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Men and Women in the Church

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

There is much at stake in God making humanity male and female. Created for one another yet distinct from each other, a man and a woman are not interchangeable—they are designed to function according to a divine fittedness. But when this design is misunderstood, ignored, or abused, there are dire consequences.

Life and Books and Everything is sponsored by Crossway, publisher of *Men and Women in the Church: A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction* by Kevin DeYoung.

Men and women—in marriage especially, but in the rest of life as well—complement one another. And this biblical truth has enduring, cosmic significance. From start to finish, the biblical storyline—and the design of creation itself—depends upon the distinction between male and female. *Men and Women in the Church* is about the divinely designed complementarity of men and women as it applies to life in general and especially ministry in the church.

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Transcript

♪♪♪ -Readings and salutations. Welcome back to Life and Books and Everything. This is Kevin Young and I am joined by Justin Taylor and Colin Hanson.

Good to have the band back together as we talk about various and sundry items related to life and/or books and/or everything. As always, grateful to Crossway for the excellent resources that they produce and at least one-third of this triumvirate boom-a-day employee. And for the many fine books and... Strange as it may be, the book they wish to highlight today is called "Men and Women in the Church," a short, biblical, practical introduction by me.

So, what's a non-self-serving, non-awkward transition into talking about this book and Colin and Justin will chime in. Maybe they'll have some questions, but I have some questions for them as well. And we're going to use this episode to talk a little bit about the book, but I don't want it to be just a commercial for the book, but talk more broadly about the state of complementarianism and what we're seeing and what we think the church needs to be doing.

So, let me give a little bit of background on this book and then let Colin and Justin jump in. So, this is called "Men and Women in the Church," it's just coming out as we speak, the trucks are driving across the country, unloading just pallets of books, yonder. And this goes back to a little-known book that I wrote many years ago called "Freedom and Boundaries." I actually started writing that my first pastoral charge in Orange City, Iowa and started writing that then in 2003, 2004, and of course Justin wasn't returning my calls at the time to get anything published with Crossway, so I self-published it.

It came out in 2006 and since then that self-publishing company went belly up. Thankfully, I have the copyright and so in the last few years, Justin and Crossway have said, "Hey, can we publish that?" And hoarders had it on Amazon for \$100. I'm sure they didn't sell any at that price.

And I have like the last 15 remaining copies worth their weight in gold they are. But I kept putting off Justin and saying, "Well, I do want to do that, but it seems like just a reissue of the book." Fifteen years later isn't going to work because a number of the issues are different and a number of new issues. And so I kept putting off until I had time to try to revise some of it.

And so I worked on that last year. So I'd say the book is the main exegetical sections are slightly revised and then about half the book is completely new. Some people may recognize some different things I've posted on the blog over the years there.

So it's definitely not a second edition of that previous book. It's a brand new book. It has new content, but it is revising some of the exegetical sections.

Thankfully, my exegetical conclusions had not changed much, except a few tweaks in

one or two areas. But it is significant, I think, that in 15 years since the earlier iteration of the book came out, my circumstances have changed. And some of the situations in the conservative evangelical church have certainly changed.

When I started writing the book, I was in the Reformed Church in America. I was thinking mainly about addressing egalitarian in my denomination, even egalitarian in my church. And I knew that there were men and women who saw these issues differently.

And I liked them. They're good people. They were not bad people.

They had different conclusions. They looked at Scripture differently. So I wanted as wincely, as gently, as clearly as possible, to lay out the case for lack of a better term.

And we'll probably talk about terms in a moment, complementarity. So I want to do some of the same things with this book. But now 15 years later, the conversation partners are not all the same.

And the challenges to complementarity are-- well, they're still there from egalitarian exegesis, but they've multiplied in different ways. And in some ways, I think maybe conservative evangelicalism is suffering from its own successes in some ways. That 15 years ago, I didn't really have TGC.

They're just starting. Didn't have T4G. That was just starting.

They didn't have the same kinds of networks of Reformed-ish conservative complementarian. And so now that there's so much of that out there, and so many people that would gladly say, yes, this is the jersey I wear, there are a number of debates, not just with those who wear a different jersey, namely egalitarianism, but within those who say, yeah, I basically think men should be pastors, men only, different conversations about what challenges and issues there are. So that's all by way of introduction.

