

“How to Respond to...”

ROLES OF MEN & WOMEN

*Adapted from Matt Chandler's "Role of Women," The Village Church, Flower Mound, TX
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Introductory thought:

In modern America today, the debate has pretty much ended on the roles of men and women in the home, church, and society. The reason for this is because our society has, in the last couple of centuries and recent decades, greatly influenced the roles of men and women not only at home, but also many Christian churches today. Since the beginning, it has been true that man and woman were created equal in dignity, value, and nature, as seen in:

- **Genesis 1:26-27** which shows that man and woman share the same nature. Both men/women were created in God's image; both given commission to rule the earth.
- **Galatians 3:28** shows God's redemption of those Christ came to save. God made no distinction between male and female.
- **1 Corinthians 12:7-11** shows that God distributes to His people an abundance of varying spiritual gifts, regardless of gender.
- **1 Peter 3:7** shows women and men are fellow-heirs with Christ.

What Scripture verifies God's DESIGN for Role Distinctions?

A. Genesis 2 gives four features supporting roles *before the Fall*.

1. The order of creation shows God's design of male authority in the male/female relationship. [cf. 1 Corinthians 11:8, 1 Timothy 2:13]
2. God's instruction to Adam not to eat the fruit, before Eve's creation. There is certainly an implied responsibility Adam was to teach/protect his wife from violating God's will.
3. Eve was called Adam's helper- It is true that this same word is often used of God "helping" people. But it is also clear that Paul (in A.1. passages above) understands Eve's view of "helper" to mean she is to have male headship.
4. Adam's naming of Eve Before / after the fall. [Genesis 2:23, 3:20]

B. Genesis 3:1-7

God seeks Adam as being ultimately responsible. [Genesis 3:11,17] Paul clearly teaches that Adam is responsible for the sin, [Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 15:22] even though Eve sinned first. [1 Timothy 2:14]

C. Genesis 3:16ff

Sin produces a perversion in the male/female relationship. History has proven this to be true ever since the Fall into sin.

D. 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

A women's submissive role within church is linked to God's created design. The home is the same picture to God as the Church. [The Bride of Christ – Revelation 21:2, 9]

E. 1 Corinthians 14:34-36

Prohibition on women teaching men doesn't mean absolute silence upon entering God's house. [1 Corinthians 11:5] The verses here deal with orderly worship as well as with women honoring husbands both at home and at church.

F. 1 Timothy 2:8-15

Women are not to have authority over a man, but should receive instruction with submissiveness. The word "usurping" authority (taking hold of a position not appointed to) is the key here.

G. Ephesians 5:22-33

The parallel is between the headship role (authority) of man over his wife, with the headship (authority) of Christ over the Church. Women submit to husbands, as the Church submits to Christ.

H. 1 Peter 3:7

While the woman is fully equal in essence, man bears a particular God-sanctioned responsibility to care for and lead his wife.

I. The Trinitarian Analogy

God is one in essence and three in person (this is somewhat similar to marriage as in God's eyes as the two are one flesh). The three persons of the God-head are absolutely equal in essence, but they are also distinct in function or roles. The distinction in function is best seen in Christ being subject to the Father [1 Corinthians 11:3] and the Spirit to the Son. [Matthew 28:19]

Where are Biblical EXAMPLES of distinct Male/Female Roles?

A. Male Leadership in Israel

From the Garden of Eden on, God called men out and held them responsible for religious leadership. Examples: Adam, Noah, 12 sons of Jacob/12 tribes of Israel, Male priestly order, prophets.

B. Male Leadership with Christ

Jesus was not reluctant to challenge customs and traditions that ran contrary to the Kingdom of God. He frequently addressed and rejected the humanly fabricated restrictions put on people. [Matthew 15:3-9, 23:1-36] His taking of women also along with Him and His disciples during His travels is a testimony of this. [cf. Matt 27:55; Luke 8:1-2] But what Jesus didn't do, though He clearly could have, was to choose a woman to be among the twelve apostles.

C. Male leadership in the Church

God's Word restricts women from certain places of leadership and instruction in the church, [seen earlier: 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, 14:34-36; 1 Timothy 2:8-15] consistently requiring that the Church's ultimate human spiritual leadership be gender-specific. This is not based on ability, but on God's designation of roles. Further evidence of this is shown in the qualification passages concerning that Elders must be the HUSBAND of one wife. [1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6]

D. Male leadership in the home.

As discussed above, [1 Peter 3:1-7] confirms and furthers these roles. If a husband is *an unbeliever* the wife submits to him to echo Christ, but doesn't participate in his sin. [1 Cor. 7:13; Acts 5:29]

What are some common objections to Male/Female roles?

Accusation #1: *"You have left out those significant examples of female leadership in Israel, in the gospels, and in the early church. It is NOT correct to say that the Bible exhibits a uniform pattern of religious male leadership."*

Response: Women did play a significant religious and at times leadership role in the Bible, but there are two things to consider:

1. Most examples of female leadership appear in roles other than those of the highest religious authority. That is, there are some prophetesses and female teachers in the Old & New Testaments, but no mention of any women priests (priestesses were of heathen origin), women heads of tribes of Israel, woman kings [Athaliah wrongly usurped (took over) the throne], woman apostles [Junia of Romans 16 is highly disputed], or women elders in the church. The highest level of religious authority God always gives a consistent principle to follow... male leadership.
2. *But what about Deborah?* [Judges 4 and 5] Given the state of Israel, most see Judges not as a description of God's prescription for His people. In fact, Deborah's judgship demonstrates just how far from God's designed purposes Israel had strayed. Yet He still used her to accomplish His purpose and will. Her exception does not disprove His principle.

Accusation #2: *"Doesn't the Bible teach mutual submission? How is there a hierarchy if there is supposedly mutual submission?"*

Response: The Bible does say that we should walk in mutual submission to each other. This does not, however, remove male headship. Husbands submit to wives by loving them like Christ loves the Church regardless of how he feels, or how she acts. A wife submits to her husband by willingly submitting to his headship through respect and obedience to Christ, just as the Church of all believers should to Christ, as Christ to His Father.

What can we affirm in response to the Scriptures above?

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
2. Distinctions in male/female roles are ordained by God as part of the created order and find an echo or pulse in every human heart.
3. Headship was established before the Fall and not a result of sin.
4. The Fall introduced *sinful distortions* between men and women.
 - A. At home, the husband's loving, humble headship is replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission is replaced by usurpation or servility.
 - B. At church, sin inclines *men* toward a worldly love of power or abandonment of spiritual responsibility, and sin inclines *women* to resist limitations on their roles or neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old and New Testaments manifest an equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women. Both Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family (home) and in the fellowship of believers (church) in Christ.
6. Redemption in Christ aims to remove the *distortions* of the curse.
 - A. At home, husbands, forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives, forsake resistance to husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission.
 - B. At church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; still, some teaching/governing roles are restricted to men.
7. In all of life, Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission -domestic, religious, or civil - ever mandates to follow a human authority into sin.
8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries. Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With over half the world's population outside the reach of Scripturally based evangelism, and with the stresses, miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, loneliness, and toleration of sinful lives; no man or woman, who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed, need live without overwhelming opportunities for a very fulfilling ministry for Christ's glory and the good of this fallen world.
10. Denial or neglect of these God given principles will continue to lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, churches, and the culture at large. The need for truth remains!