called Woman' (2:23) he was most definitely naming her, and thereby indicating that he had an authority and leadership role with respect to her."²⁰ Further, the wording of vv. 24-25 is "man and his wife", not "man and woman".

The more I read Genesis 1 and 2 in context, the more convinced I am of the equality of man and woman yet the distinctiveness of their roles. I think one of the problems we face is that we interpret headship to mean domination and subordination to be denigration. I don't know why we fall into this trap. It does not

come from the Bible. Jesus Himself subordinated Himself when He came down to our level to save us (cf. Phil. 2:5-8).

Neither does distinction in roles demand distinction in equality! To believe so is nothing less than heretical, because it implies that because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have different roles, they are not equal! Theologians explain this in terms of the Ontological Trinity (three Persons fully equal in divinity, power, and glory) and the Economic Trinity (evidenced by the Father leading, the Son submitting to Him, and the Spirit submitting to both). Ortlund explains, "The Son submits, not because He is God, Jr., an inferior deity. The ranking within the Godhead is a part of the sublime beauty and logic of true deity. And if our Creator exists in this manner, should we be surprised and offended if His creaturely analog on earth exists in paradoxical form?"²¹

Genesis 3

Do you ever wish Genesis 3 wasn't in the Bible?

If I could take the time to write a narrative to describe it, I think it would start like this:

Light.Life--A Voice--A command--A voice--A decision--Darkness.Death.

I guess we'd be pretty lost without chapter 3, moving from the utopian scene described in chapter 2 to the depravity revealed in chapters 4-6 (and right through to Revelation 22)! But don't you wish what is recorded in chapter 3 didn't happen? Well, I guess there's no point in second-guessing God in allowing the fall, but even the very issue we are looking at now points us to our fallen state, and Genesis 3 lays it all out on the table.

After studying the passage at length and considering the content, and context, comparing my understanding with other Biblical passages and doing a few word studies, I followed my own advice back in Section 1 and consulted some other resources to confirm I was on the right path. In fact, I was so impressed with the way that Raymond Ortlund presented this text and his conclusions from it, that I've attached an abbreviated-albeit lengthy-section of his study. Please take the time to work through it. One of the things I really appreciate is that he has not lost the wonder of God's Word in the process of academic argument.

What God Decreed at the Fall:

How did our fall into sin affect God's original, perfect, and paradoxical ordering of the sexes? What did He decree as our punishment at the fall?

Those who deny the creation of male headship in Genesis 1-2 often argue that, in Genesis 3, God imposed male headship/domination (no distinction is allowed) upon the woman after the fall. As the corollary to this interpretation, they go on to argue that redemption in Christ reverses this decree and reinstates the woman to "full equality" with the man. We have seen, however, that God built male headship (not male domination) into the glorious, pre-fall order of creation. Our purpose here is to summarize the doctrine of manhood and womanhood taught in Genesis 3, especially in verses 16-19...

In verses 1-5, Satan, masquerading in the guise of the serpent, draws Eve into a reconsideration of her whole life. To paraphrase and amplify his reasoning, "Queen Eve," the serpent inquires in astonishment and disbelief, "something is bothering me. Is it really true that God forbade you two to eat of any of these trees? That perplexes me. After all, didn't He pronounce everything 'very good'? And hasn't He put both you and King Adam in charge of it all? Our loving Creator wouldn't impose so severe a limitation on you, would He? I don't understand, Eve. Would you please explain this problem to me?"

Eve hadn't even known there was a "problem." But the Serpent's prejudiced question unsettles her. It knocks her back on her heels. And so the Serpent engages Eve in a reevaluation of her life on his terms. She begins to feel that God's command, which Adam had shared with her, has to be defended: "We are

allowed to eat of these trees, serpent. But there is this one tree here in the center of the Garden-God said, 'Don't eat of it; don't even touch it, lest you die'." God had actually said, "You shall freely eat from any tree, with only one exception." But Eve's misquote reduces the lavish generosity of God's word to the level of mere, perhaps grudging, permission: "We may eat from the trees." Already the Garden doesn't look quite the same to Eve. No longer is the Tree of Life at the center of things (cf. 2:9). She doesn't even mention it. Now, in her perception of reality, the forbidden tree is at the center. Life is taking on a new, ominous feel. Eve also enlarges God's prohibition with her own addition, "you may not touch it." In her mind, the limitation is growing in significance. At the same time, she tones down God's threat of punishment: "you shall surely die" becomes the weaker "lest you die."

With Eve's view of the consequences of sin weakened, the Serpent springs on that point: "You will not surely die." Now we see that he hasn't been seeking information at all. He knows exactly what God had said. And then the Serpent pretends to let Eve in on an important secret: "Eve, I'm going to do you a favor. I hate to be the one to break this to you, but you deserve to know. God has a motive other than love for this restriction. The truth is that God wants to hold you back, to frustrate your potential. Don't you realize that God Himself has this knowledge of good and evil? He knows what will enrich life and that will ruin life. And He knows that this fruit will give you two that same knowledge, so that you will rise to His level of understanding and control. Eve, it may come as a shock to you, but God is holding out on you. He is not your friend; He is your rival.

"Now, Eve, you have to outwit Him. I know this Garden seems pleasant enough; but, really, it is a gigantic ploy, to keep you in your place, because God feels threatened by what the two of you could become. This tree, Eve, is your only chance to reach your potential. In fact, Eve, if you don't eat of this tree, you will surely die!"

It was a lie big enough to reinterpret all of life and attractive enough to redirect Eve's loyalty from God to Self. The lie told her that obedience is a suicidal plunge, that humility is demeaning, and that service is servility. And so Eve begins to feel the aggravation of an injustice which, in reality, does not exist.

Having planted the lie in her mind, the serpent now falls silent and allows Eve's new perception of reality to take its own course (3:6). With Moses' enablement, we can imagine what her thoughts might have been: "It doesn't look deadly, does it? In fact, it makes my mouth water! How could a good God prohibit such a good thing? How could a just God put it right here in front of us and then expect us to deny ourselves its pleasures? It's intriguingly beautiful, too. And with the insight it affords, I can liberate us from dependence upon our Creator. And who knows? If He finds out we've caught on to Him, He'll take this tree away and we'll be stuck in this prison forever! Let's eat it now while we have the chance!"

After his careful, detailed description of Eve's deception, Moses describes the actual act of Adam and Eve's sin very simply, as a matter of fact, without a hint of shock... she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it" (3:6b). Mark well what the text says and what it does not say. The text does not say, ". . . she took some and ate it. Her husband, who was with her, also took some and ate it." What actually happened is full of meaning. Eve usurped Adam's headship and led the way into sin. And Adam, who (it seems) had stood by passively, allowing the deception to progress without decisive intervention-Adam, for his part, abandoned his post as head.

Eve was deceived; Adam forsook his responsibility. Both were wrong and together they pulled the human race down into sin and death.

Isn't it striking that we fell upon an occasion of sex role reversal? Are we to repeat this confusion forever?

Are we to institutionalize it in evangelicalism in the name of the God who condemned it in the beginning?

But if Adam and Eve fell into sin together, why does Paul blame Adam for our fall in Romans 5:12-21?

Why doesn't Paul blame both Adam and Eve? Why does Genesis 3:7 say that it was only after Adam joined in the rebellion that the eyes of both of them were opened to their condition? Why does God call out to Adam, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9)? Why doesn't God summon both Adam and Eve to account together? Because, as the God-appointed head, Adam bore the primary responsibility to lead their partnership in a God-glorifying direction...

When confronted by God, Adam does not actually lie. He just shifts the blame to Eve: "The man said, 'The woman you put here with me-she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it'" (3:12). Why is it that we all feel Adam's face-saving, despicable hypocrisy in his factual, but evasive, reply to God? Because we recognize, if only intuitively, that Adam bears the final responsibility for what happened. Eve, when challenged, can only hang her head and admit, "The serpent deceived me" (3:13).

In 3:14-15, God curses the Serpent, condemning him to humiliation and to ultimate defeat under the victorious offspring of the woman. Our only hope as a fallen race is God's merciful promise to defeat our enemy, which He will accomplish through human instrumentality.

In verse 16 God decrees a just settlement with the woman:

- I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;
- with pain you will give birth to children.
- Your desire will be for your husband,
- and he will rule over you.

God's decree is two-fold. First, as a mother, the woman will suffer in relation to her children. She will still be able to bear children. This is God's mercy providing the means by which He will carry out His death sentence on the Serpent. But now the woman will suffer in childbirth. This is God's severity for her sin. The new element in her experience, then, is not childbirth but the pain of childbirth. Second, as a wife, the woman will suffer in relation to her husband...

The form and logic of Genesis 4:7b bear a most striking resemblance to our passage:

3:16b: we'el-'îs/e⁻k tes/ûqa⁻ te⁻ k' wehû' yims/ol-ba⁻ k

4:7b: we'e⁻ lêka⁻ tes/ûqa⁻ tô we'atta⁻ h tims/ol-bô

And 4:7b reads, "[Sin's] desire is for you, but you must master it." To paraphrase and amplify the sense: "Sin has a desire, Cain. It wants to control you. But you must not allow sin to have its way with you. You must rule over it."

How does this parallel statement illuminate the interpretation of 3:16? Most importantly, it clarifies the meaning of the woman's "desire." Just as sin's desire is to have its way with Cain, God gives the woman up to a desire to have her way with her husband. Because she usurped his headship in the temptation, God hands her over to the misery of competition with her rightful head. This is justice, a measure-for-measure response to her sin.

The ambiguous element in the equation is the interpretation of the words translated in the NIV, "and he will rule over you." We could draw one of two conclusions. First, God may be saying, "You will have a desire, Eve. You will want to control your husband. But he must not allow you to have your way with him. He must rule over you."

If this is the sense, then God is requiring the man to act as the head God made him to be, rather than knuckle under to ungodly pressure from his wife. Accordingly, 3:16b should be rendered: "Your desire will be for your husband, but he must rule over you."

In this case, we would take "rule" as the exercise of godly headship. This interpretation matches the reasoning in 4:7 more nearly, but another view is possible... God may be saying, "You will have a desire, Eve. You will want to control your husband. But he will not allow you to have your way with him. He will rule over you." If this is the true sense, then, in giving the woman up to her insubordinate desire, God is penalizing her with domination by her husband. Accordingly, 3:16b should be rendered: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." The word "rule" would now be construed as the exercise of ungodly domination. As the woman competes with the man, the man, for his part, always holds the trump card of male domination to "put her in her place."