Colin, Justin, what do you see or what do you think we need to talk about on this broad topic? Kevin, one of the things that stood out to me about the book is that-- and I think this is a big burden of yours in this project-- is that if we're limiting our entire views of men and women to a thin prescription biblically, and we're not trying to address the underlying reasons, the way God has made us, then that kind of complementarianism is likely to get blown away. It's too thin. It's too weak.

And certainly, that's one of the tensions that we've talked about a lot. It's been pretty openly debated for some period of time. And I wondered if you could expand a little bit more on just why you think we need to give more attention there.

And I'll give some of my perspective on trying to publish on this topic over the last number of years. I found it very difficult to write and to publish on this subject matter.

There's something about people's experiences that makes them very difficult to be able to hear from a different perspective on this.

I find it very hard to be able to explain exactly what is the essence of manhood, what is the essence of womanhood. You took a stab at it in here, Kevin, talking about beauty with women and strength for men. You can come back to that as well.

I'm interested to hear more of your thoughts on that. This is where I've concluded over time of just pounding my head against a wall trying to publish on these things within just an online space and not having a lot of success with it is that for me to understand manhood, I can talk to my dad about that. My grandfathers were good examples for me of manhood.

It was something that I caught more than was taught. What do you think about that, Kevin? You're thinking about this with your own kids, your own church, books, blogs, all that sort of stuff. It just seems like the medium makes a big difference.

How did you think about that in writing a book trying to take a stab at these big questions of what is God's natural intent for the differences between the sexes? Again, I can look at it and I can say, "Okay, I guess another way to put it would be for my dad and mom, that seemed obvious. They didn't need a book to tell them that or a bunch of online articles, but now it just seems like we're so much more confused and it's harder to be able to even explain basic things like that even though it's going to like, "I know it when I see it." Yeah, you hit on a lot of the most important issues there and we are more confused than ever. Let me try to hit a few things that you said there.

First, you talked about, in some people I don't like these terms and I guess I'm somewhat responsible for them maybe, but narrow and broad complementarianism or thick and thin. What I mean by that simply is I sense that there are a number of people and our friends, I'm not trying to just create bad guys, good guys or girls, that's the case maybe, but folks who would say, "Yes, I agree with you exegetically on the conclusion that men should be pastors and elders in the church and that in some broad sense men are the head of the household." So those two things, men are the head of the household, that's a verse in the Bible and qualified men alone should be elders, pastors in the church and that's important things to agree on. But as you alluded to, one of my real fundamental concerns is that if we don't know the reasons for reaching those conclusions or if we hold to those conclusions with little else by way of application or the underlying apparatus, I think in time they'll seem arbitrary, capricious, people wonder, "Well, why are we kind of holding on to these?" And I do fear at times that people may hold on to those two conclusions because that's basically the feel like the team they're on, the network they're on, the denomination they're on, that they don't want to cross that Rubicon to women's ordination or to women as elders.

But beyond that, there's sort of nothing very little else that seems to be at stake. And so

one of the things I want to argue in the book is that those important conclusions are just that they're conclusions that come at the end of a lot of other important theological foundation that God gives us in His Word, that we see from beginning to end that it was God's idea to create a two-sexed humanity, male and female. And in at least a human sense of contingency, he didn't have to do that.

He could have found some other way to propagate the human race or could have found some other way for fellowship or intimacy, but he chose to do this. So there's something inherent in the way God designed us. And we're meant to live our Christian life as Christians, but as male Christians as female Christians.

And what does that mean? You hit on something really important, Colin, that it used to seem more normal, it used to seem more obvious. Now here's the danger that we all recognize. Some of those things that maybe our parents or grandparents' generation just assumed weren't always in the Bible and couldn't be shown from specific texts, that the man is the one who has to fix the car, he deals with stuff outside, the woman cooks the meals or does the dishes and deals with stuff inside the house.

So there are certain stereotypes of manhood and womanhood that we want to be careful, that we don't try to read back into scripture. And yet if we say, well, there's really nothing, there's nothing to it that being a man or being a woman, it doesn't really have to say anything to do with how you might conduct yourselves in the home or who might do what sort of work. As soon as you get to the applications where people in our day get really, really nervous, and I get that, I get nervous too, and yet if there's no application to it, what are we really saying? And is there anything to manhood and womanhood? So I'm wanting people to step back and say, is there something ontologically, biologically, physiologically, maybe even emotionally, psychologically different about being a man and being a woman that is by God's design and with appropriate flexibility ought to have some practical working out in life.

