

Christ Reformation Church

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Hold Fast to Christ!

(Col 2:2b-3 ESV) to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

“Marriage and Family on this Side of the Cross (Part 2)”

May 5, 2013

Sermon Text: Colossians 3:18-4:1

Scripture Reading: Gen 4:1-16

Introduction-

You will remember that the Bible begins and ends in Eden. If we fail to recognize this, we will fail to truly understand the Bible and thus fail to

understand the gospel and the magnitude of what God has done for us in Christ. The Bible will largely remain a disjoint, disconnected depository of stories and facts, but with no unifying theme. This is the reason that the Bible makes no real sense to so many people, and it is why so many Christians remain so focused on this present life.

When we studied the theme of the Temple, we emphasized the importance of this repeated theme:

Lev 26:12 And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

Eze 37:27 My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Joh 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Joh 14:23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my

word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

2Co 6:16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

(Revelation 21:3 ESV) And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

The discipline of Biblical theology traces this theme, and how God accomplishes it in Christ, right on through the Bible.

So whenever we read Scripture, we simply cannot properly understand and apply it without relating it to this overall goal and purpose. In the beginning, God and man dwelled together. Sin destroyed that and alienated us. But the Lord immediately set out to bring us back to Himself, back to Eden:

- Eden as temple

- A distorted, man-made temple destroyed and rejected at Babel
- The tabernacle
- The Temple at Jerusalem
- Temple destroyed
- Temple rebuilt by Ezra and Nehemiah
- Jesus as the Temple, Jerusalem temple destroyed
- The church as the Temple
- The New Creation as Temple

And therefore, as we noted last time, the New Testament instructions to us are descriptions of New Creation living. Christ has inaugurated the New Order by His death and resurrection. We are new creations, citizens of the New Heavens and New Earth. Already. Not yet. Not in all its fullness, but nevertheless it has begun. As someone put it – *Christians have one foot in the old order and one in the new*. When we understand these things, the individual doctrines we are taught in Scripture are greatly enhanced in our thinking.

And marriage is one of these doctrines. This morning as we study Colossians 3:18-19 and related Scriptures, we are going to see a specific example of how we are to return to Eden in our everyday thinking and living. A new Adam has conquered, and is taking us back to a world without sin or curse.

(Colossians 3:18-1 ESV) ¶ 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 provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.²²

Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

ESV 4:1 ¶ Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

“normal” in your life, then your heart is still unchanged. Look at Cain:

(1Jo 3:12 ESV) ¹² We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.

(Jud 1:10-11 ESV) ¹⁰ But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. ¹¹ Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

Children, what is your day like? Are you like Cain? How do you behave toward your parents and toward your brothers and sisters? Like Cain who murdered his brother? This is no small thing in God's sight just because you are a child:

(Rom 1:28-32 ESV) ²⁸ ¶ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full

of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips,

³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, **disobedient to parents,**

³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Do you see here that children who disobey their parents are placed into the same evil group as murderers and those who hate God! And why are they this way? Because they refuse to acknowledge God. That means they want to be their own god and they refuse to humble themselves to the true God.

We live in a time when there is widespread disobedience to authority, and one of the biggest forms of that disobedience is that of children who disobey their parents. God says that such children deserve to die. Do not be one of them. Humble yourself and stop being proud. Ask the Lord to change your heart and rescue you from hell. This is no small thing. It is no cute thing. You may be a child, but this is grownup stuff. If you are still

like Cain and you die today, you will end in hell forever.

And if you are a Christian, then like all of us you are called by Jesus to start living more and more like the New Creation. In the New Heavens and Earth, there is no rebellion. You are no longer of this world – stop living like it.

Listen to it in Ephesians:

(Eph 6:1-3 ESV) **Ephesians 6:1 ¶**
Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

² "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise),

³ "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

There is also a promise for children who will not obey their parents and honor them – *it will not go well with you in your life. And you will not live long.*

So you see children, you don't get a "get out of hell free card" just because you are a kid. When we are old enough to rebel and disobey, we are old enough to have to be held responsible for it.

More on Husbands and Wives

3:18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.
19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

We saw last time then that this also is a return to pre-fall Eden. It is a call to live as new creatures in a new creation which is already but not yet. Therefore, if we are to understand what this instruction means, all we need do is go back and consider what kind of relationship Adam and Even had before sin and the curse entered the world. Remember:

(Gen 3:16 ESV) ¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

...this is pronounced as part of the curse. This *desire* and *rule* are not to be the norm for Christian marriages. They are the norm for a sin-fallen world, but not for us. What do these words mean? Consider this parallel –

(Gen 4:3-7 ESV) ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,

⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

⁶ The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?

⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. **Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.**"

See it? The very same words used in 3:16. Here, sin is pictured as a ravenous beast crouched at Cain's door, desiring to master him. The Lord tells Cain that he must master or rule over that sin instead. So you see this great power struggle between sin and man.

