

Helvig: Since we have established the need to address biblical mutuality, let's delve into what the Bible says.

Royer: We should start at the beginning, Genesis 1 and 2, the creation narrative.

Helvig: You may have read it a hundred times, but here are some interesting insights.

What does the creation narrative teach about men and women?

Then God said, "Let us make human beings so that they are like us. Let them rule over the fish in the seas and the birds in the sky. Let them rule over the livestock and all the wild animals. And let them rule over all the creatures that move along the ground." Genesis 1:26 NIRV

Dallaire Do I see a hierarchy in the creation of men and woman in Genesis? No I don't. In Genesis Chapter 1 it is very clear that God created "adam". "Adam", and then he says male and female, "zākār" and "neqēba" are "adam." So, "adam" is not used as the name of the male, it is used as the human. Now what exactly that looks like in Chapter 1, what we see is that "adam" is created in the image of God in the likeness of God, given the exact same mandate, to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue the earth and to rule. Now if God had wanted to have man only be in charge, it seems to me that Genesis 1 would look very different.

Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. Genesis 2:22

Hess In Genesis 2 we do of course have the man created first in that creation account, and then the woman is created from the side of the man. I know that some people have argued that there is here the foundation for a hierarchal relationship in ministry and the church and elsewhere. But I really don't see that in Genesis 2. For one thing there is nothing in the text that suggests it. You can't say because something was created first it has more authority. In that case, the animals would have more authority over people.

It really is side that the woman is created from, the side of the man. And has long been recognized, that is because one is not above the other or below the other: not from the foot, not from the head, or whatever else. But from the side. The point is the woman is supposed to be involved with the man, together.



The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Genesis 2:18

J. Roese God creates man. And he says "It's not good for man to be alone. I'll make him a suitable helper". And you would think if it wasn't good for man to be alone...by the way, the answer to aloneness is not hierarchy, it's "known-ness". OK, that's not the answer. "Oh, he's alone, let's make a hierarchal stance." No, "He's alone, let's help him be known." Because of course the Trinity knows one another intimately, right? You have to be in relationship if you're going to mimic the Trinity.

Pierce I think "helper" in the Genesis creation account is one of the most misunderstood terms. 39 times in the Old Testament the noun appears and it speaks of coming alongside another person usually to rescue them or to save them in a time of need. So, Adam was alone and he had a need that could not be met by any of the other created animals. So, God created Eve as a helper to rescue him from his aloneness. The most significant use of helper in the Old Testament is when God is Israel's helper.

And then all the times in the Psalms and elsewhere when God saves or rescues Israel. So she comes to rescue him in a sense, but not as a superior, but rather as a partner to him.

So, she is an "ezer" corresponding to him. It is sometimes used in a military context, actually quite often in the Old Testament. Sometimes there's a stronger army coming to rescue a weaker one. Sometimes there's just another army because one wasn't enough, so together they are able to win the battle. And often when God is spoken of as "ezer", it's in a context when he comes and rescues Israel from a military threat that they're facing. So it's a strong, powerful term.

The NIV translates "suitable". It's not a bad translation, but I think probably it would be more accurate to say a helper who is "corresponding to him", like a mutual partner or just even a partner. So, Adam looks at all the animals. He categorizes the animals, and none of them are corresponding to him, none are suitable to him. So it's not like an assistant, who is a suitable assistant to you, but it's one who is like you. So just as they were created together in God's image, so she was created to be one like him, who is able to rescue. If "ezer" were just used by itself, you'd think she might be a superior coming in to rescue him. But the text clarifies she is a helper who is corresponding to him, a rescuer who is like him in that sense.

Royer: God's original design was perfect: man and woman ruling together over creation.

Helvig: But they blew it!

Royer: Their poor choices broke their relationship with God and their relationship with each other.

Helvig: One of the consequences of the sin is recorded in Genesis 3:16

Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. Genesis 3:16



But, does the curse determine how we live?

Royer: Or, can those fractured relationships be redeemed?

What are the consequences of sin on male/female relationships?

Thulson Let me tell you about a fun time I had on one of my mission trips to Kenya. A few of us were teaching a seminar to about 30 men and 30 women and we were going through the book of Ephesians and got to the text about marriage and I was trying to teach on egalitarian marriage. So, one of the men raised his hand and said “Well, what about Genesis 3:16, where it says the man shall rule over the woman?”

This got everyone’s attention and I raised the question back to him “Is that prescriptive, is it what God wants? Or is it descriptive of one of the tragic results of the fall, of sin?”

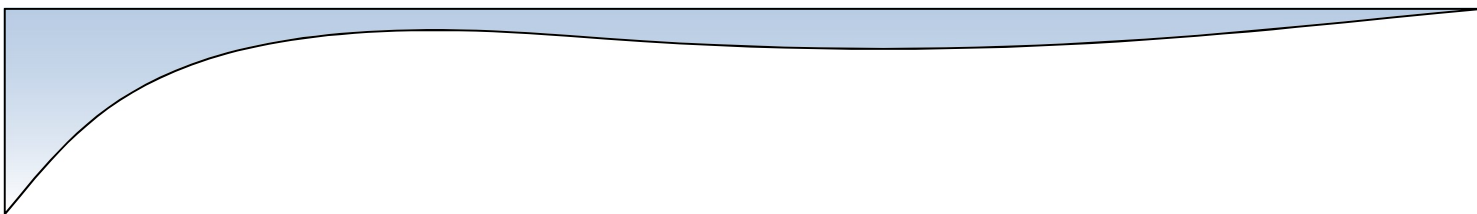
A woman from Congo, a Congo refugee there in Kenya, stood up and rather prophetically declared from Scripture that this an example of a great move of the Holy Spirit in the world today, where he’s raising up the gifts of women, bringing a liberation that comes from Jesus for their lives and for their giftedness and leadership.