So one of the words I use in one of the chapters is posture, the posture of manhood, the posture of womanhood. And I use that term intentionally because I don't mean a rigid form that it's always going to look like this, but there is a certain posture, the certain leaning in toward certain realities. And more and more, especially people are younger than us, we're going to be very allergic to any of this.

You know, just one quick illustration that shows the inanity of Twitter, I posted something last Saturday. I was going to ask about this, Kevin. I didn't know how to bring it up.

So I do, I do my own, I wash my own clothes. Now my wife doesn't ask me to do that. She does the others.

In fact, she wishes I didn't do it because she doesn't think I do a very good job. She thinks the clothes still have sort of like athletic stink in them and I'm not doing things

well, but partly to help out partly so I can get this stuff clean when I want, I do it. So I was doing my load of laundry last week and I was, this doesn't look right.

I poured in fabric softener. I started looking, this seems kind of thin. This doesn't seem normal.

And I looked at it, I don't think this is the same thing actually as detergent. I went and found whatever tied or something. I just put that in over all the fabric softener I had already put in and turned out the clothes smelled really, really fabric softener.

And a woman actually came up to me and church the next Sunday, she said, "Did you really do that pastor?" I said, "I really did do that." Well, you probably had to wash all the clothes. Nah, I just lived with it. We'll wash them again next week when we get to it.

So I tweeted something, "Hey guys, her husband's just word to the wise, fabric softener is not the same as detergent." Entirely a joke at my own expense, entirely pointing fun at myself. And the response from some was, "How dare you?" That was addressed to husbands as if it's assumed that they wouldn't be doing the laundry. And all sorts of testimonials.

The best thing I ever did for my sons is I taught them to do the laundry and praise God for my mom who taught to do the laundry. It should be 50/50. I think I didn't tell anybody what to do with your laundry or how to do it.

And I made a joke. That's how sensitive we are to these things. And the reality is, and you can see studies, especially in Christian holds, but even in non-Christian, it's still the case that the wives are mostly doing the laundry.

If you think that's normal, if you think that's good, bad, oppressive, or it's there, it can be a little bit offensive to wives and women to act as if every bit of housework they do is oppressive to them, that they haven't worked out whatever arrangement works well with their husband, and that if they were truly enlightened and truly liberated, they wouldn't be doing these things. So yes, anything you say on Twitter can and will be used against you. Justin? I regret critiquing you for that tweet, Kevin.

Sorry. So going back to the thin complementarians, I'm not a thin complementarian in any sense of the word. If you only know me from my voice, maybe that joke will pass you by.

So we want to be a nice complementarian on this. You are quite true. Okay, what was my point? So we want to be fair to the thin complementarians, right, the narrow complementarians.

I have never heard a good answer from them on the "why" question. Why did God, you know, they affirm that only ordained qualified men should be office holders in the

church, but that question of why, what is the fundamental difference? It is God that they do hold to that biblical truth, but I've never been able to discern how it's not a similar case to God arbitrarily decreed that redhead people should be elders and blondes of brunette shouldn't be. Have you heard a good answer to that? Or is that just me not looking carefully enough for asking enough people? That's a good question.

I'm trying to think what someone, you know, we have friends who would be in that camp, whether they would use that language or not. I think they might say, "Well, Justin, it's not that I deny that there are real differences, but if you go beyond that, you're adding to Scripture because Scripture doesn't spell that out." And then they'd probably go to, you know, the infamous sort of a woman shouldn't be a male man or, you know, sort of things that have been said out in cyberspace. So I think you're right.

And the other question, and I talk about this in the book, and Piper's been good to bring up this question, is what is the answer to the question, "Mommy, Daddy, what does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a woman?" I mean, do you, that's, that is the sort of question a child can ask and often do. And you say, "Well, it means that mummies have babies often." You know, that's even counter-cultural today. I mean, you can't even say that, but you have to say that to be biblical.

But I would hope we would say more than that, or, well, to be a man means you can be a pastor, to be a woman means you can have a baby, but you can't be a pastor. I think scripture gives us more than that. And part of what the difficulty is, and I think I hit on these three words in my chapter on the Old Testament, is we need to distinguish between prescriptions, principles, and patterns.

And at the one end, maybe there are some complementarians who have looked at patterns in the Bible, or principles, and then they've made them ironclad prescriptions. You can't do that, or women can't work outside the home, or now that's a problem. But there's a danger in the other direction too.

