

**Biblical Womanhood-VP, Thinking Biblically, Living Covenantally Workbook<sup>1</sup> and By Design Women's Retreat**

**A. A Grid to Think Biblically about All of life**

1. God is our reference point-Gen 1.1.
2. God's Word is our authority-Gen 1.3, 2 Tim 3.16-17.
3. God's glory is our purpose-Gen 1.26-28, 1 Cor 10.31.
4. God's presence is his promise-Gen 2.25, John 1.14.

**B. Introduction**

What is biblical womanhood? Why is there a need for us to talk about it?

Since the 1960s we have seen the steady rise of feminism not only in our western culture but in our churches. This has led to the capitulation, then affirmation, then celebration of egalitarianism. These beliefs are not based on the truths of God's Word, rather on the deceptions of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Perhaps you have heard some of them:

1. The lies/deceptions of feminism
  - There is no distinction between man and woman.
  - A woman is to seek the worldly success of power, money, sexual appeal, and self-fulfillment.
2. The lies/deceptions of feminism has led to lies/deceptions about sexuality.
  - There is no distinction between a man and a woman.
  - Your identity is your sexual desire.
  - Sexual desire is equated to love.
3. The lies/deceptions of feminism and sexuality have led to lies/deceptions about gender.
  - There is no distinction between man and woman. (After all, who can even define a man or a woman?)
  - Feelings are separate from your body.
  - Align your body with your feelings.<sup>2</sup>

I mentioned egalitarianism. What exactly is that? *Lexham Bible Dictionary*: “**Egalitarianism** is a major Christian view on gender roles that holds that women and men properly have equal and interchangeable roles in the home, church, and wider society. Egalitarianism holds that women can hold all the same roles in church leadership as men, and that in a marriage authority is properly shared equally between husband and wife. Egalitarianism also holds that women and men may properly hold the same positions in society more broadly.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Thinking Biblically, Living Covenantally Workbook*, pp. 37-47.

<sup>2</sup> Leon, Amanda. *Man, I Feel Like a Woman: Feminism, Sexuality, and Gender: What Is Biblical Womanhood?* By Design Women's Retreat, Briarwood Presbyterian, Church, January 2024.

<sup>3</sup> *Egalitarianism*. (2016). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

Egalitarianism is opposed to the biblical and historic view of the church. *Lexham Bible Dictionary*: “**Complementarianism** is major Christian view on gender roles that holds that women and men are spiritually equal but have distinct and complementary roles in the home, church, and wider society. This view stands in opposition to egalitarianism, which holds that men and women have equivalent roles.

Complementarian positions usually hold that certain positions in church leadership are reserved for men only, and that in a marriage the husband is properly the head of the family and has some degree of authority over the wife. Some complementarian positions also hold that women and men have different roles outside home and church life in broader society.”<sup>4</sup>

This erosion of commitment to the historical biblical truths of biblical manhood and womanhood is seen in evangelical publishing, seminaries, Christian ministries, and in the pulpit. Whole generations of men and women have been deprived of sound teaching on this subject. The church must teach the joy and beauty of the God-designed roles of man and woman. Wayne Grudem states, “To this new generation we must stress that complementarianism is cause for celebration rather than apology because it provides the relational framework in which men and women experience covenantal privileges and responsibilities. Both men and women are image bearers of the living God and equals before the cross. When male and female live and work together as God intended, there is nothing more beautiful, satisfying, delightful, and God glorifying—a truth to be lived and celebrated, shouted from the rooftops, and proclaimed in the streets.”<sup>5</sup>

So, let’s look at what the Scriptures say about this.

**B. Biblical womanhood is a covenantal concept.** It cannot be fully comprehended apart from an understanding of and love for the church.

Susan Hunt, *The Legacy of Biblical Womanhood*: “To isolate womanhood from the remarkable reality of covenant diminishes God’s design and calling for women. Failure to fulfill our design and calling diminishes the culture of covenant among God’s peoples ... We submit that it was the loss of a covenantal perspective of faith and life that paved the way for feminism to infiltrate the church. So, reclaiming biblical womanhood begins with reclaiming covenant. We do not mean simply giving a definition to covenant. We mean becoming so indoctrinated with and passionate about this truth that it permeates how we think and live. The theology of covenant must undergird the definition of womanhood. Womanhood must be defined theologically or it will be defined culturally.”<sup>6</sup>

**C. Understanding what God reveals in Scripture about the nature of manhood and womanhood.**

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<sup>4</sup> [Complementarianism](#). (2016). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

<sup>5</sup> Duncan, J. L., & Stinson, R. (2006). [Preface \(2006\)](#). In J. Piper & W. Grudem (Eds.), *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (p. x). Crossway.