The beautiful thing about that network of churches in Kenya is that they have several women pastors and they are seeing the gospel in many ways flourish because of the way women are being treated.

Pierce The only place the idea of patriarchy shows up, a leader model, shows up, is after the fall. The result of the fall, I think, is important that we don’t see it as a curse on the woman or the man. It is a judgement that comes. So the serpent is cursed and the ground is cursed. But the man and woman suffer the consequences of their sin, mutual sin, both in their own way, but still sin. And that consequence was the power struggle that comes between the man and the woman for domination rather than mutuality and servanthood.

It is redeemable. I think that is important to see in Genesis 3. The other aspects of the fall, the curse on the ground, the multiplied pain in childbearing, the difficulty of Adam earning a living, not to mention the mutual death they will both experience, those are all redeemable things. This is amazing to me sometimes that we miss the fact that this sense of domination over each other needs to be redeemed in Christ in the new creation that we have in Christ.

Christ came to redeem the world, to save the world and to save us from this kind of power struggle that we have over each other. I think we need to move beyond patriarchy to partnership, beyond law, old covenant to grace. And, beyond just creation to a new creation in Christ.



Fong She says “It comes down to this, Ken, why do Christians keep emphasizing the curse when we’re actually living under the cross? Why are you living under the curse when the cross makes us all a new creation?”

The church should be the first place anyone can come to see the kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven. And by that it means everyone here is a subject of the King. So, it’s not about a male being in authority, it’s about Jesus being in authority. God never meant any human being to rule another human being. It’s like we’re to submit to the rule of God.

How do we follow God’s original design?

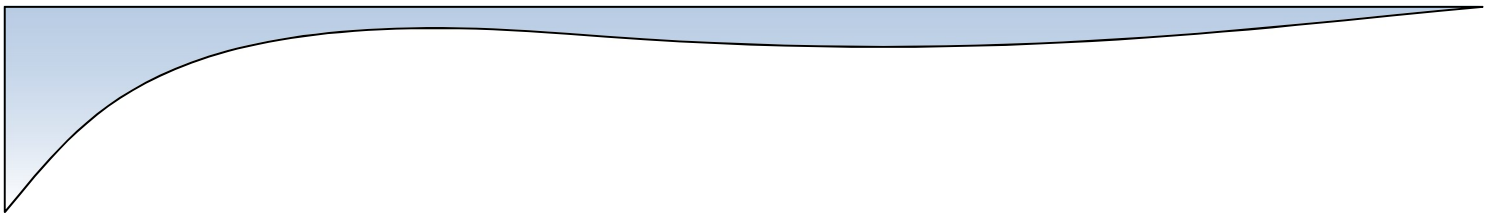
Zaki So, I grew up in a pastor’s home and we were the family that showed up first in the church and the last family to leave the church. And so, for me, before the word “call” or “vocation” was part of my vocabulary, the word “love” for the church is what drove me to the church, it is what attracted me to the church. So, I thought for me to keep being in the church for as long as I wanted to be, the only way is to marry a pastor.

One evening after I had just preached a sermon at our church, where my husband was a pastor, and on the drive home my husband said “Are you sure that God called you to marry a pastor?” And I thought it was a bit of a strange question, I thought, is this how divorce talk begins? Are you sure you were supposed to marry me? And I thought yes, I’m pretty sure. Since I was 16 I knew I was to marry a pastor. And, I was quite happy and satisfied with my role as a pastor’s wife. And then he said to me, “I think that you have the gift of being a pastor, not just a pastor’s wife.” And that to me was as if he was suggesting to me that I should walk on my head.

It was a paradigm shift for me. It was a very challenging statement when he said “Who’s supposed to guide who? Who’s supposed to lead who? Is it the culture that’s supposed to dictate the shape and boundaries of my call or is it my understanding of Scripture and my sense of call that is supposed to shape and re-shape and transform my culture”?

After a year of study and struggle it became clear to me through accurate, solid, deep, scriptural interpretation of the text that women’s ordination and the leadership of women in all parts of the church and all ministries of the church is biblically permissible.

I had a strong call...you are to candidate in your Presbyterian church of Egypt. I applied to my synod back in Egypt. And I got a lovely welcoming letter that said “We welcome your ministry but here is no possibility for what you are asking for.”



And then eventually I moved back to Egypt, after the Egyptian revolution. And all of a sudden, I wasn't just a letter that's being sent. All of a sudden, I was a person who is showing up at presbytery meetings and synod meetings and all of a sudden, they had no idea what to do with me.

I couldn't understand how they could be so closed minded to something like this even though all my life they had been teaching me that men and women are equal in God's sight. And that we've all been given the same Spirit. And that we've all been given the same gifts. And so I was disturbed by the fact that I'm not sure we're walking our talk here. And if we're not willing to walk our talk and if we're not willing to have the courage to walk our talk, then please let's switch the talk so that at least I'm settled.

I got so much encouragement from individual pastors who would choose to ask me to preach in their churches on a Sunday. Some of them would even go as far as calling me Pastor Anne, which hasn't happened yet, but I'm still waiting for my ordination process.

And I've been even more encouraged by the Seminary that invited me to join their faculty as the first full time female professor on their faculty.

This re-positioning is not a new concept. It is not a western imported idea. It is not a feminist movement. This re-positioning is the original design that God has created and preserved for women that cannot be filled in any other way. So, we have a choice whether to live with a vacancy or to fill it with the right people.

Helvig: So, Jesus can redeem us from the curse of death and domination of one over another.

Royer: And while on earth, Jesus demonstrated life as it was meant to be from the beginning.

Helvig: Join us for session 3 when we look at what Jesus taught about our relationships and what it means to be one in Christ.