But however 3:16 should be interpreted, nothing can change the fact that God created male headship as one aspect of our pre-fall perfection. Therefore, while many women today need release from male domination, the liberating alternative is not female rivalry or autonomy but male headship wedded to female help.

In 3:17-19, God decrees His judgment upon Adam:

"Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

"It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.

"By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are and to dust you will return."

God gives Adam up to the painful and ultimately futile attempt to eke out a living from the cursed ground. Notice (a few) things in the text. First, work is not Adam's punishment, just as childbearing was not Eve's punishment. The new punitive element is his pain in working the ground and his ultimate defeat in it.

After a lifetime of survival by the sweat of his brow, the ground from which he was first taken will swallow him up in death.

The second important point here is God's rationale for this punishment. God does not say, "Because you have eaten of the tree which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it'..." God does say, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree..."

Adam sinned at two levels. At one level, he defied the plain and simple command of 2:17. That is obvious. But God goes deeper. At another level, Adam sinned by... (abandoning) his headship...²²

A rather lengthy quote, I admit-but after an in-depth study of Genesis 3 in context, I believe Ortlund has allowed the text to speak plainly and has reached solid conclusions on it.

Did you notice that final statement: "Adam sinned by... (abandoning) his headship"? Look back at vv. 14-19 with me. God curses the serpent, then addresses the woman, then turns to the man and says, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree..."! God held Adam responsible for the couple's sin.

Before we continue our trek through God's Word, let's pause to look at the new scenery. Things have changed from chapter 2!

While ignoring or disagreeing with the conclusion that God established male leadership (again-headship, not dominance) in creation, egalitarians argue that the "curse" God placed on Eve that her husband would rule over her has been removed/reversed through Jesus. Please think about that with me for a moment.

First of all, the text does not say that either Adam or Eve were cursed by God in the strict sense of the word-only the serpent (v. 14) and the ground (v. 17) were cursed. What God did say to Eve was that her pain would be greatly multiplied in having children, and that she would desire to usurp control over her husband, but he would rule over her. To Adam, He said the ground was cursed because of his sin, and that he would have to work hard just to live off it. Further, death has arrived on the scene. The Apostle Paul emphasizes that death entered the world through Adam's sin in Romans 5:12ff.

It paints a pretty bleak picture, doesn't it? But, praise be to God, just as sin and death entered the world through one man-Adam, so justification and life entered the world through one Man, Jesus (cf. Romans 5:12-19). Jesus has set us free from the power of sin, but where do we get that Jesus has reversed this "curse"? Do Christian women experience great pain in giving birth (and in other areas of life)? I'm sure your mother or wife could set the record straight on that one! Is it still hard to make one's living off the land? Just ask any farmer! Do we still die? Yes!

So, why then do egalitarians single out this one element of the consequence of sin and argue that Jesus reversed the "curse" of women desiring to usurp control over men and men "ruling" over women?

Through Adam, we inherited a sin nature (again, cf. Romans 5:12-19). Careful exegesis of the pertinent New Testament passages teach that the "sin nature" (or "old nature" or "flesh") is still present in the Christian, even though salvation has come through Christ. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this: that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." The expression "done away with" is *katargeomai*, which means to have the power taken away. Indeed, v. 7 teaches that the believer no longer has any obligation to sin, and the verses that follow tell us we should reckon-or consider/calculate-ourselves dead to sin; sin should not reign in our body that we must obey it; sin will not be our master or have dominion over us, because we have been set free from the law and been placed under grace (cf. Galatians 3:13ff). Then, all of chapter 7 drives home the point that we still have our sin nature (cf. v. 18, 23 in particular).

And John writes, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8, emphasis mine). The expression "have no sin" (*hamartian ouk exomen*) does not mean that we "do not sin", but that if we say we "have no sin nature" we are not speaking truth! Later he uses the term "the lust of the flesh" synonymously with the sin nature.

The point I am making here is this: those things that came upon Adam and Eve (and through them to all men and women) have not been removed by the death of Christ nor our position in Him. Women still desire to wrongfully take the husband's place as head of the family and men still sin in lording their position of leadership over their wives. There is, however, a better way, made possible because Christ set us free from the power of the sin nature. It's found in Paul's teaching to married men and women found in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3. I'll be addressing these in-depth later, but the model is for wives to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord, and for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church-hardly a "lording it over her" domination-rather, a loving, servant-leadership: Biblical headship.

The Old Testament as a Whole

While the nature of this paper does not permit an exhaustive study of the Old Testament passages that teach gender roles, it needs to be said that throughout the Old Testament God's model for male leadership is seen both in the family and in worship. It also needs to be recognized that many godly women played significant roles in Israel's history (consider Deborah, Esther, etc.). Sadly, in the patriarchal culture of the day, male headship became something different than God's design and was oppressive to women. However, we cannot forget that it was established by God-mankind, infected by sin, messed it up. Numbers 30 gives a fascinating example of the God-given responsibility of the male as father and husband, but is just one example among many. The bottom line is this: male leadership in the Old Testament was God's design-in fact, His command. Where then do we place ourselves when we stand in judgment over God's own design?

God was still righteous and omniscient and altogether good back then! Yes, we have been set free from the law-the New Testament makes that abundantly clear. But the Law was not some evil, oppressive thing-it came from our loving God (cf. Romans 7:7; Galatians 3:21)! And God established role distinctions based on gender right from Creation, then spelled out how that would work practically in the lives of His people, Israel. As we're about to see in the New Testament, God sheds more light on our distinct roles in marriage and has a different application of our roles in the church than was modeled in the Old, but the principle still remains.

The Life, Ministry, and Teaching of Jesus

In many ways, I wish the entire focus of this paper could be on the ministry and teaching of Jesus. It seems like one of the very best investments of time we could make! Every time I encounter Jesus and His words in the Gospels, I am challenged and stretched. He was so radically other-oriented-it just spilled out into everything He said and did. And because of this, He was astonishingly counter-cultural. Besides His teaching on topics like materialism, good works, worship, leadership and others, the way He regarded and treated women was dramatically different than the society He ministered in.

Looking at the historical context of Jesus' day, we are quick to be appalled at the place of women in the Roman world-even in Judaism. While this may not have been without exception, for the most part women were regarded as second-class citizens-depersonalized in a humiliating way. However, this was not the paradigm authorized or commanded by God. Jesus' regard for women has been considered revolutionary for the historical and cultural context He lived in-but it was not different than what God had designed and revealed from the beginning.

Jesus demonstrated the high value He placed on women by recognizing their intrinsic value as persons.²³ He reinforced their inherent value as divine image-bearers (cf. Matthew 19:4). He recognized them as fellow human beings-something not all of His contemporaries could be judged to have done. James Hurley believes "The foundation-stone of Jesus' attitude toward women was His vision of them as persons to whom and for whom He had come. He did not perceive them primarily in terms of their sex, age or marital status; He seems to have considered them in terms of their relation (or lack of one) to God."²⁴

One of the ways this is evidenced is that Jesus spoke to and with women-again, something very counter-cultural (see Luke 7:12-13; 8:48; 11:27-28; 13:12; John 4:7-27; 8:10-11 and many more examples). Not only did Jesus speak with women, but how He spoke to them reveals much. He spoke tenderly, with love and respect, even joy. He didn't ignore their sin, but spoke to them in the same way He spoke with sinful men.

James Borland reminds us, "Jesus' regard for the intrinsic quality of women and men is also exhibited in

His view of divorce and lust. In His treatment of divorce (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18), Jesus clearly regards women not as property but as persons. They have legitimate rights and should be respected."²⁵

Jesus also demonstrated the high value He placed on women by ministering to them-both physically and spiritually. A study of Matthew 8:14-15, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 7:11-15, 11:27-28, 13:10-17, and John 4 reveal His concern for and tenderness toward women as He met their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. In Matthew 15:21-28, Jesus calls a Canaanite woman a woman of "great faith"-a statement of tremendous weight in that culture. Jesus is revealing the Father-heart of God in His unbiased treatment of men and women throughout the Gospels.

Further, He demonstrated the high value He placed on women by according them dignity in His ministry. Specifically, He referred to them in His teaching (cf. Matthew 12:42; 13:33; 25:1-10; Luke 15; 17:34-37; 18:1-5; 21:1-4), He taught them theological truths (cf. Luke 10:38-42; John 11:20-27), and allowed if not encouraged them to participate in His life and ministry (Matthew 26:6-13; 27:56; Luke 7:36-50; 8:2-3; 10:40; John 12:2).²⁶

One must not miss the enormity of the dignity accorded to women in the resurrection accounts-God used women as the initial witnesses to Christ's resurrection, despite the fact that in that culture their testimony was regarded as worthless (see Matthew 28:5-8; Mark 16:5-8; Luke 24:2-9; John 20:1-2).

Surely, this huge body of evidence demands the conclusion that God incarnate gave us a model of respect and regard of value and dignity toward women and men. He reminded us that all humans have intrinsic value as people created in the image of God, despite socio-economic status.

However, if we are faithful to the Biblical accounts of Jesus' life, ministry and teaching, I cannot but conclude He also demonstrated a clear role distinction between men and women. While there are other examples to illustrate this, none is more apparent than Jesus' selection of only men for the role of apostle.

One egalitarian argument against this Biblical fact is that one could expect nothing different, given the oppressive patriarchal culture Christ ministered in. When one begins a movement, they argue, one can only go so far. Christ would have been utterly discounted had He chosen women to be amongst the twelve, and therefore would not have gained audience to teach all He needed to.

Christ could only go so far?! What part of Christ's revolutionary, radically counter-cultural ministry exhibits any foundation for this statement? At times it seems that practically everything He did and said was completely against the grain of the current understanding and cultural practice. Thank God (literally) He did not "only go so far" in purchasing my salvation! If Jesus wanted to establish a new paradigm of leadership for the church, He would have done so. Do we think Him scared to challenge wrongful paradigms? Then we have not met Him in the gospels! Ask the rich young man, or the temple vendors, or the Pharisees-or better yet, ask the adulterous woman, Mary and Martha, and countless others who experienced life and life to the full because Jesus challenged the sinful, oppressive practices of the culture and religion and showed a better way. But He did not-ever-challenge or change the Biblical paradigm of male headship in marriage or lay out a new paradigm for the church that would come from His work here on earth.