<sup>6</sup> Hunt, Susan. *The Legacy of Biblical Womanhood*, pp.31-32.

1. Why do we need to understand and teach what Scripture says about womanhood?
  - a. It is vital since it is never safe for Christians to act unbiblically or to ignore the Bible's teaching.
  - b. It is vital because when properly understood and practiced biblical manhood and womanhood results in thriving, families, marriages, churches, and communities.
  - c. It is important because the nature of biblical manhood and womanhood is very much at the heart of cultural transitions and the tension that often exists between God's people and the surrounding culture.
  - d. The denial or twisting of the Bible's clear teaching on biblical manhood and womanhood is one of the central ways that the authority of the Bible is being undercut today.

#### **D. How does Scripture define what it means to be a woman?**

1. Men and women are created in God's image.

*Genesis 1.26, 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."*

- a. As God's image bearers, both men and women, have the same intrinsic dignity, worth, and value. They are equal in being.
- b. Many of the characteristics that separate humans from animals (creativity, rational and abstract thought, imagination, moral judgment, personality) are reflections of the divine image to the rest of creation. This is true for believers and unbelievers.
- c. Although the reflection is distorted by sin, as we are transformed by the renewing of our mind, believers increasingly more clearly reflect him:
  - By reflecting his character.  
His character is reflected in our response to others and to our circumstances.
  - By being in relationship to God and others.  
Relationship is the very essence of who God is-the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

2. Gender distinctiveness is God's plan.

*Genesis 1.27, So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

3. Gender distinctiveness was necessary to fulfill the cultural mandate to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over the earth.

*Genesis 1.28, 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 birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

a. The man and the woman are equal in being in these ways:

- Same authority-God and his Word.
- Same purpose-Bear his image. Glorify him.
- Same mandate-
  - Be fruitful and multiply.
  - Fill the earth.
  - Take dominion over all creation.

b. God declares this to be “very good” in his perfect creation.

*Genesis 1.31, And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good...*

#### Application Questions:

- You were created in God’s image. How does knowing and believing this truth affect how you live?
- Consider in what areas of your life God has given you responsibility and authority. How are you ruling, managing, influencing the domain God has entrusted to you?
- How has the fall affected how we bear His image?
- In what areas of your life do you need to rebuild trust with God?
- What resemblance of God does the world around me see?<sup>7</sup>

#### **E. God’s creation designs for male and female.**

1. Man and woman were created equal in God’s image but with different functions. Equal does not mean the same.

Complementarianism: “Men and women are equal in being but assigned different, equally valuable, complementary functions in God’s kingdom.”<sup>8</sup>

a. Man was designed to work and keep. His design equipped him for his calling.

*Genesis 2.7-8, 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. <sup>8</sup> And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.*

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<sup>7</sup> Denton, Courtney, *Image Bearer*. By Design Women’s Retreat, Briarwood Presbyterian Church, January 26-27, 2024

<sup>8</sup> “Complementarianism and Covenant Theology,” *Thinking Biblically, Living Covenantally Workbook*, p. 51.

[Genesis 2.15](#), *The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*

- b. Woman was designed as a helper suitable for man. Her design equipped her for this calling.

[Genesis 2.18](#), *Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."*

- God did not say that man was not good. **Man's aloneness** was not good. Relationship is the key in creation and is an imperfect, limited reflection of God's Triune nature. (See "The Triune God is a covenantal being," p.9)
- In God's tender, fatherly care, He provides what the man needed to remedy his aloneness.

[Genesis 2.19-20](#), <sup>19</sup> *Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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.*

2. Woman's creation design of helper does not imply a "lesser design or inferior assignment." God has etched our design into our very creation.

Susan Hunt, *By Design*: "The helper design is not a lesser design or an inferior assignment. It does not mean that woman is less capable, Woman's helper design is not so much what we do, but rather who we are. It is not the only aspect of who we are, but it is an essential part of our essence. Our design should not be confused with our position in Christ. Our position is identical to man's position: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" ([Galatians 3.28](#)). Neither should our design be confuse with our various roles. Our roles change: daughter, student, wife, friend, employee, employer, mother, etc. Our helper design places its tamp upon each role ... Often those roles will overlap a man's role or function. In other words, in many situations men and women may do much the same thing. But our design equips us to bring a unique perspective to that role."<sup>9</sup>

- Our design is not to be confused with our position in Christ.
- Helper design is NOT about marital status. We come with our creation design whether married or single.
- Helper design is NOT synonymous with spiritual gifting. Spiritual gifts are not gender specific.