And that is what 3:16b means. As a result of the fall and the entrance of sin into the world, every form of human relationship was distorted. And that includes marriage and the family. In the case of husbands and wives, enmity was established. A power struggle to see who would rule. Paul is telling us here in Col 3 that we are to be done with this and return to Eden in our marriages. Consider what it was like before sin –

(Gen 2:21-25 ESV) 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.

birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

See it? Both created in the image of God. Perfect oneness and intimacy. The man no longer alone, recognizing his wife as a gift from the Lord, loving her as his own flesh, and she come to help as they both pursue the mission given them by the Lord in subduing and ruling over the creation, bringing glory to God.

The household codes of the New Testament, like Col 3:18ff and Ephesians 5:22ff, are calls for husbands and wives, parents and children to return to Eden. To put away the *desiring/ruling*. Let me read some comments to you on this. The first is from Alan Groves, Westminster Theological Seminary:

"...there will be a conflict for control. This conflict is not good! It is a product of sin that has entered into the lives and hearts of the man and the woman. God is here stating the shape of the future for fallen humanity. The woman's desire is to master her husband although he will master her. Even will wrongly desire to master her husband, but her husband will oppressively master her.

Keep in mind also the larger context of Adam and Eve's sin. Eve desired to be

And again –

(Gen 1:26-28 ESV) 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

like God (Adam too, of course, but the text shows Eve being tempted and passing it on to the man). One way to put it is that she tried to gain greater control in her relationship with God by trying to become like God and to know what he knows. Then she led her husband astray (he is absolutely guilty; in fact later Scripture primarily blames him, not Eve, Paul's comments in Timothy notwithstanding). It strikes me that when God judges someone, the judgment is appropriate to the sin – oppress the poor and you will be made poor; David commits adultery and murder, so too sexual sin and murder are the judgments on his household; etc. In the same manner, Eve's punishment is appropriate to her sin; she wanted to be the master (in the wrong way), but she will be mastered (in the wrong way).

In Christ, the curse is removed, even reversed, in all areas of our lives – we will no longer die, but instead live; we will no longer seek our kingdom, but instead the kingdom of God; and in relation to marriage, the husband will no longer oppress his wife, but instead lay down his life for her and serve her; and the wife will no longer desire to master him, but instead submit to him and love him. This is only possible with new hearts and the indwelling of the Spirit and an embracing of the grace of God in Christ.

Here is another, from Philip B. Payne in his book *Man and Woman, One in Christ*. Payne argues for an egalitarian view of marriage in which husband and wife submit to one another and neither has authority or position over the other. I still reject that position, but here Payne does make a very good comment on *desiring and ruling*:

"Your desire will be for your husband means, 'your desire will be to master or manipulate your husband,' but he will master you....The fall transformed the relationship of Adam and Even from equality into a power struggle. 'Far from being a reign of coequals over the remainder of God's creation, the relationship now becomes a fierce dispute, with each party trying to rule the other. The two who once reigned as one attempt to rule each other."

And here is G.K. Beale (A New Testament Biblical Theology):

Paul is concerned to say not only that Christ has inaugurated the new creation unity of fragmented humanity in general (for example, Jew and Gentile), but also that He has begun to put back together the broken relationships with the family in particular. There was not meant to be any division between Adam and Even or between all subsequent husbands and wives living in the prefall paradise. The effect of the fall into sin

caused such a separation between Adam and Eve and in subsequent marriages. It is quite fitting for Paul to appeal to a prefall creation text ("the two shall be one flesh") about unity in marriage as a prototype for the unity of Christ and the church in the new creation. Accordingly, husbands and wives should be motivated to maintain the unity that Adam and Eve first experienced in the original creation and the unity that all human beings were designed to experience before the fall.

This is a very practical notion for Christian husbands and wives to remember. It is true that marriage is for the purposes of fulfillment in love, for propagation, and for sanctification. When problems arise in the marriage relationship, husbands and wives need to remember that there is an ultimate redemptive-historical purpose for marriage that transcends their own human relationship. As husbands love their wives and as wives respond to this love in a faithful manner, they are actors on a redemptive-historical stage performing a play before the onlooking audience of the world. As husbands and wives perform their roles on this stage in the way God has designed, their roles are an object lesson to the watching world that Christ has left His Father to love and become one with his bride, and that those who respond in faith can become part of this

corporate bride. In doing so, people will leave the sphere of the old world and enter into the new creation. Christian mates are part of the new creation, and the ethic regulating their marriage is a recapitulation of the original design of marriage in Eden which pointed to Christ and the church. When conflict enters the marriage relationship and division begins to occur, both partners need to remember that they have covenanted with each other before God to love each other, to remain loyal to that covenant, to continue to become one and, hence to maintain the peace of the new creation of which they are a part. In contrast to the divisions and conflicts that remain elsewhere in the old creation, husbands and wives are to reflect the peaceful unity that was to have been characteristic of Adam and Eve in Eden before sin. This peaceful unity that was to be true of the first marriage in history is to be characteristic of all those living in the inaugurated phase of the new creation in Christ.