And that's saying, "Unless you give me a prescription, unless there is a statement from Paul saying, 'Women don't do this, men don't do that, men wear these kinds of clothes, not those kind of clothes,' then we can't say anything else." But that's not a real fair way to look at scripture either. When we are meant to notice all sorts of principles and patterns that we see of how men and women relate to each other, how they relate in leadership, how they relate to the family. And so one of the patterns I draw out from the Old Testament, you look at the opening chapters of Exodus, and you have this grand story of redemption, really maybe the central event in the Old Testament, the liberation and redemption from slavery in Egypt, and those opening chapters in Exodus, that whole story is driven forward by women seeking to care for and protect children.

Chifra and Pua, the midwives protecting the children, you have Moses' mom and Miriam of course trailing behind to try to find safety for Moses not to be killed, and then you

have Pharaoh's daughter who takes in Moses. So you have people of different ages, different social standing, some even outside the covenant community, and you have clearly this story is... Now that's not a prescription. Women must work with children.

Women must work in the nursery. Men cannot work in the nursery. But there is an important pattern there, and something that's worth celebrating, something that's worth celebrating in the work that women do.

One of the readers of the book, and she provided a blurb, is Abigail Dodds, and Abigail wrote on her blog was it yesterday about being in the ICU with her son, so you think of it, we'd be praying for her and for her family. She made a very good comment to me reading through it. She said, "Why is it that complementarians sometimes, and they get very nervous, but they just talk about, well, men and women, here's all the things they can do, but complementarians basically men and women, they each can do 100, men can do 100 things, and women can do 99 things.

They just, women can't be elders or something." She says, "What about the things that women can do that men can't do?" And chief among those is give birth to a child, know the joys of motherhood. And again, not everyone will experience that, but most women will, or nursing, or incubating human life. You want to talk about which sex has an unimaginable privilege.

You say, "Well, that's sexist, you don't know how much it hurts." I don't know how much it hurts. I'm not minimizing the effect of the curse, but it is something to be celebrated. And if we get to a point in the church where we can't celebrate moms being moms and the high calling of motherhood, then we've completely lost what any sort of healthy complementarianism should be like.

And then follow up on the thin side. I do think you got to the heart of the matter, Justin, with the question of, "Is it because the Bible doesn't say as much as we might expect?" And I think you talk about that in the book, don't you, Kevin, about how the Bible doesn't say as much as you might expect, about exactly what this looks like. But when we come to that hermeneutical principle of the Bible's silence, it could lead us in a few different directions.

And I'm wondering, Kevin, which direction you think this might lead us in. It could lead us in that direction to say, "The Bible doesn't say more because God wanted to give us flexibility." You know, cultural flexibility, that's one of the strengths of Christianity. It's cultural flexibility.

That's one option. Another option is because it was so obvious, it didn't have to be explained in that culture. That's what we often hear about Jesus talking about homosexuality as an example.

Why would Jesus talk about this so much? Because he already said he upheld the law, he fulfilled the law, and we know what the Bible says. We know what the law says about homosexuality. Another option could be because as we try to go from why it was so obvious at that time to today, it's interesting how many things have changed dramatically.

And so for example, I think, I don't know how, you're not going to get much disagreement that the biggest discernible difference between men and women is the difference in strength. Now it's not every man to every woman. We know that we're just talking about the aggregate.

And I wonder if we've lost touch a little bit with how common, like how often those forms of strength were needed, not just for men, also for women, but especially for men. How many vocations that men pursued would not have required quite a bit of physical strength and stamina? Anything from farming to war. Let's just take those two examples right there.

Now how many, how essential is it to be a man, or at least to be a lot stronger, to be a farmer, way less than it used to be? There are way fewer examples of that, where that would make a big difference. War would be another example. Even how much warfare now is fought through drones or airplanes or ships or things like that and missiles, things that in many cases a man and a woman can easily do.

They're not dependent on physical strength. Well that would explain some of why our situation is so different because the many differences or the main physical difference is really mitigated by our technological transformations in there. So I guess going back, Kevin, what direction might you point us in there of is it thin because it was trying to give us flexibility to work that out ourselves or it was thin because, I mean back then it was so obvious, but of course if we go that route in some ways it definitely is not as obvious anymore because of just some basic technological changes.

Yeah, that's a really good question. I might have to think if I'd want to side with one or other of those explanations. Yeah, you can go a whole different route.

