



Position Paper

Complementarianism or Egalitarianism?

October 2017

Introduction

Many believe that the discussion about the role of women in marriage and the church is the most controversial issue today within the evangelical church. They believe this because this issue has many ramifications for the life and health of the church and its mission in the world. This issue is a major issue and it will become more so in the years ahead because of cultural pressures from outside the church and lack of clarity and conviction on the inside of the church.

There are two basic positions on this issue, the Complementarian position and the Egalitarian position. The Complementarian position can basically be stated as: Male and female equality in personhood and worth but functionally different roles within marriage and the church. This has also been called the traditional position. The Egalitarian position can basically be stated as: Male and female equality in personhood and worth and functionally equal and interchangeable roles within marriage and the church. It is important to understand that there are also many positions that also fall in between these two and hold onto different aspects of both.

Many today do not see this issue as an essential issue for unity in the church. This is mainly because they only focus on one issue without taking into account all of scripture and what it says on this issue. Here is a list of the issues within the church that are impacted by one's position on this issue topic. These issues make this an essential doctrinal principle for the unity of the church and church partnerships:

- Importance and understanding of authority structures
- Definition of manhood and womanhood
- Roles of men and women in marriage
- Roles of men and women in the church
- The unity and fellowship within the church
- Understanding the Trinity, how the Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit relate to each other
- Understanding the mission of the church to reveal these issues to a watching world

God's plan of redemption requires both male and female to fulfill His purposes of the kingdom of heaven here on earth and that the best way for this purpose to be carried out is through God's ordained roles and authority structure within marriage and the church.

Ultimately, the church is here to glorify Christ and Christ is most glorified when we are functioning in our God-given roles as men and women. The issue of Egalitarianism isn't primarily about woman's desire to be in power over man but it is a cry of generations of women's hearts longing to feel value and worth in response to generations of males failing in their roles to protect and lead.

This is the theological position paper on this issue for Crossroads Church Aspen and our church plants. We can have friendship with churches differing with us on this issue, but we cannot partner together in church planting since these issues directly affect marriage, leadership and the mission of the church.

As Complementarians we affirm:

- (1) Both men and women were created in God's image equal in worth
- (2) Men were given spiritual leadership responsibility in marriage and the church
- (3) Men and women were created by God with different roles within marriage and the church
- (4) All the spiritual gifts are available to both men and women, but they must be worked out within their unique roles within marriage and the church
- (5) Men and women are to beautifully complement each other in marriage to represent the beautiful relationship of Christ and His Church
- (6) A healthy church has healthy marriages and healthy marriages make for healthy mission to the community and the world.

The following position paper has two sections. The first section, Why We Are Complementarian and not Egalitarian, is a quick summary of the theological issues and some of the practical ramifications. The second section, Exegesis of Key Scriptures in Evaluation of the Complementarian and Egalitarian Positions, deals with each of the main scriptures dealing with these issues. It is our prayer that everyone would take the time to read both sections and study each of these scriptures. We will all be held accountable before the Lord for our conviction on these issues and how we teach and live them.

Part One - Why We Are Complementarian and not Egalitarian

We must, as followers of Christ, express charity in the midst of biblical debate. However, just as the Apostles and Paul debated and passionately defended sound doctrine, we should model the same reverence for the process and importance of conviction. (James 3:1)

Listed below are the ten primary reasons why we are Complementarian not Egalitarian. Detail discussion about these ten things will take place in the next section, Exegesis of Key Scriptures in Evaluation of the Complementarian and Egalitarian Positions.

- 1.) The plain reading of the main scriptures when all read together communicate a clear transcultural complementation position. Read the following scriptures all together and see how they fit and present a cohesive message.
Genesis 1-3
1 Corinthians 11:2-16
1 Corinthians 14:31-40
Galatians 3:27-29
Ephesians 5:21-33