Loving and Submitting

Now, as I have pointed out to you often, one of the enemies of this return to Eden, to this new creation living, is patriarchy. We could also add matriarchy. Any -ism that teaches that either man or woman is superior to

the other in being, that sets husbands and wives, men and women against one another, is of the curse, not the new creation. In our conservative, Bible-believing churches, the most common danger is patriarchy. A distortion of what Scripture means when it teaches that the husband is the head of the wife and that the wife is to submit to her husband. This is one of the major reasons I wrote the book, *A Cry for Justice* and added the sub-title, *how the evil of domestic abuse hides in your church*. Of all places on this earth and in this world, the Christian church must be the place where that evil of the enmity between husbands and wives is exposed, rejected, repented of, and replaced with new creation living. Sadly, Gen 3:16b is widely taught as the norm for Christians right in many of our churches!

Now, what are we to do then with the Bible's teaching that husbands are the head of their wife and that the wife is to submit to her husband? Many Christians, rejecting what is called the *complementarian* position, embrace what they call the *egalitarian* opinion. Much more heat than light often is produced when a comp and an egal intersect!

I still reject the conclusion that the Bible never presents husbands as head of their wife in the sense of leadership

or of some kind of authority. Philip Payne, as I mentioned, is an egalitarian. Listen to what he says about the pre-fall roles of Adam and Eve:

"Since man's ruling over woman is a result of the fall, man must not have ruled over woman before the fall. It would be out of harmony with every other consequence of the fall to interpret man's rule over woman as something good that should be fostered. This passage no more teaches this than it teaches that women ought to have pain in childbirth."

Payne is referring of course to Gen 3:16-

(Gen 3:16 ESV) ¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

Now, Payne is indeed correct when he says, as we have been saying, that this verse is NOT new creation marriage. It IS a pronouncement of part of the curse. It is NOT good that this desiring and ruling competition and vying for power characterize marriage. And it is true that these things did not exist before the fall.

However, are we to conclude that Adam in *no way* ruled? That Adam and Eve were completely equal and identical in their roles? I conclude, no. There are numbers of Scriptures that indicate that Adam was assigned a kind of primacy, a leadership role, that was different than the role Eve was given.

Think, for example, of Christ in relation as Son to the Father. Co-equal Persons, yes. Fully God. And yet the Son in submission to the Father.

Or think of Christ as the last Adam, and His bride the church. Are there differences in the roles of each? Does Christ lead as Head and does the church submit? Yes.

Look back into Gen 2:

(Gen 2:7 ESV) 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.

(Gen 2:18-23 ESV) 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."

What do we see here?

- Adam was created first
- Eve's being proceeded out of Adam
- Adam named Eve

Therefore we must reject the egalitarian position stated by Payne,

"Genesis 1-3 consistently depicts the unity of the man and the woman as equal partners, not woman under man."

Well, of course I would not completely agree with these descriptions either. There is a sense in which Adam and Eve were equal. And there is a sense then in which Eve was not “under” Adam as some kind of “gopher” to obediently do his bidding. And yet, the New Testament certainly points out that it is not without significance that Adam was created first:

(1Ti 2:11-14 ESV) ¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.

¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve;

¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

And then we have Paul’s instruction that sin entered the world through Adam’s disobedience, just as our justification comes through the obedience of Christ, the last Adam:

(Rom 5:12-16 ESV) ¹² ¶ Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned--

¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ ¶ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

It is, therefore, no solution for us to jettison all notion of the biblical doctrines of the husband as head of his wife, and the wife submitting to that head.

However, all forms of the power struggle must be rejected. That *desiring/ruling* dynamic of the curse is not new creation living. Listen to it again:

(Eph 5:22-33 ESV) 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.

The husband functions as head by loving and sacrificial serving as He models Christ's love for the church.

And the wife cooperates in that venture, respecting her husband, the two of them *functioning as one flesh, totally open before one another, carrying out the mission of bringing in the new creation as Christ has called them to do.*

This means:

- There must be no fear in a marriage
- There must be open, honest communication
- There cannot be any aspect of the husband ruling by "this is what I say and you are to do it."
- There must be no plotting on the part of the wife to rule her husband.
- Just as a machine must be sparked before it moves, so the husband must function as the leading spark, taking primary responsibility for leading his wife and family toward Christ and godliness. Then the wife moves joyfully in to partner in this venture.

What is the most common example of curse living in our marriages? I suggest to you that it is *fear*. I urge you all to sit down and sort this out as the one flesh that you are. Some of you wives are afraid of your husband. Some of you husbands fear your wives. So communication does not

happen. This must not be. This need not be. We have been delivered from the curse. Now we must live like it.

[Note: Following is an article by Steven Tracy (author of *Mending the Soul*) entitled 1 Corinthians 11:3 –A Corrective to Distortions and Abuses of Male Headship taken from the website of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. I do not endorse everything on that website, in particular books on marriage by John Piper].

