

Complementarianism and Egalitarianism

Resources and Basic Tenets of both sides

Complementarianism

Key resources

- [Men and Women in the Church: A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction](#) by Kevin DeYoung.
- [Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism](#), edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. The revised edition was published in 2021 and is 688 pages long.
- [The Danvers Statement](#), published by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood in 1988.

Main tenets

- Although both men and women are equal before God, the principle of male leadership was established by God before the fall.
- Men and women are designed by God for different roles, with men being designed to lead, provide, and protect and women to support, respect, and follow.
- The fall produced distortions in the relationship between men and women, resulting in a battle for domination between the sexes
- The Scriptures teach that men are to lead in the home and in the church. While women's gifts and ministry are affirmed, they may not serve as elders/pastors or in primary teaching roles over men in the church.
- The Gospel remedies the distortions of the fall but does not erase the distinctions in the gender roles.

Egalitarianism

Key resources

- [The Future of Leadership at Bent Tree](#): A 24-page statement in 2016 from the Board of Elders, Bent Tree Bible Fellowship, explaining why the biblical support for the elders' unanimous decision to open the elder board to women. This position is explained in [an hour-long sermon](#) by Pastor Peter Briscoe.
- [Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy](#), edited by Rebecca Groothuis, Ronald Pierce, and Gordon Fee. 500 pages long. A newer and longer edition of this book will be released in November 2021.
- [Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Women's Place in Church and Family](#) by Gilbert Bilezikian. The 3rd edition was published in 2006 but is not available in Kindle format. Bilezikian was a professor at Wheaton College and his position was very influential in Willow Creek's position on women in church leadership.

- [Christians for Biblical Equality's website](#). See their statement on “[Men, Women and Biblical Equality](#)” which provides their biblical rationale for egalitarianism.
- [The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking how you read the Bible](#) by Scot McKnight. An excellent book on interpreting scripture which has six chapters on women and leadership. McKnight prefers the word “mutuality” instead of egalitarianism as a term for looking at women and men in the church. McKnight is scholarly and still very 'popular' in this writing.

Main tenets

- God's design in creation was a shared leadership between men and women.
- Male leadership was a product of the Fall, resulting in centuries of patriarchy and oppression for women.
- The Holy Spirit indwells both men and women and gives gifts for ministry and leadership without regard for gender.
- The Scriptures give multiple examples of women in significant leadership, teaching, and prophetic roles (Deborah, Huldah, Esther, Anna, Philip's daughters, Junia (apostle), Phoebe, Priscilla, 1 Cor. 11:5). Therefore the 1 Tim 2:12 and 1 Cor 14:34 passages forbidding women to speak in the church must be interpreted in their cultural context and are not supra-cultural principles for every context and time.
- The Gospel opens the way for both men and women to serve Christ in the church without gender restrictions. While neither Christ nor the apostles were focused on eliminating slavery or the oppression of women, their inclusion of women in significant ministry roles was truly radical. Their words and actions establish a trajectory of redemption that continues today. We continue to work out what the Gospel means in our culture today. In the kingdom of God, God's intent is that we will ultimately experience a full partnership of leadership for both men and women, as originally intended at creation.

Comparing both views

- [Two Views on Women in Ministry](#) edited by James Beck with contributions from Linda Belleville, Craig Blomberg, Craig Keener and Thomas Schreiner. Part of the Counterpoints Series. Belleville and Keener present the egalitarian view and Blomberg and Schreiner present the complementarian view. After each presentation, the other 3 contributors respond to the author's arguments. The editor and the 4 contributors all agree with the following statement: ***“We believe one can build a credible case within the bounds of orthodoxy and a commitment to inerrancy for either one of the two major views we address in this volume, although all of us view our own positions on the matter as stronger and more compelling.”***

Positions along the spectrum

- Kadi Cole (author of [Developing Female Leaders](#)) has created a [helpful and simple table](#) describing the spectrum of views from extreme feminism/matriarchal to patriarchal.
- Sandra Glahn (professor at DTS) has written [a blog article](#), describing 8 different views, but only the last is entitled egalitarian.

Neither complementarian nor egalitarian

- [Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate](#) by Michelle Lee-Barnewall. This book is 200 pages and contains a good academic overview without being overwhelming. The position presented is that the kingdom model, rather than the world's model, needs to be used when thinking about leadership and rights.

Complementarianism but supporting women preaching

- [Hearing Her Voice: A Case for Women Giving Sermons](#) by John Dickson. Dickson agrees that teaching authority in 1 Tim 2:12 is limited to male elders but argues that what 1 Tim 2 is talking about is not what we call “preaching” today but rather the transmission of the core body of apostolic doctrines. The book is only 107 pages long. Kevin DeYoung says that this is the best argument he has seen for women preaching, although he disagrees with it in the appendix of “Men and Women in the Church” and in a [2019 article](#) on the Gospel Coalition website. Dickson [responds to DeYoung's criticism](#) on his blog.

Complementarianism in the home but not in the church

- [Recovering Biblical Ministry by Women: An Exegetical Response to Traditionalism and Feminism](#) by George and Dora Winston, who have served as missionaries and professors at the Belgian Bible Institute for many years. Their book affirms women in leadership roles in the church and the leadership of the husband in the family.

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