I have also heard that the fact that all of Jesus' apostles were male dismissed with a number of arguments as insignificant. Insignificant?! Nothing Jesus did or said was insignificant! Specifically, certain egalitarians are saying that the choice of only men as apostles is insignificant in the issue of role

distinctions in the church. I don't think that Jesus regarded His choice of men as insignificant-Jesus spent all night in prayer before choosing the twelve (Luke 6:12; cf. Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19)-and I believe it must be seen as a paradigm for leadership for the church, as witnessed by the entirety of the New Testament doctrine and practice.

Borland explains, "Apostleship was to involve leadership, ruler ship and the reception of special revelation. Several functions of the apostles were immediately discernable: (1) The apostles were to be with Christ, undoubtedly to learn extensively and to be trained firsthand (Mark 3:14-15). (2) The apostles were the obvious official leaders in the early church. See Acts 2:14; 5:12, 18, 40, 42; 6:2-4; 9:29; 15:2, and Galatians 1:17. (3) Special ruler ship was committed to the apostles. Christ promised that the apostles would sit on twelve thrones ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). (4) Christ promised the apostles reception of special revelation (John 16:13-15) and a special teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). (5) As a testimony of the fact that male leadership in the church has been permanently established by Christ, the names of the twelve apostles are forever inscribed on the very foundations of heaven itself ... (Revelation 21:14)."²⁷

To me, the conclusion is unavoidable. To quote Borland again, "None of the above roles was performed by the women who followed Christ or ministered to Him. Though highly valued and given a new dignity by Christ, their roles were different from those of the men Christ selected for His top leadership positions.

Women gave to Christ, served Him, fellowshipped with Him, accompanied Him, learned from Him, prayed, and testified of their salvation or of Christ's resurrection. But no woman in Christ's ministry was called, commissioned, or named as an apostle, or even performed in the role of an apostle. These roles and functions Christ reserved for men" (emphasis mine).²⁸

We seem to be so emotionally tied to this issue that we demand that difference in role means difference in value-but, as we have seen, our inherent value comes from bearing the image of God! Again, to appeal to the Trinity, each Person of the Godhead assumes different roles, yet are inherently equal. In salvation, God the Father sent His Son; God the Son did the will of the Father and died in our place; and God the Holy Spirit lives within every believer as our helper.

Yet another argument I have heard to this is that the fact that the twelve were all males is no more significant than the fact the twelve were all Jewish. This demonstrates the danger of using logic, etc. to defend one's argument instead of comparing the conclusions with the whole of Biblical teaching on the issue. It is significant that the twelve were all Jewish. Are we so quick to forget that Jesus came as the Messiah to the Jewish nation first and foremost, then, after being rejected by them and crucified, He opened up the way to salvation for the rest of us? The entire thrust of the Old Testament points to God's anointed Messiah coming to redeem the Jews. It also foreshadows His rejection by the Jewish nation and God's plan of redemption expanding to include Gentiles.

Matthew 2:6 quotes Micah 5:2 in proclaiming, "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel" (emphasis mine). Luke says that Simeon was waiting for the "Consolation of Israel" in 2:25. But Jesus' own words explain God's plan clearly: "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24; emphasis mine). Further, as Borland notes, Jesus sent His apostles at first only to the Jews (Matthew 10:6), promising them eventual ruler ship over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). "Considering the Jewish ness of Christ's mission to redeem Israel, it is not surprising to find all Jews on the initial list of apostles. It was not cultural pressure but God's plan to bring salvation through the Jews that led to twelve Jewish apostles" (emphasis mine).

But, just as following the resurrection salvation was offered freely to all people of all nations (cf. Matthew

28:19; Acts 1:6-8), so leadership within the church was no longer restricted to Jews. Luke, the author of the book which bears his name and the book of Acts, was a Gentile, as were a number of Paul's coworkers in the Gospel (including church-leader Titus). This rightly begs the question, was maleness, like Jewishness, to be discarded as a requirement for leadership within the church? I believe there is a crucial difference that prevents arguments of such logic to stray from the path of God's plan. First, as Borland points out, the church did not start as all male and then later become both male and female-not only were Christ's followers male and female, but both were present at the beginning of the church at Pentecost (Acts 1:14).²⁹

Second, male leadership continued to be the model, teaching and practice of the early church. The very men who had been trained by Christ continued to follow the principle of male headship established from the very beginning. Take for example their choice of a replacement of Judas. This occurs at the very start of the church, in Acts 1:15-26. In v. 21, the condition that the person be male is clearly spelled out: ". . . it is necessary to choose one of the men [Greek andron] who have been with us..."

Then, in Acts 6, where the very first non-apostle leaders of the church were chosen, the twelve directed the body of believers to "seek out from among you seven men [Greek andras] of good reputation..." (v. 3).

Borland concludes that "in the choice of the twelve apostles, in the choice of only men to write the New Testament Scriptures, in the other leadership tasks given uniquely to the apostles, in the pattern of male leadership followed by those whom Jesus taught most closely, and even in the twelve names inscribed on the foundations of the heavenly city, Jesus clearly affirmed an abiding role distinction between men and women and an abiding leadership role for men."³⁰

I do not want us to miss the importance of Christ's model in His view of men and women. The Creator walked amongst His creation! He looked deep into the eyes of the very individuals He formed in their mother's womb. Before they had come into existence He had known them from the beginning-loved them from the beginning. Is there any wonder He looked at them with such compassion, yet wept over them with such pain as they continued in their ways? He does the same with us. He loves each one of us purely and passionately. He wants us to give up the fight to be what we think defines us and be all we can be in Him. He values us. Can you really believe that? Our value to Him isn't found in the role He designed for us, it's in us. Male and female, created in His image. He looks into our innermost being and sees something of Himself there. Let's give unto God what is God's-ourselves!

Galatians 3

What a glorious, liberating letter Galatians is!

Lord Jesus, thank You for the truth of this message: salvation is found through faith in You alone. In the courtroom of Your Father's justice, we have been justified-we've been declared righteous! Nothing we have ever done nor ever could do has bought this standing-it's in You and all You did when You took our sin on the cross and gave us Your righteousness in return. There is freedom reigning in us because of You. Freedom from the power of sin. Freedom from the Law that condemns us because of our imperfection. Freedom to live in Your righteousness. Thank You, Jesus! Thank You that You did not offer this indescribable gift to only a privileged few, but to all, regardless of race, status, or gender. Thank You that we are heirs with You in all of God's goodness. Thank You, Father, that we can call You "Father" and not lie! Thank You that we are no longer slaves but Your very own children through our Redeemer, Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen? Amen! That's the truth of this book! That's what it's all about! I would love to work through the entire letter with you. Both of us would come away so refreshed and, as Paul promised in 2 Timothy 3:16, taught and rebuked and corrected and trained! But this paper is focused on "the gender issue" (sounds kind of ominous, doesn't it?), so the teaching of Galatians does not directly apply. Or does it? There's this

one very big little verse almost dead-center in the book that has become a battle cry for the egalitarian argument. It's a verse about how salvation isn't for a favored class of people, but for all. The Jew has not advantage over the Gentile, the free person no advantage over the slave, the man has no advantage over the woman, all are on an equal playing field when it comes to salvation. All have sinned. All have earned death. None have earned eternal life. But through faith in Christ, we have been given what we don't deserve. Salvation. Salvation to the Jew, the Greek, the Roman, the American and Canadian. Salvation to the businessman, the CEO, the accountant, the janitor, the homeless woman, the prostitute, the pimp. Salvation to every man, woman and child who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and places their faith in Him alone.

It's not a verse about male and female roles and responsibilities in the church or even in the home. It's a verse proclaiming one of the central, most wonderful truths about salvation.

How do I know? I read the book! I read it without any thought of the issue of the role of men and women in the family or the church-and you know what? It doesn't show up! But the verse has been taken out of its context and made to argue against role distinctions in marriage and church leadership. That's why that principle of "context" we talked about way back in the first section is so important!

Let's take a look at the historical context of this book. Why was it written? What was going on? What was life like in the various little churches in Galatia? What were they talking about, wrestling with, and believing when they got together like we do?

Well, for starters, Paul was writing to people he knew. He'd looked out over the pulpit at them before (OK, the pulpit's a bit more of a recent addition, but the bottom line is that Paul had preached the true Gospel to these people at some point before this-see vv. 6-11; cf. Acts 14:21; 16:6). And it sounds like He preached a pretty clear message of the Gospel!

But, if you're anything like the people in Galatia, you've got to admit that the Gospel sounds too good to be true! There "ain't no free lunch", right? Well, heaven's a pretty big "lunch", so it goes to reason that it must cost us something! Something like a lot of good works. Living right. That seems more reasonable. Jesus came and showed us how to do it.

Wait a minute! That's not the Gospel of Jesus Christ! And that's not the Gospel Paul preached! But after Paul left, a heresy began to permeate the churches in Galatia (and elsewhere) known as incipient, Judaistic gnosticism. It was spread by certain Jews who tied the claim to a "superior knowledge" (which was a part of gnosticism) to the insistence of works for salvation (which was a part of Judaism). And they started to believe it! After all, it's fairly logical. The argument appealed to them (a good warning for us today!). In fact, they bought in. It prompted Paul to say in 3:1, "Oh foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth...?"

That's why Paul wrote this letter. Do you remember my experience on the trail up Mt. Robie Reid? (I know-it's been a long time since I told you my story back on p. 3!) I started to veer off the right trail when the brush got so thick it obscured my view of where I needed to head. That's what the Galatians were doing. They were leaving the right path by their additions to the Gospel message. Paul wrote the letter to set the facts straight about salvation not being by works-or Jesus + anything-but by faith in Jesus alone.

This is the true Gospel!, he proclaims. This is the right path! What they were starting to believe as the gospel was not the gospel at all. In 1:6-7, he writes, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (NKJV). It's a different kind of gospel altogether.

For that matter, if "gospel" means "good message" or "good news"-which it does (Greek evangelion), what they were believing really wasn't "gospel" at all!

Then Paul proceeds to argue for the true Gospel. The theme pervades the entire letter. While we can't study the whole book, let's look at the literary context and study the development of Paul's argument up to the passage in question (3:28).

1:1-5 Greetings

1:6-10 Rebukes the false gospel and declares the truth of the true gospel

1:11-2:21 The true gospel was revealed to him by God

3:1-4:31 Paul's argument for the true gospel

3:1-5 The Galatians are tempted to live by the flesh and the law

3:6-9 Why do they do this, when Abraham was justified by faith?