A Corrective to Distortions and Abuses of Male Headship

In recent years, 1 Cor 11:3 has been used to buttress a complementarian model of sexuality (men and women are spiritual equals, but have different, complementary gender based roles). The relevance of this text to clarify gender role debates is patently clear. Paul gives us an instructional model for male leadership-the man is the head of the woman as God [the Father] is the head of Christ. The eternal functional headship or authority¹ of the Father over the Son, often referred to as functional

subordination within the Trinity, has been well developed by others.² My concern is rather to build on this theological principle by teasing out some of the implications of functional subordination affirmed in 1 Cor 11:3 to correct misunderstandings and distortions of male headship. It is often asserted that patriarchy, broadly defined as the legitimation of male authority over females, is the basis for most, if not all social pathologies. For instance, Russ Funk states:

Patriarchy is a terrible, violent, vile system that destroys huge pieces of all of us-our individual humanness and humanness in general. Patriarchy creates men who choose to act oppressively and violently, who create huge systems of destruction.... . Patriarchy is a death system. It is a system based on destruction, violence, and degradation.³

It might be tempting to casually dismiss such criticisms, especially given the theological and ethical views of many radical feminists who deny for example, the substitutionary atonement (calling it "divine child abuse"),⁴ reject historic Christian orthodoxy in favor of neo-

paganism and goddess worship, and stridently promote lesbianism and abortion.⁵ At the same time, we must never soften our commitment to the truth, wherever it may lead us. If feminists have identified legitimate concerns, they must be fiercely addressed. Sadly, while biblical complementarians oppose the abuse of male leadership, they have been extremely slow to address specific issues of male abuse in a detailed fashion.⁶

While patriarchy is not the cause of all the world's social ills, a corruption of patriarchy very often is a major cause of many ills. Given the nature of human depravity with its tendency to corrupt divine gifts, it should not surprise us to find that male headship is often twisted to generate horrible evil. Donald Bloesch astutely observes: "In opposing militant feminism, however, we must not make the mistake of enthroning patriarchal values that have often held women and children in bondage and oppression."⁷ Similarly, in the context of noting the harmful results of egalitarianism, which he says are anarchy or matriarchy, he issues a

sober warning: "a very real danger in the patriarchal family is tyranny in which the husband uses his power to hold his wife and children in servile dependence and submission."⁸

Widespread abuse of male power is anticipated and condemned in Scripture. Genesis 3:16 sadly predicts that one effect of the fall would be the distortion of biblical sexual roles, with the man seeking to rule harshly and despotically over the woman. "He shall rule over you" is no divine proscription but a tragic predication of sin's effects on the human race.⁹ Scripture declares that in our fallen world, those with power (typically males) will use their power to exploit and abuse those with less power (typically females and children-Micah 2:9; 3:1-3; Isa 10:1-2; Ezek 22:6-12). In a clarification of greatness in the kingdom, Jesus reminds his disciples that the Gentile political rulers (who were virtually all male) used their authority to dominate harshly those under their care,¹⁰ whereas in the kingdom of God, greatness is expressed through humble servitude (Luke 22:25-26).

Prevalence of male abuse of power/authority

Can we quantify the biblical predictions of distorted sexual roles by men? Sadly, the evidence is overwhelming that males have repeatedly abused their power and authority over women. For instance, Susan Brownmiller's feminist classic *Against Our Will* marshals over five hundred pages of tragic and largely irrefutable evidence of the prevalence of rape by western men over the past two millennia.¹¹ World Health Organization research indicates that at least one in five of the world's females have been physically or sexually abused by a man or men at some time in their life, and that violence against women is as serious a cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age as cancer.¹² Furthermore, the World Health Organization asserts that research results from every country where reliable, large-scale studies have been conducted reveals that 16-52% of women have been assaulted by an intimate partner.

For centuries, Anglo-American common law granted the husband the right as head of the household to beat his wife as long as he did not cause permanent damage.¹³ Currently, domestic violence perpetrated by males accounts for more adult female emergency room visits than traffic accidents, muggings, and rape combined, and according to the U.S. surgeon general it is the greatest single cause of injury to American women.¹⁴ The U.S. Department of Justice reports that 30% of women who are murdered, are killed by their husbands, ex-husbands, or boyfriends.¹⁵ Sadly, since the fall, men have repeatedly used their power and authority abusively to dominate women.

Results of male abuse of power

What happens when God-ordained male leadership turns malignant? The tragic result is that God's prescribed order is brought into disrepute. In many cases marriage itself, one of God's greatest gifts to humanity, is impugned and rejected. God ordained gender expression is also distorted through

male abuse of power. For instance, many researchers believe that a very high percentage of adult lesbians were sexually molested by men in childhood or adolescence. Many women have tragically (but wrongly) concluded that males are not safe; intimacy can only be found with other females.¹⁶

Biblical Solutions

Where in a fallen world do we go for a healthy picture of male headship which challenges both feminism and distorted patriarchy? 1 Corinthians 11:3 challenges feminism by making male leadership a transcultural moral absolute patterned after God himself. 1 Corinthians 11:3 challenges distorted patriarchy by rigorously shaping the boundaries and qualities of male leadership. Biblical headship patterned after the Trinity is the most powerful biblical corrective to the abuse of male power. The Father's headship over the Son involves: loving, sharing, and honoring.

John 5:18-24- Headship and Equality

The Gospel of John gives rich detail regarding the relationship between the Father and the Son. I will focus on John 5:18-24. This passage begins with Jesus' scandalous claim of sonship with the Father (v. 18). While the very terms "Father" and "Son" may well suggest the functional headship of the Father,¹⁷ this is not the implication that John highlights here. Rather, he notes that Jesus calling God "Father" is a radical proclamation of equality with the Father. In fact, throughout this passage which describes the Father's relationship with the Son, complete ontological equality is repeatedly highlighted. This is an important starting place as we reflect on the nature of male headship, for feminists claim that patriarchy is predicated on assumptions of male superiority. John teaches that headship is based on equality.

