

AMBrewster's Short Explanation of Complementarianism

Egalitarianism focuses primarily on the *equality* of roles between men and women. Complementarianism focuses on the *uniqueness* of roles between men and women.

The egalitarian argues that men and women were created with full equality both in their image bearing and rule over the earth (Genesis 1:26-27). Adam's being created first does not presuppose a necessary authority over Eve. The fact that Eve was created to be Adam's helper is understood to mean that they complete each other, but does not require any subordination to man as the word translated "helper" is also used of God's relationship with man where He is clearly not subordinate. They also believe that one of sin's effects on mankind was a new hierarchal arrangement where women were subjected to men (Genesis 3:16), but that redemption in Christ restores the equality originally intended by God (Galatians 3:28). In their understanding, it is perfectly acceptable for a woman to exercise authority over her husband and over men in general in the church.

Complementarians believe men and women were created equal in their essence, but that God delineated a distinction in their roles. Adam's being created first and Eve's being created as his helper support this position. They also believe that sin complicated the roles by injecting enmity into the relationship and causing the women to want to usurp the husband's authority (Genesis 3:15-16), but the redemption offered through Christ affirms and redeems the created male leadership (Ephesians 5:22-23; I Timothy 2:8-15) allowing women to fulfill their God-given role in the home and church in a way that pleases Him. This Christ-honoring role would not include a woman exercising authority over her husband or over men in general within the context of church.

I believe that complementarianism is the more biblical theology. It is clear that men and women were created with an equality of essence (Genesis 1:26-27; Galatians 3:28; I Corinthians 12:7-11; I Peter 3:7). But it is also clear that God designed and intends for role differentiation between the sexes.

God's own character supports this position. God clearly consistently reveals Himself as a male both linguistically and illustratively. It's interesting to note that the first masculine pronouns used in the book of Genesis in the description of man's creation (Genesis 1:27). It's also important to note that the incarnate Christ came as the God-man, not the God-woman. And the Trinity provides a divine example of an equality of essence with a differentiation in function.

The events of Genesis 2 and 3 reveal a focus on male headship. Adam is created first (Genesis 2; I Corinthians 11:8; I Timothy 2:13). God instructs only Adam. This implies that it was Adam's job to instruct Eve (Genesis 2:16-17). Even was created to help Adam (Genesis 2:21-22; I Corinthians 11:9-10). Adam named Eve twice (Genesis 2:23, 3:20). Within the ancient context, this displayed Adam's authority both before the fall and after the fall.

Even though Eve was the first to sin, Adam was approached first and held ultimately responsible (Genesis 3:1-7; Romans 5:12ff; I Corinthians 15:22; I Timothy 2:14).

The fall of man did not initiate male leadership; it merely complicated it by infusing both sides with selfishness (Genesis 3:16). Woman would now be tempted to reject man's authority, and man would be tempted to abuse it.

Paul defines the unique roles between husband and wife by comparing the authority of the man and submission of the wife to the authority of Christ and the submission of the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). He also states that it is man's responsibility to care for his wife in a way that is unique to men (I Peter 3:7).

Harkening back to Genesis 2, Paul uses the creation account to explain why women are not to exercise authority over men within the church (I Corinthians 11:1-16; I Corinthians 14:34-36; I Timothy 2:8-15).

When practically realized in a consistent, holistic, and biblical way, complementarianism best aligns with the Word of God.