3:10-14 The Law could not save, it could only condemn

3:15-18 Therefore, God fulfilled His promise to Abraham

3:19-4:20 The purpose of the law

3:19-23 It was an inferior system, preparing the way for the gospel

3:24-29 The law was God's "child-leader" (translated "tutor" in some versions) to bring us to the gospel in Christ

3:24 The law was the child-leader

3:25 Now that we have found Christ we do not need the child-leader

3:26 Faith is the way to life in Christ

3:27 All believers are now clothed in Christ

3:28 All are free to receive the gospel of Christ regardless of status

Hmm. Nothing about role distinctions. Anywhere. But, here in 3:28 Paul chooses three illustrations from his day that the Galatians could readily identify with to demonstrate that the differences have been removed as far as salvation is concerned. You may have heard that in the culture of Paul's day, Jewish men often thanked God that they were not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. Many commentators acknowledge that this may not have been as derogatory as it sounds to our sensitive ears, but that it comes from the fact that in that culture Gentiles, slaves and women were limited in certain spiritual privileges open to Jewish males.³¹ This may have been what Paul had in mind when he chose these three examples, as apparently many Gentiles had similar formulas.³²

1) Neither Jew nor Greek-that was one of the main arguments of this book. The Jew did not have an advantage over the Gentile when it came to receiving the salvation of the gospel Paul preached. They thought they did; that was the problem with the Judaizers.

2) Neither slave nor free-that was an amazing truth in the Greek/Roman culture of Paul's day. A day in which the slave was often viewed not as a person, but as nothing more than a piece of property. But, Paul argues, in Christ they are both invited to the gospel on the same basis.

3) Neither male nor female-Ah ha! At last! This is where Paul is teaching about the role of men and women in marriage or in the church, right? Where do you get that from the context? No! Paul chooses another shocking truth as an illustration: that in that day of male pride and dominance, but both men and women can equally receive salvation.

There were great differences in the pairs Paul chooses to contrast, but not when it came to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1) The Jew and the Gentile had different social status-but not in salvation

2) The slave and the free had greatly different social status-but not in salvation

3) The male and the female had different social status-but not in salvation!

That is the point of the freedom of men and women in Galatians 3:28! It does not teach truth concerning their relationship or in church life and ministry. It does teach some truly wonderful and literally foundational truths about the Gospel. Please don't let this passage lose any of its power and wonder just because it has been argued from two opposing views of the gender issue! And please remember the importance of studying passages of God's Word in their literary context! Don Carson writes in his excellent work, *Exegetical Fallacies*, that Galatians 3:28 "teaches that in Christ there is no male and female; but does the Bible mean that male and female are alike in every respect? Who is going to bear the babies? Or do I now get my turn? The context of Galatians 3:28 shows the concern in that passage is with justification. In their standing before God, male and female are as one: neither enjoys any special advantage, each is acquitted by grace through faith."³³ This passage could just as easily be ripped out of context and used to argue that if there is neither male nor female in Christ, homosexuality must therefore be OK. Of course, that goes against the clear teaching of a large body of Scripture, but that's what happens when you don't consider the context!

OK, let's move on. I hope somewhere in there, somehow, despite having to defend the passage, I've wet your appetite to dive into Galatians and be reminded of the glorious truths Paul presents in this great letter.

Ephesians 5

This summer I read a great book. After repeated recommendations from Pastor Art, Steve and Tanya, I finally "broke down" and borrowed (how's that for non-committal?) the three books of Francine Rivers' *The Mark of the Lion* series. WOW! I was blown away by her phenomenal grasp of first century history and culture interwoven masterfully with outstanding writing and compelling plot. The Christian novel-a genre I hadn't bothered too much with-has become a treasured part of my reading diet now! In *Echo in the Darkness*, Rivers' takes the reader right into the heart of Ephesus-not just geographically, but into the spirituality, mysticism, philosophy, and overall culture of this ancient city that seems remarkably like Greater Vancouver! In case you're worried that I've thrown out every hermeneutical principle I laid out in the beginning of this paper and have resorted to using fiction to interpret the Bible, rest assured: I haven't. But if you want to feel a bit of what the recipients of Paul's letter to the church(es) in the area must have experienced in day-in and day-out life, I highly recommend her excellent work (but be sure to read the series in order!). Rivers' has become known in some ways as a historian first and novelist second, despite her astounding ability to write narrative!

I wonder what was going through Paul's mind as he sailed into port at the city of Ephesus, the capitol of the Roman province of Asia, on his second missionary journey. Ephesus was known for many things-in many ways it mirrored the decadence of Rome. It was a vital and thriving commercial center, located at the intersection of several major trade routes. It wasn't by mistake that Paul chose this city to visit. Ephesus' location and prominence made it ideal as a missionary center for Paul's ministry in the area. But looming over the alabaster skyline was a spectacular monument: the Artemision-temple to the fertility goddess Artemis (Romans considered Artemis to be their Diana, but Ephesians believed her to be sister to Apollo, daughter of Zeus). The architecture matched their elevated view of her, and was so grand that the temple was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Marble paved the colonnade that led to the spectacular structure, where 127 columns, each sixty feet high, rose to glorify a god who didn't exist. In some sense, it defined Ephesus-a city full of empty people who worshipped a different god for nearly every aspect of life: Apollo, Aphrodite, Asclepius, Eros, Venus, Zeus-and half a dozen others (remember the Serpent back in Genesis 3? He and his lies hadn't gone away! They still haven't). Ephesus. A city that was a melting pot of nationalities, cultures, superstitions, and pride. A city far from God. And down the dock and onto the road and into the milieu strode Paul, with a message that would

shake the city and all it stood for.

Paul preached the Gospel in Ephesus, and God brought people unto Himself, and a church was born. Despite pleas for him to remain, Paul stayed only a short time, but left his trusted fellow-laborers Aquila and Priscilla there (cf. Acts 18:18-21) with a promise to return.

Return he did, and this time stayed for two years. God did huge work in Ephesus through Paul-in fact, Luke tells us "all that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles" (Acts 19:10). In fact, so many people in Ephesus turned to Christ that the local craftsmen who made their living making and selling idols and souvenirs of the temple rioted because of all the loss of business this Paul guy was causing!

Shortly after, Paul sailed for Caesarea, then journeyed to Jerusalem where he was arrested and imprisoned. Eventually, after appealing to Caesar based on his Roman citizenship, Paul was taken to Rome. And, under house-arrest in Rome, Paul took out his quill, dipped it into the ink, and the living wind of the Holy Spirit filled the sails of his heart and mind and moved him along as he wrote.

The quill moved quickly, deliberately. Letters became words, words became sentences, sentences became larger units of thought. The parchment was sealed, and a messenger left with a precious package.

Halfway across the Roman world, a small group of believers huddled in prayer. Life in Ephesus wasn't easy-especially as a Christian. Was it really worth it? They knew it was, but how do you live for God in such an oppressively pagan culture? What should their lives look like-and what shouldn't they look like? So much of the teaching they had received was so different from all they had accepted before Christ. How should they relate to each other? To their spouses, children, and the people they worked with everyday?

The time Paul had spent with them had flown by, and even though the elders of the churches were providing Godly leadership, putting doctrine into a way of living was easier said than done.

"God? How do we do this? How do we glorify You in a city that glorifies itself? What do...

A knock on the heavy wooden door rouses one of the women from prayer, and a tired traveler is welcomed in. With careful fingers, a scroll is opened-and a prayer is answered.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ..."

Nearly two thousand years later, a group of Christians gather together in a similar context with similar questions.

And, because of God's providence, we read in the book of Ephesians the same words they did.

Which is fitting, because one of the central themes that jumps out from the pages, whether they be parchment or modern paper, is God's eternal purpose to establish and complete His Church, the Body of Christ.

Like many of Paul's letters, the book is divided into two main sections: In chapters 1-3 he teaches solid doctrine, and in chapters 4-6 he shows us how to put it into practice in our daily lives. As I've said before, this is another book that I'd love to work through in its entirety with you! Maybe we'll have a chance to do that sometime. But for now, let's look at how the second half of Paul's teaching develops, up to and including a very crucial passage that has a lot to say about what Biblical headship should look like in the context of a marriage.

4:1-6 Believers should walk worthy of the Lord, in unity with other believers

4:7-16 The church functions on the basis of the gifts given to its members

4:17-32 The Contrast between the believer's life before salvation and after salvation

5:1-17 The new life should be patterned after the character of God

5:18-6:9 The new life should be a reflection of the control of the Holy Spirit
 5:18 The command to be filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit
 5:19-21 What the control of the Spirit will produce in the context of church
 5:19 Singing
 5:20 Thanksgiving
 5:21 Submitting
 5:22-6:9 How that control will be seen in the Christian family
 5:22-24 In the life of the wife, and...
 5:25-33 In the life of the husband
 6:1-3 In the life of the children, and...
 6:4 In the life of the father
 6:5-8 In the life of the servants, and...
 6:9 In the life of the master

OK! Now that we've seen an overview of the literary context that precedes our passage, we're ready to look more closely at 5:18-6:9. The section starts with a present, active command in v. 19: "be continually filled with (by) the Holy Spirit". That cannot be understood to be a command to receive the Holy Spirit (which obviously isn't up to us at all), because Romans 8:9 teaches us that as Christians, the Holy Spirit already lives within us (as He did in the lives of the believers in Ephesus who received Paul's letter). A careful comparison of Ephesians 5:19-22 with Colossians 3:16-18 reveals that the Spirit takes the Word of God as we hide it into our hearts to bring about continual control-which we need to live the life God wants us to live!

Paul teaches us that the control of the Spirit finds expression in three participles in the next three verses. I know it sounds kind of like English class, but we need to remember that participles are not main verbs: main verbs express the action of the sentence, participles help us understand how that action finds expression. The first thing we see is that being controlled by the Spirit expresses itself in encouraging each other in spoken word and song, praising God together. The next expression is one of thanksgiving to God for everything! And thirdly, (oh, no-the dreaded "s" word...) submitting to one another.

What would that look like in the various contexts that make up our lives?

Well, that's what Paul is showing in 5:22-6:9-what a Spirit-controlled life would look like! In this section, Paul lists three pairs of people who live in relationship with each other: wives/husbands, children/fathers, and slaves/masters. Really, these three pairs represent the basic social structure of life here on this earth: marriage, family, and business/work structures.

Paul seems to be saying that each of these relationships, if they are controlled by the Spirit, will be experiencing joyfulness, thankfulness to God, and harmonious relationship. The potential of each relationship is not being realized if joyfulness and thankfulness are not a part of it.