Loving

In John 5:19-20 we see that while the Son does not act independently of the Father ("the Son can do nothing of himself"), this is not based on the Son's inferiority but on the intimate relationship he has with the Father. "For whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner" (v. 19) indicates an "uninterrupted communion" between the Father and the Son which is so intimate that the Son not only will not, but cannot, act independently of the Father.¹⁸ This is further clarified in v. 20, which says "the Father loves ['keeps on loving'] the Son and shows him all things that he himself is doing."

The Father's headship over the Son is thus expressed in unbroken intimacy in which the Father continually loves and delights in the Son, and reveals his will to the Son he delights in.¹⁹ *The work of the Father and the Son is the collaboration of intimate equals.* Thus, Gilbert Bilezikian [in opposing John's teaching] distorts John's model of functional subordination when he states "Christ did not take upon himself the task of world redemption because he was number two in the

Trinity and his boss told him to do so or because he was demoted to a subordinate rank so that he could accomplish a job that no one else wanted to touch."²⁰

Most complementarians easily recognize Bilezikian's statement for what it is-a gross perversion of a biblical complementarian model of functional subordination. Biblical complementarians assert that the Father never treats the Son as an inferior who can be bullied, but as an equal who is intimately loved and always shared with. Complementarians are not always as quick, however, to recognize the same perversion in heavy handed male authority in which males treat women as inferiors by making decisions unilaterally, selfishly, and insensitively. Teaching which emphasizes female submission without equally emphasizing the man's responsibility to delight in his wife and share with her as an equal partner distorts male headship. The Father's headship over the Son teaches us that biblical headship makes submission not a matter of mere duty, but a delightful response from a woman

who is loved, partnered with, and trusted as an equal.²¹

The importance of defining male headship in terms of loving equality between the man and the woman cannot be over emphasized. As we noted above, physical and sexual abuse by men is shockingly prevalent in our culture. Abusive men often cite male headship/female submissiveness to justify their abuse. Ultimately, this is based on a perverted assumption of male superiority. For example, one standard textbook on group counseling for abusive men states that male superiority/ female inferiority is one of the most consistent core beliefs of abusive men. Hence, for most abusive men, any challenge from their wives is seen as insurrection, which justifies violent behavior to bring the wife back into her position of inferiority.²² One abusive husband explained his belief system at the time he abused his wife: "I [believed] that the man was the head of the household and the final decisions should be his. You know, there has to be a boss. I would make the decisions; my word was the last word. My word was law."²³ Another abusive husband

made the following statement to a researcher who asked him why he beat his wife:

Rebellious and stubborn, that's what she is. And I believe firmly in the Bible. So I have the means ... even hitting You cannot stand the order of creation on its head. Only the man is the Lord of creation, and he cannot allow himself to be dominated by womenfolk. So hitting has been my way of marking—that I'm a man, a masculine man, no softie of a man, no cushytype.²⁴

Sadly, these Christian men grotesquely distort biblical headship. Male headship defined as harsh authoritarian domination of an inferior is destructive heresy that may lead to sinful and immoral actions. The Trinity teaches us that *headship and submission are founded within an intimate love relationship among equals, not coercive domination by a superior.*

Does the New Testament explicitly describe headship in marriage in terms of an intimate love relationship between equals? In Eph 5:22-33 this is precisely what we find. While a different analogy is used here (the husband and Christ)

than Paul uses in 1 Cor 11:3, the point in comparing the man's headship over the woman to Christ's headship over the church is to emphasize loving intimacy. Husbands are specifically commanded to exercise their headship by loving their wives "as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). This is the strongest love declaration imaginable. Truly biblical headship is expressed in sacrificial, loving intimacy. Gender equality in biblical headship is developed in the latter portion of the passage, where Paul calls on husbands to love their wives as their own bodies (5:28). Just as a husband nourishes and cherishes his own body, so he should express his headship over his wife by loving and nourishing her (5:29). Gender equality is further emphasized in 5:31, where Paul cites Gen 2:24 – "and the two shall become one flesh." Biblical headship takes place between a man and a woman who are equally made in God's image. Only equals can experience a "one flesh" relationship. Biblical headship is based on loving intimacy between equals.

Delegated Authority

In John 5:21-24 we find startling statements about the manner in which the Father delegates authority to the Son. Jesus echoes the ancient Jewish belief that the Father has authority over life and death (cf. 2 Kings 5:7; Job 1:21; Ps 104:27-30) by asserting "the Father raises the dead and gives them life." But Jesus then issues a completely unexpected declaration—"even so the Son gives life to whom He wishes" (v. 21). The assertion that the Messiah would have the authority to raise the dead was unknown in ancient Judaism.²⁵ In v. 22 Jesus further demolishes the Jewish understanding of the Messiah's authority, by declaring "not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son." In the Old Testament the Lord God is said to be the eschatological judge (Gen 18:25; Joel 3:2; Ps 82:8), but since Christ is ontologically one with the Father, he is given the full authority to judge. Christ explains the basis for the Father giving Him authority to judge in John 5:27—"because He is the Son of

Man." The title "Son of Man" is Jesus' favorite self designation, and probably comes from Daniel 7:13-14 which describes a Messiah figure from heaven who is given everlasting "dominion" or authority, and is served by all the nations and peoples.

