



A Christ-Honoring Practice of Complementarianism
Toward a Biblical Practice of Equality and Authority
 (Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Series)

Biblical Complementarianism contends the Scriptures speak clearly, repeatedly, and compellingly that while men and women are equal in value and standing before God, primary responsibility and spiritual authority to lead in marriage and to teach authoritatively and spiritually govern the church have been assigned and restricted to spiritually qualified men.

What should Biblical Complementarianism look like and what it should feel like in when practiced in a Christ-honoring way?

I. In the Home

A. The Mandate (Eph. 5:22-32, Col. 3:18-20; 1 Pet. 3:1-7)

- Men are to lovingly serve and lead their wives and their families by bearing primary responsibility for the spiritual and physical well-being of their family in ways that are not demeaning, damaging, or sinfully oppressive.
- Women are to graciously support and follow the leadership of their **own** husband and to cultivate a gracious, joyful Christ-exalting atmosphere at home as they develop and appropriately use the gifts and abilities God has entrusted to them for His glory.
- God does not command or expect a woman to submit to sinful behavior, intentionally abusive behavior (of any sort—physical, sexual), or to put herself or her children in physical or moral danger.

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B. The Model—what it looks like (Eph. 5:23-25)

- Men are to lead their wives as Jesus leads His church.
- Women are to support their own husband as the Church follows and supports Christ.

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C. The Manifestation—what it feels like (1 Pet. 3:7)

- Husbands—dwell with your wives in an understanding way that shows honor to your wife.
- Wives—live with your husbands in a respectful way marked by pure conduct and a gentle spirit.

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Q: What are some ways a man can prepare to one day lead a family with the kind of self-sacrificial loving leadership God requires of husbands and fathers?

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Q: What are some ways a woman can prepare to one day support and follow the leadership of a godly husband?

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II. In the Church

A. The Difficult Mandate (1 Cor. 14:34-35)

"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, 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. 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." (ESV)

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- Though it is difficult—it is not ambiguous—let a woman be silent in the churches; they are not permitted to speak.
- So, what does Paul mean when he states women are to be silent in the church? Especially when just a few paragraphs earlier he has actually stated they can pray and prophecy in the church (1 Cor. 11:1-16)?

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B. The Actual Meaning (1 Tim. 2:11-15)

"Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet..." (ESV)

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- Women, like men are permitted to pray. They are permitted to testify. They are permitted to sing. They are even permitted to announce a truth from God (prophecy). All of this is made clear in 1 Corinthians 11. What they are prohibited from doing in the church is exercising authoritative pastoral teaching authority over their husband or over the men in the church of God.

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C. The Pastoral Restriction (1 Tim. 2:14)

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- This means in NT pattern—women can't occupy the office of an ordained or recognized pastoral office or fulfill a clearly recognized pastoral function in the church.

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D. The Wide Opportunity

- Teach and instruct other women, children
- Lead a choir (not a worship pastor)
- Read Scripture, pray, sing, testify
- Write a commentary
- Be a missionary
- Do what Rosaria Butterfield did in our conference
- Share the Gospel—personally and corporately
- Teach religious courses in a university (some would argue that a woman should not teach seminary classes in pastoral training).
- However, the clear restriction is pastoral leadership.

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Q: What are some ways Christian men can encourage Christian women to exercise their gifts in a proper way in a local church for the glory of God and edification of God's people?

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III. In the World (1 Tim. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:2-4)

- "likewise 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," (ESV)
- "but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious." (ESV)

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The Bible does not prohibit a woman from:

- Starting and leading a company
- Being a dean at a university
- Being a Supreme Court justice
- Being an ambassador to the UN
- Being the Queen of England or the president of the United States

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But as she does these things in the providence and will of God, she must do them in ways that reflect what God has said a godly, biblical woman should be like—the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit (does not mean weak). She must do so with decorum and appropriate femininity, and she must do so in ways that cherish the husband and children God has given her.

IV. In Singleness (Rom. 13:1-7)

- Married women are commanded to submit to their “own” husbands—not to all men in general.
- All believers, women included, are instructed to follow and obey your spiritual leaders—the pastors of your church.
- All believers are told to submit to the temporal leaders God has placed over you—governmental and judicial.
- All young people are told to honor your parents. When you leave home you move from rote obedience to honoring your parents and highly regarding their counsel.

Conclusion

Biblical complementarianism recognizes that God, in His amazing wisdom, has created men and women as complete and complementary equals before Him, tasked to reflect His image together through the different but incredibly complementary roles He has designed for them, particularly in the home and in the church.

As we live this out with God’s help, we can, together, showcase the wisdom of God and reach a broken world with the life-transforming message of the Gospel. As Christian men and women—in the home and in the church—we have the opportunity, together under the headship of Christ, to do just that.

Q: How can this teaching change my life or disposition right now?

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Q: What does “complementarianism” mean to you or how would you put it in your own words?

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Q: In a serious dating relationship, how important is it to you to understand what the other person thinks about some of these teachings of Scripture?

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