Observe something else. What if the "submitting" (v.21) refers not to each of the 6 identifiable people-groups listed, but to the first people in each of the 3 groupings? Before you accuse me of teaching inconsistent heresy, bear with me for a minute! This may not be the intended meaning Paul was giving, but it is very possible. The word translated "submit" in vv. 21 and 24 is the Greek word *hupotasso*, made up of two words, *hupo*, meaning "under", and *tasso*, meaning "to arrange"-hence, "to arrange under" or "to put oneself under". Further, the word "obey" in 6:1, and the word "obedient" in 6:5 translate the Greek word, *hupakouo*-again made up of two words: *hupo*, meaning "under" (same as vv. 21 and 24), and the word *akouo*, meaning "to hear". Put together, these two words mean "to hear under", or to hear and put yourself under the authority of what you hear.³⁴

This fits with the grammatical structure of the passage, as well as the meaning of submission. Let me explain. The passage clearly teaches a proper, Spirit-controlled response to each other. Many argue it teaches "mutual submission". Let's go back to v. 21 to look at this closely.

We need to remember that "submitting to one another in the fear of God" is the third in a list of participles describing what occurs when we are controlled by the Holy Spirit. The basic meaning of the verb submit (hupotasso) is a voluntary yielding to another-it's what one does to oneself. Actually, the term has its origins in a military context, emphasizing being under the authority of another. However, the word does not connote a forced submission, but describes a voluntary submission to a proper authority.³⁵ Paul uses the same word to describe Christians voluntarily submitting to governmental authorities in Romans 13:1 (cf. 1 Peter 2:13). In fact, in the 33 occurrences of the word in the NT, I did not find one instance where the one exhorted to submit was not submitting to a person in a God-given position of authority over them.

All that having been said, it is clear that Paul is laying down a paradigm of relationship similar to the one he gives in Philippians 2:3-4: "... in lowliness of mind let each esteem others [allelous-the same Greek word translated "others" in Ephesians 5:21] better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

And the motivation for it all is to be "reverence for Christ" (or "God" in some translations). George Knight gives us a helpful understanding of what this means: "Reverence, or fear (phobos), here is not dread... rather, it is respectful reverence for Christ that recognizes who has asked this of us and that He will hold us accountable for our actions (cf., for this sense in Paul, 2 Corinthians 5:11; 7:1)."³⁶

Even if Paul does mean complete reciprocity (wives submit to husbands and husbands to wives), **John Piper and Wayne Grudem** conclude, "this does not mean that husbands and wives should submit to each other in the same way. The key is to remember that the relationship between Christ and the church is the pattern for the relationship between husband and wife. Are Christ and the church mutually submitted? They aren't if submission means Christ yields to the authority of the church. But they are if submission means that Christ submitted Himself to suffering and death for the good of the church. That, however, is not how the church submits to Christ. The church submits to Christ by affirming His authority and following His lead. So mutual submission does not mean submitting to each other in the same ways."³⁷

Let's move on. The first relationship "pair" Paul addresses is that of the husband and the wife. It's also where we find ourselves with differences of opinion as to exactly what Paul is teaching here. I wish that weren't so! I know this must seem to be a profoundly arrogant statement given the huge amount of scholarship on this passage, but the text is really not that ambiguous if you let it speak plainly, recognizing the principles of content, context, comparison-even culture-it's when you get to consulting other scholars that the waters get a bit muddier!

Verse 22 reads, "Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord." As Pastor Art pointed out in his sermon on this passage, the word "submit" is borrowed from v. 21 and applied here to the wife. Again, letting the text speak plainly, there's very little to misunderstand. We need to keep in mind the meaning of "submit" (hupotasso) discussed above in referring to a voluntary submission/yielding to a person who is a position of authority over the person submitting. Then, remembering the principle of looking at the content of the passage, there's a critical word that needs to be noticed: as. Wives are to submit to their husbands as they would to Jesus. Paul expands this in v. 24, saying, "just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

In comparing this teaching with other references to the responsibility of the wife in the New Testament we discover that this exhortation to the wife to submit to her husband is in fact universal. Every passage that deals with the relationship of the wife to her husband tells her to "submit to" him, using this very verb (hupotasso): Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1; Titus 2:4f.38

Why would this command need to be so consistently driven home by the New Testament writers? Probably because way back in Genesis 3 God told Eve this would be a problem for her! Remember our study there? The woman would desire to usurp the God-given authority of the man. As discussed earlier in this paper, the freedom we receive in Christ is not freedom from the sin nature, but from being enslaved to it. Now, in Christ, the believing wife could resist her desire to control her husband. How? The key is back in v. 18: being controlled by the Holy Spirit!

Interestingly, this exhortation is never given to the husbands! However, as we shall see, the husbands are far from getting off with the easier end of the deal!

The reason wives are commanded to submit is given in v. 24: "for [or because] the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." The picture of the Holy Spirit-controlled wife living in relationship to her husband is to be found in the relationship of the church to Christ. As the church takes its place in relationship to Christ as the head, so is the wife to live in relationship with her husband. This verse tells us, however, that there is one very significant difference between the wife/husband relationship and that between the church and Christ, and that is "He is the Savior of the body". With all of our discussion about the teaching found in these verses we should never lose sight of this fact. We will never understand these relationships and never be able to realize them apart from a profound appreciation for the amazing mystery of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

So, the reason Paul gives for wives to submit to their husbands is because the husband is head of her as Christ is head of the church. What does that mean? I wish we didn't have to break the flow of Paul's argument here to answer that question, but the bottom line is that it needs answering, and our understanding of the rest of the passage will be impacted by our conclusions. So, join me on a closer look at this, and we'll get back to looking at what a Holy Spirit controlled life is characterized by!

The Meaning of "Head":

I want you to do something for me. I want you to forget everything you've ever heard "head" may mean in the Bible other than its ordinary, literal use to describe that orb on top of your neck! OK? Forget that it means authority. Forget that some argue it means source. I can only ask you to do this because that's what I did my very best to do when I approached this issue in the book of Ephesians.

The first place we encounter the word "head" (Greek, kephale) in the book is in 1:22, so let's start there and look at it in context. Paul is sharing with the Ephesians that he has prayed for them ever since he had heard of their faith in Christ. He lays out the specifics of his prayer, which concludes with: "(that we might know)... what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

Wow! What a powerful passage exclaiming the supremacy of Christ! Listen to the words Paul uses in conjunction with Christ: "(the Father) seated Him at His right hand" (a figure which pictures ruler ship

from the throne room); Jesus is "above all principality and power and might and dominion"; His name is above "every name that is named" in all eternity; and the Father "put all under His feet".

It certainly describes the power and authority of Christ, doesn't it? Oops! I broke in right in the middle of the sentence! Let's continue: the Father "gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body..." A quick aside here: Paul wrote the letter to the church in Philippi about the same time he wrote Ephesians-and in Ch. 2 he describes how Christ humbled Himself and came and died for us; then Paul writes, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

OK-without going to any lexicon (Greek dictionary) or commentary or anything outside this passage, what do you think the basic meaning of "head" might be? Context and usage determines meaning! It is virtually unarguable that the word "head" is used in the middle of a passage all about Christ's authority-in fact, the passage almost builds to a climax of Christ being the head of the church! It certainly shows how strongly God feels about the Church! But if Paul meant "authority", why did he use "head" instead of "authority" or "rule" or "leadership"? Well, again, look at the larger context. Throughout Ephesians, Paul is developing an image of the church as a body, one entity made up of many members. If Jesus is in authority over it, to continue the metaphor, He is its head.

Remember my instructions to forget everything you've ever heard about what "head" means? Well, you can think about it for a minute now. We've been encouraged to consider "head" (again, the Greek word *kephale*) to mean "source". We're going to look at this more later, but given the context of this verse (1:22), do you think that's what Paul intended his readers to understand? Even if there is a sense where Christ is the "source" of the Church, the context demands the idea of authority. Certainly it could not be said that in this context, "head" means "source without authority", which is the argument egalitarians are forced to make!

Well, let's move on in Paul's letter. The next place we find him using *kephale*, or head, is in 4:15. This is a foundational passage about what the church is and what it needs to be all about! After explaining that when Jesus returned to heaven, He gave "gifts" to those who believed (vv. 7-10-specifically, spiritual gifts as described in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12), Paul tells us that God has provided the church with gifted leaders in a variety of areas: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers (v. 11), who all need to be about the business of equipping the believers in the church to be ministers of God's love, so that the body of Christ (the church) will be built up (v. 12). But, for that to happen, we need to grow and mature and discern truth from error so we can avoid falling for every wind of doctrine (vv. 13-14). Then Paul contrasts that description with this: "but, speaking the truth in love, (we) may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-Christ-from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (vv. 15-16).

In this passage, Paul is clearly using the metaphor of a human body to describe the relationship of Christ to/with all the members of the church. The church, like a human body, has many parts-and every part needs to do its job. Christ's part is the head-He holds all the parts together and causes growth. It's a beautiful and striking picture.

Remembering how Paul has already described Christ as "head", this passage enlarges our understanding of what that means-but it does not-must not-remove the concept of authority that Paul developed earlier in conjunction with this very term! In fact, it is by Christ's very authority and power that the church does

grow and is "held together"!

Continuing on in the letter, we arrive back at 5:22. Before we go to outside sources, let's look at what clues there are right in the content and context of this passage. We don't have to look for long. We just finished a detailed discussion of the fact that wives are to submit to their husbands. As we saw, the meaning of that word in the day Paul was writing was to voluntarily submit or yield to a person who is in rightful authority over them. Don't forget that 1:22 clearly associated authority with kephale. Now, in this passage, the admonition is found at the beginning of three related pairs: wives are to submit, children are to obey (in submission) to their parents, slaves are to be obedient (in submission) to their owners. Paul is saying here: Wives, submit to your husbands... because the husband is the one who is in a position of God-given authority over you in the relationship, just as Christ is in authority over the church-so, just as the church is subject to its rightful leader, Jesus, you are to be to your own husbands in everything.

Have I read anything into the text or forced an external meaning on it? I don't think so-but just to be sure, let's compare the implications with the whole of Biblical teaching. We've already looked at how this author (Paul) treats the issue in the same book, so let's look outside to other references to kephale in his writings.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul writes, "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." Knight explains, "In this context, Paul refers to Genesis 2:21-24 and states that the order of creation of man and woman and the fact that woman was created to help the man (and not vice versa) demonstrate that God had established man as the head over the woman by this divine action and its inherent intent (1 Corinthians 11:8-9)."³⁹

What's Paul doing referring to creation in a discussion of headship? Because, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, He knew that God established male headship at creation-it was not a result of the fall! Both in 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2 he explicitly refers to the creation order as the foundation for male headship. For that matter, Genesis 2 even shows up in the passage we're studying (see 5:31), demonstrating that the principles found there inform his teaching here.