We clearly see here that the Father's headship over the Son does not preclude the Son having great power and authority. In fact, since the Father and the Son are equals and in intimate relationship, we should not be surprised to find the Father sharing his authority with the Son (cf. Luke 10:22).

Sometimes complementarians seem to believe that unless husbands and male elders wield absolutely all authority in the home and in the church, male headship is compromised. This is not what the headship of the Father over the Son teaches us. In fact, the delegation of authority within the Trinity should challenge us to exercise biblical headship by making sure that women are truly being treated as equals by being given authority in various spheres of life and ministry. Feminists have long argued that male headship necessarily denotes inequality. Christian men who

insist on maintaining a monopoly on absolutely all domestic and ecclesiastical authority validate this misconception, and distort the example of headship within the Trinity.

Does this Trinitarian model mitigate against males having final decision-making authority and females responding to male leadership? It does not at all, but rather offers a clarification of male headship. Male headship does not mean that females are not invested with any authority; Christ and the Father demonstrate this. Christ was responsive to the Father's leadership during His incarnation. Repeatedly we read in John's gospel that Christ did the will of the Father and was responsive to the Father's authority (4:34; 6:38; 8:28). Even after Christ's earthly incarnation He is still submissive to the Father's headship, for at the end of the age "the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him" (1 Cor 15:28).

While complementarians by definition believe that God has given the man final domestic and ecclesiastical authority, the woman as the man's equal is given significant and varied authority (the right

or power to do something).²⁶ While it goes beyond the scope of this article to flesh out the full extent of female authority, we should note that in Scripture godly women have authority to proclaim the gospel (Acts 1:8; Phil 4:2-3), prophesy (Isa 8:3; Acts 2:17-18; 21:8-9), run a household (Prov 31:10-31), manage commercial enterprises (Prov 31:10-31), give men corrective accountability (1 Sam 25:18-38; Luke 18:1-8; Acts 18:26), and serve as co-laborers with men in ministry (Judges 4; Rom 16:1-6, 6; Phil 4:2-3).

Honoring

Jesus scandalized the Jewish leaders in John 5:23 by declaring that the Father has given all judgment to the Son "in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." As is true with the previous two aspects of headship within the Trinity, this third element is also based on complete equality between the Father and the Son. The Greek word translated "even as" is , and means "just as, to the same degree." John is saying that the Father gives the Son authority to judge so that the Son would be honored to the same

extent the Father is honored. The boldness of this statement is seen through Isaiah's declaration that God does not share honor with anyone else. "I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another" (Isa 42:8).

While giving honor and worship to idols or created beings is a grievous offense (Deut 7:25-26; Acts 12:20-23; Rev 22:8-9), giving honor to Christ who is one with the Father is entirely appropriate. The Father's headship over Christ is not diminished when Christ receives honor. In fact, this is how his headship is lived out. Other Scripture passages such as Heb 2:9 and Phil 2:9-11 develop the theme of the Father honoring Christ. In both of these passages the context is Christ's incarnational humiliation and obedience to the redemptive plan of the Father. The Father's response to Christ is to "crown him with glory and honor" (Heb 2:9) and "highly exalt" him (Phil 2:9).

Does Scripture highlight honoring as an element of male headship? Peter makes this an earmark of male headship, for he calls husbands to give their wives honor "as a fellow-heir of the grace of life" (1 Pet 3:7). This is such an essential

aspect of male headship that Peter says if husbands do not honor their wives, God may not hear their prayers. Jesus gives us one of the clearest examples of male headship reflected in honoring women. He risked the wrath of the Jewish religious community by lovingly allowing a sinful woman to touch him (Luke 7:36-50), respectfully dialoging with a Samaritan woman in public (John 4:7-27), providentially choosing women to be the first witnesses of his resurrection (Matt 28:1-8), including women among his traveling disciples (Luke 8:1-3), and allowing women to sit at his feet and be taught (Luke 10:38-42). Jesus did these things in a Palestinian Jewish culture in which, generally speaking, women were not to go out into public, men were not to speak to women, women could not give testimony in court, women could not inherit their husband's property, the birth of a daughter was considered a loss, and girls had no official education system in which to be educated.²⁷ The importance of headship involving honoring women is seen through the following pronouncements from influential male civic and ecclesiastical leaders.²⁸

The most influential Greek philosopher, Aristotle, taught that women are by nature inferior to men owing to their defective mental capacities. The Greek biologist Galen drew on Aristotle's low view of women and traced female inferiority back to conception: "the female is more imperfect than the male.... . Just as man is the most perfect of all animals, so also, within the human species, man is more perfect than women." The medieval Christian jurist, Gratian, in the first enduring systematization of church law makes very similar statements: "woman is not made in God's image. Woman's authority is nil; let her in all things be subject to the rule of man ... and neither can she teach, nor be a witness, nor give a guarantee, nor sit in judgment." The early church fathers also often struggled to honor women, and disrespected them by relating their inferiority to the fall. Tertullian, who ministered in the late second and early third century warned women "And do you not know that you are Eve? God's sentence hangs still over all your sex and His punishment weights down upon you. You are the devil's gateway; you are she who first violated the forbidden

tree ... with what ease you shattered the image of God."