Colossians 3:18-19
1 Timothy 2:8-15

- 2.) The transcultural and timeless truth of: male and female equality in personhood and worth but functionally different roles is supported throughout the entire Bible. It flows from the very personhood of our triune God who exists in three equal persons; Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit. Each have functionally different roles. Jesus submits to the Father, the Holy Spirit submits to both the Father and the Son.
- 3.) Patriarchal authority structure runs throughout the Bible and is a transcultural and timeless truth modeled in the Trinity, marriage and the church. Yes, there has been much abuse within this structure, but scripture does not support those abuses. We must remember, we pray to the Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit. God comes to us as a male though God transcends gender because female was created in His image as well. We must remember that Jesus is right now in a male resurrected body at the right hand of the Father interceding for us. For all eternity we will intimately relate to Jesus in a male resurrected body. Many today are trying to show that somehow the Gospel of Jesus overturned this patriarchal authority structure. Nowhere does Jesus overturn it. He does speak strong words of correction to the abuses within this structure and elevates women's dignity more than any historical figure.
- 4.) The Old Testament priesthood was open to only men. Women held important roles and offices like Deborah the Judge, but none served as priests upholding the Genesis account that man was to be spiritually responsible as the leader.
- 5.) Jesus chose only male Apostles. Nothing was keeping Him from appointing women culturally if He was as some egalitarians are trying to show going to overturn male spiritual leadership within marriage and the church.
- 6.) The early church appointed male next tier leaders, which was the seven including Philip and Stephen. Again, this is consistent with all Old Testament and Gospel teaching and modeling.
- 7.) There is no biblical text at all that shows a woman explicitly teaching or having authority over men in marriage or when the church was corporately gathered. Again, Jesus was not bound by an oppressive patriarchal system or culture if He wanted to overturn this principle.
- 8.) Consistent male leadership in marriage, family and church is affirmed and taught throughout the Bible. All the spiritual gifts are available to women and women are to minister alongside men within marriage and the church. But man is ultimately responsible before God for the spiritual leadership of the home and the church. God held Adam not Eve ultimately responsible for the sin in the garden.
- 9.) The universal leadership principle supported throughout the Bible. The idea of co-leading is not found in the Bible. The idea of shared leadership is found in the Bible with clarified responsibilities. The idea of first among equals is modeled in the Bible. Jesus clearly equipped Peter to lead the 12 as first among equals. Life experience reveals - someone has to lead – it is a terrible dance when both try to lead rather than the beauty of both male and female complementing each other with their God given unique roles.
- 10.) There is clear definition of roles within marriage and the church defined in the

Complementarian position and supported by the scriptures. There is not the support in the scriptures to define an Egalitarian view of marriage and women's role within the church. There is confusion and lack of definition that comes with an Egalitarian view in trying to define the following:

- Importance and understanding of authority structures
- Definition of manhood and womanhood
- Roles of men and women in marriage
- Roles of men and women in the church
- The unity and fellowship within the church
- Understanding the Trinity, how the Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit relate to each other
- Understanding the mission of the church to reveal these issues to a watching world

To overturn these biblical proofs of the Complementarian view and to adopt an Egalitarian viewpoint is a massive exegetical burden that we do not believe has been accomplished by the current Egalitarian scholars. Some of these scholar/theologians are referenced at the end of this paper.

Part Two - Exegesis of Key Scriptures in Evaluation of the Complementarian and Egalitarian Positions

No one can stand before God and give an account of their theological position based solely on what some pastor or scholar says or what we feel is right. We will be held accountable for our personal conviction and obedience to what the Scriptures say about how we live and lead in our marriages and within the Church. It is the responsibility of every believer to ask good questions and learn good Bible Study Methods whether they are a teacher or not so they can learn to be "a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15b)

Hermeneutics is defined as: different processes and principles to interpret the Bible.

Exegesis is defined as: the process of determining the meaning of a specific text.

A simple but good guide for good Bible Study Methods is:

- 1) Observation – ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight and revelation
- 2) Interpretation – utilize Hermeneutics and Exegesis to study the text
- 3) Application – ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to apply the truth

Genesis 1-3:

Genesis 1:26-28:

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God

created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 1 gives the big picture of the first six days of creation and chapter 2 establishes the seventh day Sabbath and gives the details of the creation of Adam and Eve. God gave Adam and Eve the commission to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it in Genesis 1. In Genesis chapter 2 God gives the details of their roles and how this commission was going to work out. The biblical principle of equality in personhood and worth but functionally different roles is revealed in the beginning. This biblical principle is vitally part of creation because it flows from the very essence of the Godhead. Equality in personhood but functionally different roles was not a temporary state for the Godhead, but defines God for all eternity. More detailed explanation of this are found below under the Old Testament section.