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<sup>9</sup> Hunt, Susan. *By Design*, p.14.

- d. Helper design is NOT a specific list of tasks we do. “Helper” is not a checklist.
- e. Helper design is NOT synonymous with individual temperament. For example, we may be more naturally task-oriented than relational, but we still carry God’s creation design as female.
- f. Helper design is NOT a personality trait or a reflection of taste, preference, or style.
- g. Helper design is NOT automatically synonymous with service vocations such as teachers, doctors, social workers, etc. A woman can express a helper design while serving as a CEO or elected official.
- h. Helper design does NOT automatically equal our roles or changing seasons of life. Women can be daughters, sisters, friends, wives, mothers, aunts, widows, employees, employers, etc.
- i. Helper design is NOT about literal motherhood. Life-giving is the mission for all women, not just literal mothers, Even if we NEVER have a child by birth or by adoption, we are still called to participate in relationships as described in Titus 2.
- j. Helper design is NOT synonymous with any political ideology.

### 3. Helper defined biblically.

- a. The Hebrew word for helper is *ezer*. Consider how the word *ezer* is used in the OT to refer to God as the helper of mankind. Note the compassion and community aspects of the divine helper in these passages.
  - God defends. [Exodus 18.4](#), for [Moses] said, “The God of my father was my **help**, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.”
  - God sees and cares for the suffering. [Psalm 10.14](#), But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the **helper** of the fatherless. NIV
  - God supports. [Psalm 20.2](#), May he send you **help** from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion.
  - God protects. [Psalm 33.20](#), Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our **help** and our shield.
  - God upholds. [Psalm 54.4](#), Behold, God is my **helper**; the Lord is the upholder of my life.
  - God delivers from distress. [Psalm 70.5](#), But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my **help** and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay!
  - God rescues. [Psalm 72.12, 14](#), <sup>12</sup> For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to **help**. <sup>14</sup> He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight. NIV

- God comforts. [Psalm 86.17](#), ... *for you, Lord, have **helped** me and comforted me.*
- b. These verses help us understand more precisely how our creation design is the very reflection of the character of God. They also give us practical insight into what our creation design can look like in ever day life.
- These are strong, nurturing, compassionate, relational words and are a reflection of the very character of God.
  - Whether we are looking at helper as part of God's nature or woman's design, it is always an expression of compassion that occurs in the context of relationships.

**The essence of helper can be summarized by two words: community and compassion.**

4. God's relational order includes headship and submission.

a. Man was created first.

[Genesis 2.7](#), *Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

[1 Corinthians 11.3](#), *But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*

b. God affirms the creation order in the NT where men and women are described as having different roles designed to show Jesus.

- Godly headship reflects Jesus' sacrificial love for the church, his bride. [Ephesians 5.25-30](#), <sup>25</sup> *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her* <sup>26</sup> *to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,* <sup>27</sup> *and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.* <sup>28</sup> *In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.* <sup>29</sup> *After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—*<sup>30</sup> *for we are members of his body.*

- Godly submission reflect Jesus' submission in his human nature to the Father.

[Luke 22.42](#), *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."*

[Philippians 2.1-9](#), *Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,* <sup>2</sup> *then make my joy*



*complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.<sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,<sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,*

c. Note three things (See “Complementarianism and Covenant Theology” on p.51):

- Headship and submission are not a result to the fall (Genesis 3.9-12).
- Headship and submission refer to the home and the church.
- A woman is never to submit to sin. This would not be helping.

Meaghan May, *Entrusted to Be Invested*: “We want to live in such a way that we adorn ourselves with the same submissive yielding to God’s good will—that his kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And so we’re following Christ and yielding as we see him yield (in his earthly ministry) and saying, “Father, lead me forward, Help me not to just base my decisions on the teachings of men, false doctrines, and what looks good. But instead, what are you calling me to?” ... which is what our passage (1 Timothy 2) started with, “lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified.” ... We are a billboard pointing to Christ.”<sup>10</sup>

## **F. Sin corrupted every aspect of our creation designs.**

1. Remember that Satan undermined God’s creation design and order when he went to the woman to tempt her first. Man and woman were each disciplined by God in ways specific to their design creation.

*Genesis 3.16-19,<sup>16</sup> To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”<sup>17</sup> To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.<sup>18</sup> It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”*

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<sup>10</sup> May, Meaghan. Week 2 audio for *Entrusted to Be Invested*. <http://vimeo.com/830596936>.