These statements asserting female inferiority do violence to the Trinitarian model of headship. As the Father's headship is seen in the robust way he honors the Son, so male headship is properly reflected when men honor women, treat them as full equals, and strategize to bring them greater honor.

A final aspect of male headship, which is subsumed under honoring, is protection. While protection is not explicitly noted in John 5:18-24, it is a logical application of loving and honoring. Furthermore, in eschatological contexts the Father does empower and protect the Son. This is particularly seen in Psalm 2 and 110, which speak of the Father's empowerment of the Son to triumph over his enemies. Is the protection of women explicitly linked to male headship in Scripture? Absolutely, for this is a dominant biblical theme. In our fallen world where power is often abused, God calls his people to protect the vulnerable and create justice for the oppressed (Prov 24:10-11; Is 58:5-10; Ezek 45:8-9). Men are particularly called to protect and care for women and

children (Deut 25:5-10; Isa 1:15-17; Jer 22:2-3), for this is how God himself exercises his power and authority (Deut 10:17-19).

Unfortunately, secular society and even the Christian church often fail to protect women, and often blame the woman for physical or sexual violence perpetrated upon her.²⁹ Feminists rightly criticize the church for failing to protect women. In one research project on domestic violence, 27% of pastors surveyed said that if a woman submits to her husband as God decrees, then the abuse will stop or God will give the woman grace to endure the beatings.³⁰ In fact, the beatings often do not stop and we should not presume on God's grace to endure avoidable suffering.³¹ These pastors have misunderstood the nature of domestic violence, and have seriously distorted the nature of biblical submission. Churches should aggressively confront abusers and pursue all means possible to protect vulnerable women. True masculine headship is reflected in the sensitive care and protection of women.

Conclusion

While feminists are correct to highlight the widespread abuses of male power and authority, the solution is not to reject God ordained gender roles but to clarify them. 1 Corinthians 11:3 provides the best imaginable corrective to distortions of male authority by defining human male headship in terms of the Father's headship over the Son. The radical implications of this text should not escape us. Based on 1 Cor 11:3, we should consider it just as heretical to imply male superiority over women as we consider Jehovah's Witness teaching heretical which asserts that Christ is inferior to the Father. We should consider it utterly unbiblical for men to dishonor women, as we consider it utterly unbiblical to deny worship to Christ. Just as we would be offended at and oppose the teaching of anyone who would deny that the Father raised Christ from the dead and will eschatologically vindicate him, so we should be deeply offended that anyone would fail to honor and protect women. The most instructive model for male leadership is the headship of the Father over the Son.

Endnotes

¹ Wayne Grudem's work on κεφαλή removes all doubt that it means "authority over" not simply "source" or "origin of." Cf. "Does Kephale ('Head') Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples, *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985) 38-59; "The Meaning of Kephale ('Head'): A Response to Recent Studies," *Trinity Journal* 11 (1990) 3-72; "The Meaning of Kephale ('Head'): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (2001) 25-65.

² Stephen D. Kovach and Peter R. Schemm, Jr., "A Defense of the Doctrine of the Eternal Subordination of the Son," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42 (1999) 461-476; Robert Letham, "The Man-Woman Debate: Theological Comment," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990) 65-78; Bruce A. Ware, "Tampering with the Trinity: Does the Father Submit to the Son?" *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 6 (2001) 4-12.

³ Russ Funk, *Stopping Rape: A Challenge to Men* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1993) 37. Similarly, Vicky Whipple states "one of the main teachings in conservative churches that contributes to domestic violence is that of male/female submission," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 13 (1987) 254.

⁴ "Christianity is an abusive theology that glorifies suffering. Is it any wonder that there is so much abuse in modern society when the predominant image or theology of the culture is of 'divine child abuse'-God the Father demanding and carrying out the suffering and death of his own son?" Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God so Loved the World?" in *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*, ed. by Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (New York: Continuum, 1995) 56.

⁵ Mary A. Kassian gives a very helpful overview of the growth of lesbianism and paganism/goddess worship in the feminist movement, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1992). Cf. Peter Jones, "Androgyny: The Pagan Sexual Ideal," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 (2000) 443-469.

⁶ For instance, exceedingly few book length treatments of the abuse of male power seen

in child abuse, sexual violence, or domestic violence have been written by biblical complementarians, whereas evangelical egalitarians and theologically liberal feminists have written hundreds of such books.

⁷ Donald Bloesch, *Is the Bible Sexist?* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1982) 104.

⁸ Ibid., 89.

⁹ The Hebrew terms for "desire" and "rule" found in Gen 3:16 are the same terms found in Gen 4:7 regarding sin's desire to overcome Cain who needed to dominate or master it. These lexical observations along with the context of Gen 3:16 which gives unfortunate, negative consequences of the fall, leads me to conclude that "he shall rule over you" reflects not God's desire, but a realistic prediction of the results of sinful struggles for power.