The next place kephale shows up in Paul's writings is Colossians 1:18, right in the middle of one of the cornerstone passages on the supremacy of Christ. The entire context of that usage points to Christ being above all things in the sense of authority and power. Egalitarians argue that kephale means "source"-specifically, "source without the idea of authority". I believe this argument breaks down at every level, as we will discuss, but could "head" mean "source" here? I cannot agree that it could-especially if it is without inherent authority. Let's look to another of Paul's passages about Christ's headship.

In Colossians 2:10, we see Paul use the word kephale again in the context of authority: "And you have come to the fullness of life in Him, who is the head of all rule and authority." If Christ is the source of all rule and authority in the universe, then is He not also a far greater authority and a far greater ruler than all of these others?⁴⁰

Let's come back to Ephesians 5:23. If "head" means source, and therefore Christ is the "source" of the church (which is not incorrect to say), how is the husband the "source" of his wife? Don't forget, Paul said that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. It could be argued that the husband is to be the "source of encouragement", or growth, or whatever else he indeed should be, but that would require kephale to morph as needed to fit each different text. This takes the authority away from Scripture to interpret itself and places it at the hands of the interpreter.

One of the things that concerned me most with the egalitarian argument is that it in many ways hinges on

understanding kephale to mean source without the idea of authority. But if meaning is controlled by context and usage (and it should be), and we are to seek the meaning the Biblical author intended his recipients to understand (which we must), where does one conclude that kephale can only mean source without inherent authority? Nowhere does this come into greater question than here in Ephesians 5, where "submission" (hupotasso) is tied inextricably to it-the wife is to submit because the husband is the head just as the church is subject to Christ because He is its head. That's what the passage says! I've heard and read more than a dozen egalitarian arguments on this issue, and I'm still baffled. In every instance kephale is used in the New Testament, in my estimation "source without authority" is never the best understanding of "head" in context. In some cases, the additional meaning of source could be added to that of leader/authority, but so could a host of other words/meanings. Kephale, when used in the Bible to refer to a person and not the literal head of a body, means head in the sense of leader, authority, or ruler.

But what about kephale's usage in the culture of the day? What did Paul's readers understand kephale to mean? That's really the question at stake, isn't it? The first source should be the Scriptures themselves, but Paul's readers only had the Old Testament, which is written in Hebrew (hard for a Greek word to show up there!). So, to look at the Greek we must turn to the Septuagint. Really, that's a great place to look, because the Septuagint was the Bible used by New Testament authors and Christians throughout the early church. It is, however, a translation (not the original writings), and is therefore not inerrant. Still, it is extremely important for determining how a word might be understood by the Biblical writers and their early church recipients. Kephale's use in the Septuagint has been studied in detail and suffice it to say in summary that kephale as used in the Septuagint-when used metaphorically to refer to a person (and not a literal head)-consistently translates the Hebrew word ro'sh which, again when used in reference to a person, means "head" as in leader/ruler (see Deuteronomy 28:13, 44; Judges 10:18; 11:8, 9, 11; 2 Samuel 22:44; 1 Kings 8:1; Psalm 18:43; Lamentations 1:5; Isaiah 7:8, 9; 9:14-16; Jeremiah 31:7).⁴¹

Gilbert Bilezikian and many other egalitarians tell us the meaning of kephale is "a battle of the lexicons".

According to Wayne Grudem, that's terribly misleading, as not one lexicon focusing on the New Testament period of Greek language ever understands kephale to mean source when used in reference to a person, but they consistently define it with the idea of authority.⁴²

Did you catch that? How does one have a "battle of the lexicons" when all are in agreement that kephale does not mean "source" when used in reference to a person!

For that matter, the only lexicon that lists "source" as a possible definition of kephale, and that only when it is used in the plural form to refer to an object or river-never in the singular (which is how Paul uses it) and never in reference to a person-is dropping "source" as a possible meaning of kephale! The editor of that lexicon, one of the world's leading Greek linguists, **P.G.W. Glare** has rejected the meaning "source" and plans to remove it from the lexicon because there is no unambiguous support for it!⁴³

Whence the support for "source" when kephale refers to a person then? Biblical usage does not support it.

The Septuagint does not support it-not even once! The lexicons that focus on the Hellenistic/New Testament era do not support it. The extra biblical writings from that era do not unambiguously support it. In fact, no example has ever been found in Greek literature where person A is called the "head" (kephale) of person or group B, and where person A is not the ruler or authority over person(s) B. Not one example! Grudem concludes, "it is simply not true that 'contemporaries of Paul most often took ['head'] to refer to the origin or source of something' in such contexts. The truth is, they never did."⁴⁴

If "head" does not mean source, then, but is used as a metaphor for leader / ruler / authority, how can one argue from the Bible that there are no role distinctions in marriage?

Ephesians 5 clearly indicates a difference in responsibility, and is supported unanimously by parallel texts. Speaking of which, let's go back and follow Paul's teaching through.

I'm sorry I had to take such a lengthy route to understand "head", but given the controversial nature of this subject and its implications for life and ministry, I felt we needed to study it in depth!

So far, we've been commanded (!) to be filled-or controlled-by the Holy Spirit, which should express itself in joy, thanksgiving and other-oriented relationships. We studied at length what it meant for wives to voluntarily yield to their husband's God-given leadership, just as the church should submit to Christ, our Head.

Verse 24 tells the wives they are to be subject to their husbands "in everything". The whole concept of "body truth" is certainly in view here (see 1 Cor. 12:12-27 where this truth is developed in detail). A body that is not in obedience to the head is a sad thing to see. Most of us have seen tragic illustrations of this in those people who have a disease in which the muscles of the body do not respond appropriately to the orders which come from the head-sometimes with tragic results. In a similar manner the church, or the people in a church, who are not walking in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, because they are not letting the Holy Spirit control their lives are failing their Lord and failing to be what He wants them to be in this world. They are spoiling the relationship He intended and are sending the wrong message to the non-Christian people in this world before whom their lives are to be a witness of the greatness of the God they proclaim to know and love! Then Paul says the same thing is true in the in the wife/husband relationship.

If the church/Christ relationship is breaking down the problem is never with Christ. On the other hand if the wife/husband relationship is breaking down the problem may be with the wife or it may be with the husband. That's why Paul moves to instruct husbands in Spirit-controlled love for their wives in vv. 25-31. It's been said that there must be some significance in the fact that Paul takes three verses to talk about the responsibility of the wife, but seven verses to talk about that of the husband! If it doesn't impact interpretation directly, at the very least it should be noted as a clear emphasis.

"Husbands, love your wives...", Paul writes, and in the course of his discussion on the husband's responsibilities, the word comes up another three times. Knight makes the interesting observation that the husband's role as head does not show up here but in the section addressing the wife-Paul doesn't say, "Husbands, be head over your wives", but instead exhorts him three times to love her.⁴⁵

I am convinced that one of the main reasons for marital breakdown is right here. Too many of us "husbands" see this command (yes, command!) to love our wives, and say, Yeah, sure. I love my wife. After all, I married her, didn't I? Well, that kind of misses the mark (which is actually a pretty good definition for the word SIN!) that Paul tells us we need to aim for. "Love" by one definition isn't "love" by another-and this love Paul is calling us to is a pretty profound love!

You're probably familiar with the fact that there are three primary Greek words that are all translated "love" in our Bibles. That's not a mistake, it's just not quite the full story, either. One of the words for love is eros. You can probably recognize our word "erotic" in it. It's identified by, well, probably the best way to understand it is lust-and the motivation is always self-gratification.

A second Greek word translated "love" is philia (recognize "The City of Brotherly Love" in that? It's how Philadelphia got its name). Philia is a love that's by attraction, and whereas the motivation is a bit better than self-gratification, it's still motivated by self-benefit.

But neither of those are the words Paul chooses to use here. No, of all the words he could pick, he rightly chooses the biggest. Well, it's only five characters-agape-but it's huge in meaning and implication. Agape love is a love that's volitional-it's by choice. And instead of being self-benefiting, it most closely mirrors Jesus' love, because it's motivated by being other-benefiting.

That's why Paul says next, ". . . just as Christ also loved the church..." Whoa! There's that agape-word again! It sure describes Jesus' love for the church, but for husbands to love their wives like ("just as") Jesus loves the church? That's HUGE! Jesus' love was so other-benefiting that "He gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word..." (5:25b-26)! That's love! And, husbands, that's how God is calling us to love our wives! Can you imagine what that would look like? What the result would be if we really loved this way? Well, that's the whole thrust of this passage of Paul's: what Spirit-controlled leadership will produce!

Paul goes on to explain that Jesus loved the church, laying down His life for her, that He might "purify her" and "present her" perfect and glorious and holy.

Just as the church, in submitting to Christ, was the model for the wife in submitting to her husband as her head (vv. 23-24), so now Christ, in His love for the Church, is the model for the husband in loving his wife.⁴⁶ It's a love that gives of oneself for the benefit of the one loved.

Let's take a look at what we've got so far, men. In v. 25a we were given "the command"; in vv. 25b-27, "the pattern", and now in vv. 28-31 we get "the application". In these verses Paul takes the truth of the Christ/church relationship and applies it to the husband. Then he drives the point home by showing how carefully a man will take care of his own body, and then says, "that's how you ought to love your wife!" Here, he argues that "no one ever hated his own body", and in Colossians 3:19 he writes, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." Biblical headship is not domineering, oppressive, harsh ruling-it-over-her kind of leadership. It's servant-leadership. Jesus describes it in Matthew 20:25-28, where He tells His power-hungry disciples, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desire to be first among you, let him be your slave-just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Jesus isn't eliminating headship here. He's defining it.

Coming back to Ephesians 5, Paul says that "he who loves his wife loves himself." That's true in a lot of ways, but I think the thrust Paul is getting at here is that the husband and wife are "one flesh" (see v. 31).

So, just as the Lord nourishes and cherishes the church, and we do the same for our own bodies, we as husbands are to love our wives that way. In fact, the word Paul uses for "cherish" also means "to keep warm", "to comfort"-he uses the same word in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 to describe a nursing mother tenderly caring for her own children. It's radically other-oriented. In fact, it sounds a lot like that central command to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18)!