Genesis 2:5-25:

⁵ When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— ⁷ then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. ¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” ¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” ¹⁹ Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Key things from Genesis 1-2 showing Adam’s spiritual leadership:

1.) God created Adam first

- 2.) Adam given task of naming the animals before Eve was created
- 3.) Adam given task of preparing the garden for Eve – man is to be responsible for being the primary provider. This is not saying that the woman does not provide or even might provide more, it is saying that ultimately the man is responsible for the family.
- 4.) Adam given the command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and to communicate that to Eve – spiritual leadership over the garden - house, making a home ready for Eve so they can complement each other and take dominion and subdue the earth together.
- 5) Eve created to be a helper for Adam
- 6) Adam named Eve who was created from his own body
- 7) Man is to leave and cleave, modeling being Provider, Protector and Priest
- 8) Satan subverted Adam’s leadership by tempting Eve
- 9) God approached Adam first after they had sinned
- 10) Adam is held ultimately responsible for sin and the fall

Genesis 3:16:

¹⁶To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

The woman’s penalty impacts both her role in childbearing and her relationship with her husband. Egalitarians try to show that a result of the fall was the patriarchal structure and man leading his wife rather than a corruption of the order of creation shown in Genesis 2. Painful childbirth signals hope in new life ahead, but also is a reminder of sin and what happens when we take things into our own hands and disobey God.

In Genesis 3:16b, the word, “desire” is used in two other places in the O.T. Gen. 4:7 and Song of Solomon 7:10-11. In the Song of Solomon passage the word in context refers to intimate sexual desire. This aspect makes no sense in the context of Genesis 3:16b, which is clearly a penalty from God to the woman. Better is the explanation from Genesis 4:7b, where “desire” and “rule are found together, “Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” In 4:7b sin is characterized like an animal that is trying to assault and overcome Cain and, but God tells him to “rule” over that unruly desire. So, this verse describes a struggle of leadership within marriage. This “desire” of the woman is her attempt to control her husband, but God has ordained his leadership function in the creation. This is just a reminder of what the woman did in the garden. She overturned the God created order by listening to the serpent and not her husband and God’s command to Adam that he was to share with Eve. *Adam’s passivity for letting the serpent tempt Eve and not stepping in to protect her allowed a complete reversal of the God created leadership structure for marriage.* Satan has been at work throughout history trying to undo marriage and the family structure. This is one reason why this is such a critical issue for the church to establish strong marriages and families built upon God’s design and stable against the enemies lies.

Old Testament:

Throughout the Old Testament the created roles within marriage from Genesis were upheld. Patriarchal Structure was the model of family and within the family of God. As stated above this structure flows from the very essence of the Godhead. Egalitarians minimize this issue and point out the abuses of patriarchal structure rather than deal with the source of this structure. Satan’s goal has been to subvert this family structure from the beginning.

Women served in many different ways throughout the Old Testament and in some very high profile positions, i.e. Deborah (Judge) and Esther (Queen). But it is important to note that they never served in the priesthood. Again, this is consistent with the created leadership structure within marriage and the house of God.

All of the authority structure we see within the Bible ultimately flows from the essence of the Godhead, the Trinity. Within the Trinity we have the Son submitting to the Father. It is important to note that this is not just a temporary structure. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 makes this very clear:

²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.”

Not only does this reveal the clear submission of Jesus to the Father, but it makes it clear that this defines the very essence of God. This is consistent with the rest of the N.T. teaching that clearly reveals Jesus and the Holy Spirit submitting to the Father. And reveals the consistent teaching of the O.T. with the N.T. teaching on marriage. (John 5:19-47; 10:29-30; Acts 1:7; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:11-15)

Gospels:

Throughout the Gospels the created order from Genesis is upheld. Jesus Himself only chose men to be His 12 apostles. There was nothing culturally keeping Jesus from making a point about a new structure within marriage and the church when it came to men and women. Jesus did more to elevate woman's dignity and worth than any other historical figure. He broke many cultural norms to reach out to women. He engaged the woman at the well when culturally He was not supposed to. He had many women who were part of His larger group of followers. If, as the Egalitarians promote, the Gospel liberated women to be both equal in personhood and equal in function as men why would Jesus not address or even hint at this major of an issue? Jesus upheld the creation order and that order is consistently upheld throughout the rest of the N.T.

Acts and Romans:

Egalitarians try to say that women taught openly to men in the early church. They point to situations like Priscilla and Aquila who explained to Apollos the way of God more accurately. (Acts 18:26) But this reveals just the opposite. It is a beautiful picture a couple serving God together and encouraging and equipping people. This account was in private not part of the gathered church. It is in complete harmony with Paul's description of women's roles in marriage and the Church (1 Tim. 2:11-15).

Egalitarians advocate that Paul appointed Junia (Rom. 16:7) as an apostle with the same authority and role as her husband and other apostles. There are two main problems here. First, the Greek itself does not support clearly that Junia was actually described as an apostle. Secondly, the gift of apostle is available to both men and women, but that gift just like the teaching gift needs to be worked out within the guidelines of 1 Cor. 11:2-16, 14:31-44; 1 Tim. 2:11-15.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

² Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. ³ But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵ but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. ⁶ For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. ⁷ For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. ⁸ For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹ Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰ That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; ¹² for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. ¹³ Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴ Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, ¹⁵ but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶ If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.”