¹⁰ Interestingly, the same Greek word used here for harsh lordship or domination, κυριεύω, is the same word used in Gen 3:16 in the Septuagint to indicate that the man will rule over the woman.

¹¹ Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975). While only the most strident feminists would agree with Brownmiller's conclusion that rape is "a

conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear" (p. 5), her documentation of the widespread abuse of male sexual power must not be dismissed.

¹² "WHO Violence against Women Information Pack," www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/vaw/infopack.htm, 2002.

¹³ Riva B. Siegel, "'The Rule of Love': Wife Beating as Prerogative and Privacy," *Yale Law Review* 105 (1996) 2117-2130. A brief, helpful history of domestic violence against women in the western world can be found at "Herstory of Domestic Violence: A Timeline of the Battered Women's Movement," www.mincava.umn.edu/reports/herstory.asp, 2002.

¹⁴ *Journal of the American Medical Association* 276 (1992) 3132.

¹⁵ Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark, *No Place for Abuse* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001) 166.

¹⁶ D. K. Peters and P. J. Cantrell found that over 66% of the lesbians surveyed reported forced sexual encounters with men after the age of twelve, compared to a rate of only 28% for heterosexuals, "Factors Distinguishing Samples of Lesbian and Heterosexual Women," *Journal of Homosexuality* 21 (1991) 1-15. Susan Hunt,

a complementarian, observes "every single one of my feminist friends was abused by a man who was supposed to be her protector... a father, an uncle, a husband. I'm convinced that's true for the vast majority of feminists.... Is it any wonder these women don't trust men or that they equate 'submission' with co-dependence, downright mindlessness, or worse, masochism?" *By Design: God's Distinctive Calling for Women* (Franklin, TN: Legacy, 1994) 68. Certainly not all feminists have experienced abuse, but Hunt's point is well taken.

¹⁷ John MacArthur, "Reexamining the Eternal Sonship of Christ," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 6 (2001) 21-23. Donald Macleod also gives a helpful discussion of the historical understanding of Christ's sonship, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998) 71-107.

¹⁸ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 312-313.

¹⁹ Benjamin B. Warfield draws on Jonathan Edwards and describes the Trinity as a mutual delighting of the Father and the Son in each other, in which their very existence is intertwined so that "the Deity becomes all act, the Divine essence itself flows out and

is as it were breathed forth in love and joy" *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1968) 27. John Piper gives an extremely helpful explanation of the Father's delight in the Son in *The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God's Delight in Being God* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1991) 23-44.

²⁰ Gilbert Bilezikian, "Hermeneutical Bungee-Jumping: Subordination in the Godhead," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (1997) 59.

²¹ Macleod notes that the Son's servanthood in the incarnation occurred "not by the Father's bare decree [duty], but of his own volition and by mutual consent, his incarnation reflecting not only the Father's love for the church, but his own" (77-78).

²² Mary N. Russell, *Confronting Abusive Beliefs: Group Treatment for Abusive Men* (Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications, 1995) 41-43. Similarly, Alsdurf and Alsdurf found that 55% of the abused wives they interviewed said their husbands had said the beatings would stop if they would be more submissive as wives (*Battered into Submission*, 84). While some complementarians will be skeptical of studies done by egalitarians or secular feminists they perceive are seeking

primarily to promote their own agenda, complementarian counselors and psychologists who work with abusers and abuse victims have drawn similar conclusions about how frequently abusive evangelical men use the doctrine of male headship to justify abuse. My own wife, who has been a family counselor for over twelve years, reports that from her extensive counseling experience, when professing evangelical men are domestic abusers, more often than not they use distortions of headship to justify their behavior.

²³ Ibid, 41.

²⁴ Eva Lundgren, "I Am Endowed with All the Power in Heaven and on Earth: When Men Become Men through 'Christian' Abuse," *Studia Theologica* 48 (1994) 37.

²⁵ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978) 260.

²⁶ This is the definition of ἐξουσία, used in John 5:27 to indicate "authority."

²⁷ Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995) 128-129, 127, 163-166, 167, 44, 204.

²⁸ The following quotes and references are drawn from Julia O'Faolain and Lauro Martines, eds., *Not in God's Image: Women in History from the Greeks to the*

Victorians (New York: Harper and Row,

1973) 118, 120, 130, 132.

²⁹ Anne L. Horton and Judith A. Williamson argue that abuse victims, perpetrators, and their family members seek out pastors and religious leaders more than all other helping professionals combined, and yet pastors often fail to protect abused women and children, *Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988).

³⁰ Alsdurf and Alsdurf, 156.

³¹ Enduring avoidable physical persecution is not commended biblically. There are numerous biblical accounts of godly individuals who avoided physical persecution by their God ordained authorities whenever it was possible. For instance, David (1 Sam 18:11; 19:10; 23:14), Joseph (Matt 2:13), Jesus (John 7:1; 8:59), and Paul (Acts 9:22-25; 14:5-6; 17:8-10) all fled from avoidable assaults. David in particular fled from Saul for several years, and yet he was very respectful and submissive to Saul's authority (1 Sam 24:4-6; 26:8-11).