

## Resources on complementarianism, egalitarianism and the role of women in the church<sup>1</sup>

A very controversial and emotionally charged topic so great need to approach this with the most gracious and humble attitude possible and listen carefully to the different sides.

Some of the key texts that we must listen to carefully and wrestle with *and be governed by* in regard to the roles of men and women in church ministry are:

Genesis 1-3	1 Corinthians 14:26-40
Judges 4-5	Galatians 3:23-29
Joel 2:28-32	Philippians 4:2-3
Luke 6:12-16	Colossians 3:16
Acts 18:24-28	1 Timothy 2:8-3:15
Romans 16:1-16	Titus 1:5-9
1 Corinthians 11:1-16	Titus 2:1-10

We must keep all these in balance and give each passage its due weight. It is important that we do not interpret any one of these Scriptures such that they contradict others. The same Paul who wrote Romans 16 also wrote 1 Timothy 2-3 and vice versa.

The issues here can get very complex. The key question is: Are there no differences at all in the roles of men and women in the church or some differences of role?

### Complementarianism

This view is that, while there is equality of status and value between men and woman,<sup>2</sup> there are differences of role within the church.

[Piper & Grudem \(eds\), \*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism\*, 1991](#) – the key text – big book including chapters on roles in the church by Carson, Moo, Poythress and others

[Why is the Gospel Coalition Complementarian?](#) (useful video discussion between Carson, Keller and Piper)

[Alan Purser's, 'Equal but Different'](#) – short paper for Crosslinks mission society members - good on the importance of teaching *equality* as strongly as *difference*

Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas Schreiner, *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, 2nd edition, 2005. ([review by Andy Naselli](#) and [TGC interview with Köstenberger](#))

[Mark Baddeley, \*The Future of Complementarianism, The Briefing\*](#) (5 post series)

Carrie Sandom, *Different by Design: God's Blueprint for Men and Women*, Christian Focus, 2012 – especially chapter 8

Clare Smith, *God's Good Design: What the Bible Really Says About Men and Women* ([Intro pdf](#)) – good to read the [last chapter](#) first

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<sup>1</sup> Another, very useful and lengthy bibliography of resources from different perspectives, compiled by a Lutheran evangelical, can be found at [Women Pastors in the Lutheran Church? Online Resources for the Study of Gender and the Ministry, the Order of Creation, and Related Topics](#).

<sup>2</sup> So, as Alan Purser notes, it is unfortunate that the labels complementarian and egalitarian have come to be used as opposites.

[Jean Williams - posts on Women's Ministry](#)

Sharon James, *God's Design for Women*, Evangelical Press, 2002 – especially pp 77-138, 291-301

[Sandy Grant, Women in Romans 16](#)

### **Egalitarianism**

The best egalitarians are committed to the truth and authority of the Bible but argue that the Scriptures can and should be understood to teach that all roles within the church are equally open to men and women.

Gordon Fee, "Male and Female in the New Creation." in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, edited by Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, IVP ([response by Joel Rainey](#) and at more length [Everett Berry](#))

[Gordon Fee, Listening to the Spirit in the Text](#) - specifically pp 56-76

Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Re-thinking how you read the Bible* ([brief overview](#) and [critical review](#))

Scot McKnight, *Junia Is Not Alone*, Patheos Press, 2011 ([response from Denny Burk](#))

Ronald Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Gordon Fee, *Discovering Biblical Equality*, IVP, 2005

[Alan Johnson \(ed\) How I Changed My Mind About Women in Church Leadership: Compelling Stories from Prominent Evangelicals](#), Zondervan, 2006 ([review by Gerald Hiestand](#))

Anne Atkins, *Split Image: Discovering God's True Intention for Male and Female*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1998 – specifically chapter 6

[Christians for Biblical Equality](#)<sup>3</sup> – blog, journal and articles to download, e.g. [Catherine Clark Kroeger, Q: My Church Does Not Believe that Women Should be Elders...](#)

[Esther Mombo and Heleen Joziassse, 'From the pew to the pulpit: Engendering the pulpit through teaching African Women's Theologies'](#) – arguably outside an evangelical perspective but very influential in our Kenyan context

**A third position** which allows women to take up at least some roles that most complementarians would feel uncomfortable about (e.g. preaching to a mixed congregation) has been suggested by some:

John Dickson, *Hearing Her Voice: A Case for Women Giving Sermons*. (responses by [Lionel Windsor](#) and [Christopher Ash](#) and the book-length rebuttal, [Women, sermons and the Bible: Essays interacting with John Dickson's Hearing Her Voice. Edited by Peter G. Bolt and Tony Payne](#), followed by a series of counter responses from John Dickson on his [blog](#))<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This organisation has been very active and influential in Kenya.

<sup>4</sup> This particular debate is one largely *within* (Australian) conservative evangelicalism. As so often is sadly the case when we are arguing with 'our own' the debate seems to be becoming increasingly heated (but there's a good deal of light in there as well so worth listening in).

Sharon James, *God's Design for Women*, Evangelical Press, 2002 – basically a complementarian book but in chapter 6 she argues for women preaching in evangelistic/revival/mission contexts

Let's go back to the Bible, pray for the Spirit's help, listen to one another as sympathetically as possible, weigh the arguments of all sides as fairly as possible, speak to one another as graciously as possible, and ultimately let the Scriptures speak into and against our cultures and sub-cultures.