The first important teaching that this section of scripture makes clear is that women are to be involved in the church service using their gifts, especially prophesy. Again, all of the spiritual gifts are available to both men and women, but they are to be worked out within the N.T. guidelines for marriage and the church. (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:31-40; 1 Tim. 2:11-15)

“Head Covering” issue: The main point of these verses is not what kind of physical (cultural) head covering the women are to wear in church. The context is clear that the bigger main issue is the issue of “authority” structure within the church. Egalitarians accuse Complementarians of being inconsistent here in not pressing the issue of a physical head covering if we are going to press the issue of male leadership within the church. First, scholars have never come to any consensus to what kind of physical head covering Paul was specifically referring to. Secondly, for us to require women to wear a certain type of head covering today would be putting a law into the church that would distract us from the main heart issue. A similar cultural issue today in the West that would relate would be the issue of women taking the man’s last name. If she refuses, she is making a statement about her independence. If she takes it, she is saying she comes under his name. So, to press the issue of a physical head covering today would be violating the greater gospel message of grace over the law. We do not strictly obey the holy kiss today (Rom 16:16) but pull the timeless truth from it of a warm welcome. And we do not command the drinking of wine for sickness today. (1 Tim 5:23) So, the timeless truth or transcultural principle is that women when prophesying when the church is gathering should honor male headship, the God created authority structures from the beginning.

***Kephale* (head) discussion:** This word can mean either “authority over” or “source”. The egalitarian position has fought for “source” to lighten the clear authority structure given from Genesis. However, even if it means source and authority like it probably does in Col. 2:19 and Eph. 4:15, this does not change the meaning, it would still support male leadership.

“Most egalitarians have continued to argue that *kephale* means ‘source’ and complementarians that it

means ‘authority over’ or ‘ruler.’ Although I am an egalitarian (and recognize that there are some cases where the meaning ‘source’ is more likely), as an exegete I am more inclined to think that the complementarians’ usual lexical preference is more relevant (especially Eph 5).” (*Paul, Women and Wives*, Craig Kenner, p. xiv)

Spiritual Protection issue: 1 Cor. 11:10 states, “That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.” This statement ties back to the garden and the enemies goal to reverse the order of submission, which Paul states again here in 1 Cor 11:3. When men are passive like Adam or women usurp their husband’s leadership role in marriage and in the church the marriage is opened to spiritual attack. Satan has been about destroying the structure and strength of marriage and that structure and strength within the church from the very beginning.

1 Corinthians 14:31-40

^{33b}As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. ³⁶ Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? ³⁷ If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. ³⁸ If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹ So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But all things should be done decently and in order.

Obviously, Paul cannot be talking about a universal silence for women within the church, because we have just seen in 1 Corinthians 11 that women are to prophesy in the church. And it is clear from other places that women are to use their gifts when the church is gathered. So, what is Paul referring to here? In context, in the previous verse Paul has been giving direction for how to evaluate the theological accuracy of a prophecy that is given. Verses 31-33 states, “For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of the prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.” So, when it came to determining the theological accuracy of a given prophecy women-wives were to remain silent and discuss with their husbands and in the church be a unified couple. This lines up with Paul’s guidelines in 1 Tim. 2:11-15, that women are not to teach or have authority over a man in marriage or in the church.

In verse 37 Paul makes clear that this is a timeless truth when he states, “the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.”

Galatians 3:27-29

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

This is one of the main passages the Egalitarians utilize to support their position. They interpret Paul saying here that in Christ there is no longer any personhood distinction nor functional distinction between male or female. They hold this verse in priority over all of the other verses we are looking at in this paper.

Here are just a few reasons why this is not at all what Paul is saying here: *First*, the context of the discussion is clearly referring to salvation. The point Paul is making is that there are no boundaries to the throne of grace. *Second*, this would contradict the order of creation and all of the other scriptures Paul had written. *Third*, the distinctions between Jews and Greeks, and slave and free and male and female did not change within the church. Jews were still Jews, with their cultural uniqueness and slaves were still encouraged to serve their masters and masters to treat their slaves well and husband and wives were to still to love and respect each other in their unique way. Now, some have pointed out that since slavery is wrong and slaves should be liberated that the same liberation should be applied to wives role in marriage and the church. This is not so since Paul clearly command bondservants to obey their masters and masters to treat them well. (Eph. 6:5-9) We must be clear that for Paul and in the N.T. there was a culturally acceptable slavery that was a benefit to poor people. Paul strictly condemned “enslavers” in 1 Tim. 1:10. This is the kind of slavery our country experienced and it should be condemned. *Fourth*, if this hermeneutic is used here as the Egalitarians are using it, it can also be used by progressives to eliminate any distinctions between the sexes. This is a good example of how important good bible study methods are. So, if this hermeneutic is taken and this verse goes beyond the context of salvation to deal with practical roles within marriage and church then it also destroys any distinction between what it means to be male and female, there is no end to how this passage could be used to promote homosexuality and transgender issues. “There is no male and female...” surely doesn’t mean that God’s created order and physical and functional differences are overturned. Again, the consistent transcultural truth throughout the Bible is that God created husbands and wives as equal in personhood and worth but with different functional roles within marriage and the church.

