

THE BIBLICAL BASIS, WISDOM, AND BEAUTY OF COMPLEMENTARIANISM (Genesis 1-3)
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Introduction

Competing visions of God's design for roles of men and woman: Egalitarian vs. Complementarian views

Ten Reasons for Affirming Male-Headship in the Created Order as Seen in Genesis 1-3

1) The **order of creation, with the man created first, indicates God's design of male headship in the male/female relationship**. What might seem to have been an ad hoc decision to create one of the pair first, with no particular reason for the order, is shown to be otherwise by Paul. 1 Timothy 2:13 declares that God intentionally created the man first to establish his headship in the relationship. The principle of primogeniture—the priority of the first-born—is invoked by Paul.

2) The means of the **woman's creation as "out of" or "from" the man** bears testimony also to the headship of the male in the relationship. Rather than creating the woman likewise from the dust of the ground, independent of the man, as it were, God intentionally takes a rib from the man and fashions this into the woman. As Adam declares, she is "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). Paul's observation in 1 Cor 11:8, then, that "man does not originate from the woman, but woman from man" once again establishes male-headship from the manner by which the woman was created, viz., she came from the man, not independently from the dust of the ground.

3) While both man and woman are fully the image of God (Gen 1:26-28), yet the **woman's humanity as "image of God" is established as she comes from the man**. Adam names her "*isha*" (woman) because she was "taken out of *ish* (man)" (Gen 2:23). That is, she has his nature—the nature of a human being—only as she comes from him. This is Paul's point in 1 Cor 11:7. Why should a woman have her head covered (a symbol of male authority – see 11:10) but a man not? Answer: man "is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man." Clearly Paul does not mean here that woman is not in the image of God, but rather that her being the image of God only happens as she comes from man, who is created as the image of God. Note: much the same can be said of Seth, Adam's son, who is born in the likeness and image of Adam (Gen 5:3), who himself is made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). Here, Gen 5 does not say that Seth is the image of God, but the clear implication is that since he is born in the likeness and image of Adam, who himself is the image of God, Seth too is made in the image of God by coming from Adam.

4) **The woman was created for the man's sake or to be Adam's helper** (Gen 2:18, 20). While it is true that this same Hebrew term for "helper" is often used of God helping people, it is clear that Paul understands Eve's role as helper to require that woman ought to be under the rightful authority of man—see 1 Cor 11:9-10 – "man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head".

5) **Man (not woman) was given God's moral commandment in the garden; and woman learned God's moral command from the man** (2:16-17). Implied in this is Adam's responsibility to instruct his future wife and guard her from violating this prohibition (hence, the significance in 3:6 that the woman gave to the man "who was with her," showing he failed to guard his wife as he should have).

6) **Man named the woman both before and after the entrance of sin**. Adam's naming of the woman indicates, in an OT cultural context, Adam's responsibility for and rightful authority over the one whom he named. See, for example, God's granting Adam the right to name the animals in the garden, showing God's delegation of rightful authority to Adam as he (not God) names them (2:19-20). And interestingly, Adam named his wife twice, first when she was formed from his flesh (2:23), and second after they had both sinned (3:20), indicating

that while his rightful authority over her was established when she was fashioned from him, yet his headship continued after they both had sinned.

7) **Satan approached the woman (not the man) in the temptation, usurping God’s design of male-headship.** Satan came to the woman specifically, and it was the woman who was tempted, deceived, and who ate the forbidden fruit, *then* giving it also to Adam. Since it was the woman who was approached and tempted by Satan, this manifests Satan’s disdain for the God-created order of male-headship that God had established (see 1 Tim 2:14).

8) **Although the woman sinned first, God comes to the man first, holding him (not her) primarily responsible for their sin.** Paul clearly teaches that the line of sin in the human race begins with Adam and his one sin (Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:22) despite the fact the woman took and ate the forbidden fruit first. So notably, although the woman sinned first, God nonetheless seeks out *Adam* after their sin to inquire why they were hiding (3:8-9). God’s approach to Adam, not Eve, indicates, then, that Adam is the one ultimately responsible for sin. Adam only rightly bears the responsibility as the head of the sinful human race, as Paul declares in Rom 5 and 1 Cor 15, if he is viewed both by God and by Paul as having authority and ultimate responsibility in the garden for what occurred.

9) The **curse on the man and woman indicate the fundamental purposes for which each was created, respectively** (Gen 3:16-19). The *woman’s curse* focused on multiplying her pain in childbearing and allowing her sinful desires to seek to usurp her husband’s headship (Gen 3:16—note: for help in understanding Gen 3:16b, see the identical wording in Gen 4:7b). The *man’s curse* focused on the difficulty and toil his work would now require in a fallen world (Gen 3:17-19). In these very curses, the fundamental identities of the woman (as female) and man (as male) are indicated. The woman’s fundamental identity is that of wife and mother (“pain in childbearing”), under the headship of her husband (“your desire will be for your husband”), whereas the man’s fundamental identity is that of worker outside of the home and provider for his family, even now with great toil due to sin (“in toil you will eat . . . ; both thorns and thistles it shall grow”). Paul may have this identity of the woman in mind by his comment in 1 Tim 2:15 that a woman will be saved through childbearing—that is, she will show she truly is a saved, Christian woman by embracing her God-designed role, as fundamentally and generally is the case, as wife and mother.

10) **The Trinity’s equality and distinction of Persons is mirrored in male-female equality and distinction.** The Trinity presents a pattern and analogy for the male-female relationship, as God designed man and woman, in his image (Gen 1:26-27), to reflect some aspects of his own being. God is one in essence and three in Persons. The three Persons of the Godhead are absolutely *equal in essence*. That is, each divine Person possesses equally, simultaneously and fully, the one undivided divine essence. Their equality—as an equality of identity—could not be greater. But at the same time, the three trinitarian Persons are *distinct in function*. Notably, this distinction of function is marked, among other things, by an intrinsic relation of authority and submission within the very Godhead, by which the Son is subject to the Father, and the Spirit to the Father and the Son. One of the most vivid biblical examples of Christ’s subjection to the Father is in 1 Cor 15:28 where the exalted and victorious Son “will also be subject to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God [the Father] may be all in all.” Given this understanding of the Trinity, it makes sense for Paul to say what He does in 1 Cor 11:3, speaking here of three authority lines that exist: “Christ is the head [authority over] of every man, the man is the head of a woman, and God [the Father] is the head of Christ.” Just as the Persons of God are equal in essence and yet they relate within a structure of authority and submission, so too men and women are equal in essence while relating within a similar structure of authority and submission within the believing community and in marriage and the home.