By now you're probably not surprised to see Paul quote Genesis 2:24 as a model of marriage. After we've finished this study in Ephesians 5 and 6, go back and read Genesis 2 and then this passage. The themes and principles weave together as-well, as only an Artist could weave them!

I just thought of something. Remember David's words in Psalm 19? That God's Word would "direct us to hidden treasure"? Well, in v. 32, Paul exclaims that a great mystery-a sacred secret-has been revealed: a Christian marriage parallels the union that exists spiritually between Christ and His bride, the church!⁴⁷

Paul concludes his teaching on the marriage relationship with one last exhortation to the husband: love your wife as yourself-look after her; care for her. And to the wife: respect your man! The verb he uses is phobeo. Recognize it? We mentioned it back in 5:21 as the attitude we need to have toward God. Paul "bookends" this teaching on marriage this way-and gives the wives a poignant reminder of the role her husband has and how she needs to respect that and him (see Leviticus 19:3 for the same verb used in the Septuagint).48

Paul next moves to consider the other two sets of relationships he develops in this section on Spirit-controlled living, the relationships of children/fathers and slaves/masters (which can most certainly apply to our work and business environment). Between 5:18 and 6:9, Paul really does move us through the complete spectrum of social relationships we find in our lives today. There's some great truths and lessons in 6:1-9, but because of the primary purpose of this paper we will not pursue them here! (I know: "Whew!")

OK, you still hanging in there with me? We're down to one primary passage to look at! Before we just leave Ephesians behind, however, I hope I've stimulated your thinking and stirred your heart. If I have, recognize that it's the very Spirit at work that we're commanded to be controlled by!

Do you remember what I said way back at the beginning of studying this section? I encouraged us to recognize the relationship between being "filled with the Spirit" of Ephesians 5:18 and letting "the word of Christ dwell in you richly" of Colossians 3:16. That's still my greatest plea to you. Get in the Word. It will get into you and... well, I guess we've taken a pretty good look at what life could look like as we experience more and more of the Holy Spirit's control in our lives.

Now a confession from me. For a number of years I've showed people the unique relationship between Ephesians 5:18-21 and Colossians 3:16-17. But until this study, I don't think I ever realized the length of parallel teaching between the passages. So, because we've taken a pretty long, arduous journey through Ephesians 5, and because I really can't think of a better way to close this section and remind us what it's all about, I want to include Paul's presentation to the church in Colosse of the same truths we looked at here.

Colossians 3:12-24, NIV

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. **23** Whatever you do, work at it

with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

1 Timothy 2 & 3

Most scholars writing a discussion of the Biblical teaching on the roles of men and women in the church would probably would have come to 1 Timothy first. For that matter, both egalitarians and complimentarians alike have written fantastic studies of this passage. It's central to the issue, they say. Indeed. It is.

Well, I guess I'm revealing my prowess as a scholar (or lack thereof!) in leaving this passage to the end, and then running out of the time necessary to really plunge into it. It probably tells you a lot about my high levels of reasoning and strategic planning and overall scholastic abilities-that and my sentences that are made up of one word. Or two.

Of course, most academic papers don't digress into long stretches of narrative or prose or quasi-poetry or whatever genre it is that I write (I can't even keep track myself!), so I guess I'll just hope I haven't frustrated you to tears and blinded you to any of the sign-posts in God's Word on the road to a Biblical understanding of the roles of men and women in marriage and ministry.

I think when I started out on this trek I expected this section of Scripture would require the most study and produce the largest body of observation and interpretation. But now that I'm here, I realize that in many ways God's paradigm of gender roles has already been discovered and interacted with in this paper, and I'm left with a wonderfully challenging chunk of Scripture that gives a great guideline for the practical application of the teaching we've looked at thus far.

So let's dive in.

We've already learned a lot about the context Timothy was in when he received this letter from Paul, as he was, in fact, ministering in Ephesus. Probably not many years have passed since the church received the letter we just finished studying-perhaps just one or two-and Timothy had taken the helm in leading the church.

Paul loved Timothy as a son (cf. v. 2), and had a deep commitment to equip him to be an effective, faithful pastor-at one point exclaiming, "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust" (6:20).

By now it's no surprise to discover Paul's purpose in writing this letter. It's stated clearly in 3:15-"I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." That's great news for us, because we're here trying to find out what God says about leadership in the church!

Here's the basic flow of thought:

- 1:1,2 Opening Greetings
- 1:3-20 Teaching Concerning Doctrine for the Church
- 2:1-15 Teaching Concerning Worship in the Church
 - 2:1-8 Prayer in the church
 - 2:9-15 Women in the church
- 3:1-16 Teaching Concerning Leaders in the Church
 - 3:1-7 Pastors
 - 3:8-15 Deacons
- 4:1-16 Teaching Concerning Dangers for the Church
- 5:1-6:21 Teaching Concerning Duties in the Church

Because of the focus of this paper, we will only study the two sections of the worship and leadership of the church, specifically 2:9-3:7.

Probably most of us remember encountering 1 Timothy 2:9-15 for the first time and thinking, "Huh? What does that mean?" The passage is a bit daunting-actually, it's pretty confusing at first glance. But, remember our conclusion that if God went to all the work of revealing His plan to us in His Word and preserving it through all these years He must intend we understand it? Well, let's plunge in with a prayer for His illumination, and we'll see where this passage leads us.

First, in vv. 9-12 we find Paul's instruction to women in the church. In fact, I am inclined to believe in light of the teaching of these verses and in connection with Paul's teaching elsewhere that this instruction finds its application in the meetings in the local church, possibly comparable to what we call our Worship Services. There may be general principles that are to be applied outside the church, but the basic teaching in this section deals with the local church. Thomas Schreiner agrees-he writes, "When Paul calls on men to pray 'in every place' [v. 8], this is probably a reference to house churches. Thus, the directives here relate to a public church meeting when believers are gathered together."⁴⁹

Paul sets our defenses off right at the outset: women are to "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing" (v. 9). One is under the impression Paul would pound the pulpit in our day about tinted hair, nose rings, and Cover Girl! It seems pretty conservative, but we need to remember whom he was writing to and when. Remember the culture in Ephesus in the first century we discussed at the outset of our study on Ephesians 5? Proper worship of a fertility goddess would involve... well, an overt sexuality. The temple of Artemis employed countless prostitutes, and the sensuality had pervaded the streets and communities of Ephesus.

Needless to say, women who were so employed or who enjoyed the intrigue of attracting men to themselves dressed provocatively, with elaborate hairstyles and ostentatious clothes. Their appearance labeled them, as it were. Whether or not some of the women in Ephesus and Asia minor were exercising their new-found Christian liberty to excess may be an interesting debate, but the point Paul is making in vv. 9-10 seems to be that the woman's dress and public manner should cause attention to be focused on Jesus Christ and not on herself (see v. 10).

Just when we recover from the initial shock of v. 9, Paul nails us with this: "Let a woman learn in silence and all submission." This has been a contentious issue in the church for many generations but it seems that Paul is talking about the meetings of the church and the way he expects women to conduct themselves in this context. While it may be that some women were disrupting the services of the church, Paul here seems to say that they are to demonstrate their submission. That may be in relation to their husbands as he taught in Ephesians 5, but it may primarily mean the women should not challenge the authority of the male leadership in the local church. In any event, her attitude should not be unruly and disruptive, which is good counsel for men as well. The emphasis in this verse isn't that women should learn, but the manner in which they should learn.

After a detailed study of the Greek grammar and structure of this verse, **Schreiner concludes**, "*Women were to learn with entire submissiveness from the men who had authority in the church and manifested that authority through their teaching.*"⁵⁰

That having been said, one of the things we often miss in "reacting" to this text is that Paul is encouraging (or at the very least, not discouraging) women to learn. While this was generally discouraged in the Jewish culture of the day, it was not as radical in Ephesus as we are sometimes made to believe. A solid

study of the culture reveals that women had an increasingly prominent status in the city, arguably due to the high regard for Artemis. In fact, some historians suggest that a "women's lib" of sorts was rumbling through the society. Most importantly, however, Paul is permitting or encouraging women to learn the truth of God and His Word in the church context in a proper manner.

However, learning seems to be one thing, teaching another—at least in the church gathering. In v. 12 he writes, *"And I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, but to be in silence."* Again, I think this is to be understood as referring to the context of the local church as seen in the literary context of this verse/passage. Paul cannot be saying that the women cannot teach in any circumstances as he at other times plainly tells them to teach and we read of them teaching—but never in the sense prohibited here (see Acts 18:26; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15; Titus 2:3).

Let's pause for a minute to ask the text some questions. First, what exactly is Paul referring to when he prohibits women from "teaching"? Paul uses the word in similar ways to describe the public transmission of authoritative material (cf. 1 Timothy 4:13, 16; 6:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:7).⁵¹ After a careful analysis of related usage, Douglas Moo explains, "the activity usually designated by teach is plainly restricted to certain individuals who have the gift of teaching."⁵² The Greek word Paul uses here indicates the type of teaching that was found in the Jewish synagogues of his day, and included a call by the local rabbi to have his disciples listen, believe and practice his words.⁵³

This understanding is attractive because it honors the literary context of the passage. Paul puts "teach" between the admonition to be in full submission and the prohibition to be in authority over a man. One application this precept may have is in preaching. In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul uses the same verb here translated "teach" (didache) in an admonition to Timothy to "Preach the Word... with careful instruction."

Coming back to 1 Timothy and looking at the larger literary context, we see Paul about to move into a section on elders/pastors. Paul may have this in mind, as the role of the elder included teaching in/with authority (see 5:17; cf. 3:2). Thus, Paul is prohibiting women from being elders/pastors, which I believe is made abundantly clear in 3:1-7.

But not only is Paul forbidding women to teach men in the church assembly, he also states they should not "exercise authority over" them. Thinking about the context in which this prohibition occurs, the phrase may forbid the women to claim authority over the man (or men) who is designated as the "teacher" in the local congregation.

This word translated "exercise authority over", *authentein*, only occurs here in all of the New Testament, so we do not have the benefit of studying Paul's usage of the word in other places. Extra-Biblical usage may be of some help, but the primary meaning of the word must be determined by studying the word as Paul uses it in this context. I believe this leads us to the above conclusion.