In Genesis 3.16-19, to “be contrary” is the opposite of being a helper. “To toil” and “sweat” negatively communicated that there would now be obstacles to overcome in working and keeping.

2. In the fall, the woman was not a helper to her husband. She harmed him. She was a hinderer.
3. When the woman chose self-rule by listening to the serpent and subverting the creation order, she became a life-taker.
4. After the fall, God reaffirms male headship and submission by addressing the man. [Genesis 3.9-11](#), <sup>9</sup> *But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”* <sup>10</sup> *He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”* <sup>11</sup> *And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”*

#### Application Questions:

1. What struck you most immediately about the teaching on Helper Design?
2. Which aspect of being a Helper comes most naturally to you? Which aspect will you need to lean into Jesus to develop?
3. Review the passages in Psalms (10:14, 20:2, 33:20, 54:4, 70:5, 72:12-14, 86:17). How does the attributes of God as helper encourage you in your role of helping?
4. Share additional examples of women exercising their helper design that you have experienced.
5. Our helper design is a part of our womanhood. Where do you see your role of helping others where you live, work, and play? Ask God to give you opportunities to help others the way he has helped you.<sup>11</sup>

#### G. But the gospel...

1. ... redeems our helper design and transforms us from life-taker to life-giver. [Genesis 3.15](#), *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*
2. In the hope of the gospel, Adam names his wife Eve.
  - a. All believers are called to the mission of “life-giving,” however, in the creation story, God highlights woman’s capacity to be a life-giver. As Scripture unfolds, the breadth and depth of the meaning of woman’s role in life-giving continues to grow.

Susan Hunt, *The Legacy of Biblical Womanhood*: “Eve’s name is a celebration of her calling and capacity to be a life-giver. We tend to have a myopic view of mothering. We limit it to women who have birthed biologically. The covenant way is bigger and bolder. Every redeemed woman is a life-giver.

“Failure to understand this biblical perspective diminishes motherhood. The results:

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<sup>11</sup> Denton, Courtney, [Helper](#). By Design Women’s Retreat, Briarwood Presbyterian Church, January 26-27, 2024

- We will be short-sighted and fail to extend out life-giving capacity into every relationship and ministry.
- Single and barren women are deprived of the joy of fulfilling their creational life-giving design and the covenant community is denied their mothering ministry.
- Covenantal motherhood is inherent in God's plans for his people.

Psalms 113.9, He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD!

"This is one of the Psalms used to celebrate the annual festivals in Israel. It was a community song. The childless woman was recognized as a mother in Israel. This was a title of honor and respect."<sup>12</sup>

- b. Life-giving is the mission for all women, not just those who are biological mothers.

#### **H. Eve's transformation from life-taker to life-giver.**

1. Eve's understanding of God's promise of redemption is incomplete as she gives birth to the self-centered line of Cain.

*Genesis 4.1, Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.*

2. Eve's understanding matures as her reference point centers fully on the sovereign provision of God.

*Genesis 4.25, Adam made love to his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him."*

*Transformed: Life-taker to Life-giver:* "In the Garden, Eve made the prideful decision to be her own authority... in the second statement, Eve's reference point is God. This movement from an "I" orientation to a "God" orientation is the transformation from life-taker to life-giver."<sup>13</sup>

3. Though redeemed in Christ, woman's ability to be and do what she was created to be and do is restored.

*John 3.30, "He must increase, but I must decrease."*

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<sup>12</sup> Hunt, Susan. *The Legacy of Biblical Womanhood*, pp. 161-163.

<sup>13</sup> Hunt, Susan. *Transformed: Life-taker to Life-giver*. p. 120.

*Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

**Application Questions:**

1. What resonated with what you heard from the teaching on life-giver?
2. In what ways are you giving life to those around you? Whom do you nurture?
3. Think of life-givers you know or have experienced. How have they shaped you?
4. The difference in being a life-giver and a life-taker can be as quick as an impatient attitude, a short word, a judgement of another, etc. In what areas do you need God's forgiveness and help to move from being a life-taker to a life-giver?<sup>14</sup>

**I. A definition of biblical womanhood:**

Man and woman are created equally in God's image. Woman is designed a helper and commissioned a life-giver. This created order, design, and commission are distorted by sin. A redeemed woman, empowered by the grace of the gospel, increasingly reflects God's character in every relationship and life situation.

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<sup>14</sup> By Design Women's Retreat, Briarwood Presbyterian Church, January 26-27, 2024.