Ephesians 5:21-33, Colossians 3:18-19

²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.”

There has been a negative connotation of the idea of submission because of the abuse of this idea. Biblical submission is seen as a beautiful thing that reflects Jesus Himself as He submits to the Father. These verses are clearly consistent with the created order of the specific roles of husbands and wives within marriage. This is in line with all the other N.T. teaching on roles of husbands and

wives in marriage and the church. These verses go on to also communicate the powerful reality that Christian marriages are to mirror the Church's relationship with Christ.

1 Timothy 2:8-15, 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

2 ⁸I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. ¹¹Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

3 ¹The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

1 ⁵This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ‘if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

One of the main arguments of Egalitarians is that Paul is talking specifically about women influenced by false teachers and that women were in general not educated and therefore more susceptible to false teaching. One key problem with this is that there is no indication in the text of this cultural problem. Nor is there any indication of this issue found in Ephesus from other passages. (Acts 19). Also, some try to say that these instructions are given because women were not educated; however, not all men were educated and 1 Timothy only speaks about male false teachers, so why would the male false teachers not be kept from teaching as well?

There are solid reasons why these verses teach timeless transcultural truths:

- 1) They are consistent with all O.T. and N.T. verses dealing with this issue.
- 2) Paul is not dealing with some unique cultural issue in Ephesus, for he states very clearly in chapter 3 verses 14-15 his purpose statement for writing to Timothy: “I hope to come to you soon, but I am

writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.”

3) Paul’s guidelines for women not “to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet,” are tied directly to the creation order from Genesis as timeless truths.

4) Some egalitarians say that not all proof texts from OT are transcultural meaning used to show timeless truths. However, we see Jesus used the created order to defend God’s design for marriage and not to divorce (Matt 19:3-9). Paul argued from creation in prohibiting homosexuality (Rom 1:26-27). There is nothing in 1 Tim 2 that reveals anything other than Paul arguing a timeless truth from the created order, without building something from cultural background that is not mentioned at all within the text.

5) In verses 8-10 Paul describes the attitude and atmosphere that should characterize the church whenever it gathers. The men are to lead out in worship and not let anger and quarreling divide the unity of the church as it is gathering. Sadly, in many churches the men are passive in worship (just like Adam in the beginning) rather than leading out as they ought to as the spiritual leaders. He commends the women to uphold modesty in their dress so as to not cause division or distraction from worship. The specific dress that Paul refers to here was culturally a problem when the church gathered because it caused division and distraction.

6) In verses 3:1-7, immediately following this discussion, Paul gives the qualifications for eldership within the church. Again, this lines up with the rest of scripture that the elders of the church must be men and that they must be able to teach and have spiritual authority in the church.

Conclusion

After reading and studying all these verses you might have more questions than when you started. That is good. We must first start by looking at what the overall teaching of the Bible is before we start to move toward applying the scriptures to specific issues within marriage and the church. Some practical questions that can only be properly answered after thorough study of all these scriptures are:

- Do these principles apply only within marriage and the church or do they apply out in the world?
- Can a woman ever teach a man?
- Can a woman ever be in the pulpit?
- Can a woman teach a mixed bible study?
- How does a woman operate with an apostolic gifting?
- How do a husband and wife model these principles?
- What is the role of a single woman?

There are many other questions that will come up in this discussion. It is imperative that the local church leadership has a clear understanding and conviction of their position on these verses. When application questions come up there should be a healthy prayerful discussion between leadership and those who have questions before any decisions are made on application.

Complementarian resources:

Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, Piper and Grudem
Women in the Church, An Interpretation and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 by Andreas Kostenberger
and Thomas Scheiner

Egalitarian resources:

Paul, Women and Wives, Craig Kenner
Discovering Biblical Equality, Pierce, Grootius

Comparative Study:

Two Views on Women in Ministry, contributors Linda Belleville, Craig L. Blomberg, Craig Keener,
Thomas R. Schreiner