It is interesting and informative to note the transition from v. 11 to v. 12. Verse 11 concludes with the phrase, "all submission". **Douglas Moo** suggests it hinges the activity women are to carry out (learning) to two others (teaching and exercising authority over) that are prohibited in order to maintain their submission.⁵⁴ He concludes that we may paraphrase the transition this way: *"Let the women learn... with full submission; but 'full submission' means that I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man."*

Moving on to vv. 13-15, we're not surprised to hear Paul argue that the basis for his exhortation is found in creation. Why can't a woman be in a position of authority over a man? Because of God's design for male headship as revealed in the creation order. Adam was formed first, then Eve, Paul explains (v. 13). And Adam was not deceived, but Eve was utterly deceived (v. 14). I can't say I completely understand

Paul's logic all the time, but I'm not willing to argue with the Holy Spirit who inspired these words! And, not surprisingly, Paul's argument in vv. 11-14 fits with the whole of Biblical teaching on gender-specific roles and responsibilities, and continues to establish the doctrine as timeless. No matter what prompted the teaching Paul gives here to Timothy, it's the same teaching he has argued in Ephesians and Colossians, and is supported by the practice and ministry of Jesus and the creation order.

OK, just when we think we're there, Paul has to go and do v. 15 to us. This is one of those brain-twisters. "Nevertheless," he concludes, "she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control." Wow. Thanks for clearing that one up, Paul! I'm reminded of J.B. Phillips rendering of 2 Peter 3:16, where Peter comments, "There are some points in [Paul's] letters which are difficult to understand." Good grief! One wonders if even Timothy understood that! Well, at first glance, anyway. Then some things start becoming slightly more clear. Don't forget that Paul is still in the context of Genesis 2-3. Eve "fell into transgression" after being "utterly deceived". If we remember the repercussion of her folly, we'll see the similarities to Paul's words here.

Childbirth figured heavily into God's pronouncement on Eve: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children." Interestingly in 1 Timothy, Paul uses an article in the sentence where you wouldn't normally expect one. It gives probability to "... saved in childbearing" being more accurately translated "... saved in the childbearing", alluding to the salvation Eve and all women would experience at the birth of the child (Messiah) promised back in Genesis 3-the seed of the woman that would bruise the serpent's head (3:13).

Douglas Moo considers this a viable interpretation, but says that he thinks *"it is preferable to view verse 15 as designating the circumstances in which Christian women will experience (work out-cf. Philippians 2:12) their salvation-in maintaining as priorities those key roles that Paul, in keeping with Scripture elsewhere, highlights: being faithful, helpful wives; raising children to love and revere God; managing the household (cf. 1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:3-5)."*

Each of these interpretations are informed and controlled by the context and are plausible. Neither seems to impact our understanding of vv. 12-14 adversely, but rather complete the flow of thought.

Immediately from this, Paul launches into the qualifications of the leadership offices of the church. It seems abrupt, but really is the logical extension of his argument in 2:11-12. Sometimes we forget that chapter and verse divisions were not a part of the original text, but added much later. While sensitivity to the structure of the author's argument was given much attention, occasionally we encounter a chapter division that doesn't really fit. That may be the case here.

In 1 Timothy 3 Paul is giving Timothy instruction concerning the basic leadership offices in the local church, elders (pastors) and deacons. We will look only at the office of the elder, because in our case here at MRBC it most closely corresponds with our paradigm of church governance. While we call our board members "deacons", their role as the governing body assumes much of the role of the elder in the New Testament church, whereas the New Testament understanding of deacon (literally, servant) was concerned with the hands-on ministry of the church.

In vv. 1-2 the person is identified as the "bishop" (episkopes). This can be accurately translated as "overseer". In the parallel passage in Titus 1 where the same basic qualifications are listed for this office, the person is called "elder" and "bishop" interchangeably (Titus 1:5, 7). The term "elder" is from presbuteros, which might be translated "ruler" and carries the concept of the "leader" of a given group.

Seeing as how we have no one who goes by the title "bishop" or "elder" at MRBC, this may seem

confusing as to which, if any, roles coincide. Well, in Acts 20:28 the same person is identified as the "bishop" and is also called the "shepherd" or pastor, (poimene). This same thing is seen in 1 Peter 5:2. It is therefore obvious that the terms bishop, elder, and pastor are used interchangeably in the New Testament of the same person-the person who functions in the local church in the office we normally call "pastor". What is accomplished by interchanging the terms is a fuller picture of the role of this leadership position, seen as follows:

Bishop leader as administrator
Elder leader as ruler (not as a king of a country, but as a chosen leader of a group).
Pastor leader as a shepherd of the people, looking at function.

In Ephesians 4:11 we learn that God gave some to be "apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastor-teachers" (*"pastor-teacher" refers to one office of the church, not two; the Greek text makes that quite clear*).

Coming back to 1 Timothy 3, after introducing the section with the statement that those who desire to serve as a bishop/elder/pastor desires a good, or noble, work, Paul launches into a long and restrictive list of qualifications a godly man must have to serve in such a role. It would be a very profitable study to thoroughly examine the meaning of each of these words in these verses to more carefully understand the qualifications God through Paul establishes for this leader in the local church, but time and space do not permit. Rather, since the focus of this paper is on the roles of men and women, I want to note several things that indicate that this office is limited to male leadership.

The language of vv. 2-7 is definitive. "Overseer" (or "bishop"-v. 2) is in the masculine gender, as is "husband" (v. 2), "man" (v. 5), and every one of the six pronouns in vv. 4-7. A study of Titus 1, a parallel passage on the office of bishop/elder/pastor reveals the same thing.

Further, back just a few verses in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, Paul restricts women from teaching in the context of the church when it is assembled and from having authority over men. These are the functions of the elders of the church.⁵⁷ Notice that nowhere in 1 Timothy does Paul say women were teaching false doctrines, even though we know that false doctrine was plaguing the church (see chapter 1). In 5:13 Paul refers to women gossiping, but does not say here in 2:12 that they were teaching false doctrine and therefore should not be permitted to teach or have authority. Another argument some egalitarians promote is that Paul is discouraging women from teaching because they were uneducated in that era. But nowhere in the text does Paul indicate this as a reason (for that matter, Ephesus was the home church of Priscilla and Aquila, and it was here in Ephesus that Priscilla knew Scripture well enough to help instruct Apollos some fourteen years earlier!) Again, the reason Paul gives for his prohibition is that Adam was created before Eve and the way in which a reversal in male and female roles occurred at the time of the fall (see v. 14). Grudem concludes, "These reasons are not limited to one situation in the church at Ephesus, but have application to manhood and womanhood generally."⁵⁸ Paul's teaching on the qualifications of elders needs to be understood in the context in which he gives it: immediately after pointing to the order of creation as the basis for male leadership!

None of this is intended to demean women or fail to recognize the significant ministry they have had both in the New Testament church as well as throughout history, but we are still obligated to seek to determine the teaching of the Bible concerning the office of pastor in the local church and those who can function therein. I can't conclude anything from 1 Timothy 2:9-3:7 other than the role of the pastor (and/or elder) is reserved for men. Throughout the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, there is a consistent pattern of male leadership among God's people-moreover, there is not one example in the entire Bible of a woman doing the kind of congregational Bible teaching that is expected of pastors/elders in the church!⁵⁹

I cannot stress enough that I believe men and women are absolutely equal in value-we are only talking about a difference in role here. And, once again, I implore you to consider that there is difference in role in the triune Godhead! God, in His wisdom and grace, has ordained men to provide primary leadership and responsibility in the church and the home, but that leadership is to be defined by the paradigm of servant-hood that Christ set out for us to follow.

I wish I could take the time and space to look in-depth at the high calling of God for women both in the church and the home. I regret that this final section of our study has seemed to emphasize more what a woman cannot do rather than all God has empowered, gifted, and called her to be and do.

With men, women and children perishing around the world and in our own communities without knowing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, I firmly believe God is calling each of us to be all that He designed us to be and serve Him together, both male and female, to reach our world for Jesus. That means we must discover our God-given SHAPE for ministry and joyfully and passionately fulfill our roles as members of His body.

No man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world.⁶⁰

Conclusion

Wow! Who'd have thought when we started this trek it would turn into something that feels more on the scale of an Iron Man triathlon or an Eco Challenge adventure! We've come a long way together, and I want to thank you for journeying with me!

I realize I've made some fairly strong statements along the way, and I have really wrestled with this. It may seem that I have taken an unnecessarily bold, even forceful position against egalitarianism and those who hold that view. I hope you don't think that, because that truly does not describe my heart nor my love and respect for my brothers and sisters in Christ who differ with my understandings of the text. For example, one of the most outspoken champions of the egalitarian movement is Dr. Gilbert Bilezikian. Dr. Bilezikian's teaching in regards to servant leadership has challenged me on a number of occasions-in fact, this spring Pastor Art and I had the privilege of sitting under him in an all-day seminar on the church as community. His dream of an Acts 2 church is compelling to me. He is a respected theologian and scholar, as are many of those who argue an egalitarian view alongside him.

As I indicated in my preface, I respect Pastor Art immensely as a pastor, friend, and my leader and mentor. His interactions with me on this subject have increased my respect for him and appreciation of his humility and desire for unity.

But as we've journeyed from Genesis through the New Testament's teaching in regards to the role of men and women in marriage and the church, God's plan for male headship in marriage from creation to the present seems abundantly clear to me. Not because I want it to be, but because I believe that's what the texts plainly mean. His design for male leadership in the church seems unarguable to me.

I am undoubtedly revealing my naiveté. When there's this much controversy over the meanings of the crucial passages, someone in my position may be wisest to confer credence to the ambiguity of the text and hold my view loosely. But I can't. The texts just aren't that ambiguous. They're not always easy to work through, but by heeding Paul's advice to "work diligently" at correctly handling the Scripture, I've found that the signposts of God are indeed clear. They point out the right road. That's the road I want.

I don't want us, as a church, to take the wrong road. I've been in the forest when a half dozen different

openings all promised to be the right trail. And I've been in the forest when I couldn't see it for the trees. I love Maple Ridge Baptist. I want us to follow the trail in God's Word that leads to His design.

So I implore you. PLEASE take another look at God's Word on this matter. Do not fall into the trap of asking and being asked, "Well, what do you think?" It's not what we "think" that really matters. It's what God says. If anything, this "gender issue" should serve to point us to the realization that we need God's Word to teach us, rebuke us when we're out of line, correct our thinking and practice, and train us in the right way.

I can't say I always understand the logic of God's way, but I'm willing to admit that He's bigger than me and His ways are above mine. I'm willing to admit that I can't wrap my brain around an Artist that would create what He has, love like He does, and then hand us the brush to mess it all up. Let's not! Let's paint along the lines He gave us. I'm pretty sure He has a better perspective from up there anyway.

*One of His projects,
John*

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