I'm just giving those options. No, but I certainly think, I mean certainly we know that things were obvious in a way that they aren't now and certain patterns and certain ways of doing things could be assumed. We do want to always be careful not to go beyond scripture, but we also want to be careful that in our own cultural moment we aren't trying to read out of scripture certain patterns and principles that be there.

I mean you raised a great point that the most obvious immediate difference between men and women is what you said biological physical strength and the need for that has never been less in human history. And so the differences between men and women have in many ways seem to have been reduced, eliminated, mitigated that if you don't have

to have brute force to carry out certain things then how important is masculinity and femininity. To that however, I would make a couple of arguments.

One is that even though it's often in the name of feminism or in the name of women's equality, I think what we so often see in cultural narratives, movies is a woman's valor is pitched in terms of masculine virtues. I mean it's the kick you know what, heroine in a movie who could, you know, doesn't matter you know how thin she is and she can still absolutely get in there and with the best guy can crack your neck, can go in there, she can be as bad and as tough and as rough as any man. Those are, that's the strong woman, that's the heroine.

When we so rarely see and I think you know others have made the same point but we so rarely see a movie where a strong woman is sacrificing for a child, is a nurse in an ICU unit, is having in ways that show great self-sacrifice. In other words, what we might typically associate with more feminine virtues of self-sacrifice, communal gathering, those sorts of strengths. I would also say in you know anytime you talk about this whole subject, you know, people are not going to like everything you say but I think it's the fact that once men and women will be different, they are different and when we bring men and women together in certain circumstances, there is on the one hand a great sanctifying effect that women can have on men.

So I think marriage is a very good thing, we know Jesus was single so it's not absolute all of that but it's a very good thing. I think there is something that God means when he puts a man in marriage and when he gives him the blessing of children that a man is meant to be in a healthy way sanctified, domesticated that having to love and provide and protect a wife and care for child is supposed to be a good governor upon the worst sort of masculine instincts. On the other hand, I would say, this will sound, let's put it boldly, I think when for example you have women become elders in a church.

I think the male elders stop acting like elders. I think the nature of eldership changes. I think it because women are different and even godly women who come into that and bring Christian virtues to bear, I think they are different.

I think men are wired to act differently around women and we tend to guard ourselves more, we tend to be less aggressive and that's a good thing. That's how God made us and yet then maybe there is a reason why having some female-only spaces, some male-only spaces is healthy. I would argue that the internet has just further precipitated all of this.

Be so bold as to say in general, you see men and women often arguing differently on the internet. They make their sort of arguments in different ways. They argue with different sort of emotive force.

They argue with either less or more drawing from personal experiences. They argue

more or less appealing to personal suffering. Men and women argue things differently.

They wield power differently. When we pretend those differences aren't there, we not only don't do justice to God's design but we end up hurting both men and women and we lead to less healthy churches and less healthy homes. I'll be quick on this one, Justin.

I want to follow up Kevin on the men stop acting like elders question there. I wondered, I mean a lot of your background of this book, you talked about writing your first draft in 2003, 2004 and you were in the RCA, pretty young. This is something that you saw in that denomination, I'm assuming.

Yeah, and I have people that I love and care for who differ with me on this and friends or family, women who are ordained and so I always speak respectfully. But yeah, I think there is a difference. I think there's a difference too, one of the differences sometimes between thin and thick complementarian is what is an appropriate role for a woman to be addressing men.

On the one hand, we say, "Well, of course, I don't want to say it's wrong for a man to learn from a woman." So, Linacuilla with Apollos and all sorts of contexts, all sorts of nuances. Yet I would argue that whatever you say about complementarianism, if you are sitting there cheering on as a woman berates the men in the audience, I think you've given up something of complementarianism already. And so, there are inherent differences in men and women that no matter what we do, no matter what our theology says, our social engineering does, they will be there and they will find ways to come out.

And so, I think the Bible gives us ways to have them come out in healthy ways and we'll get to in a moment where complementarianism maybe hasn't been healthy. But that's the aim and to pretend like we can do away with the differences will not in the end be possible. Justin? Yeah, so let me ask a two-part question.

There are two very different questions, but it starts to kind of critique to the right a little bit. We've critiqued the egalitarianism, we've critiqued the thin complementarians and we all know thick complementarians who can be thickheaded. Yes.

They can be thick in all senses of the word. Are there some ideas that you hear, theological ideas from fellow complementarians that make you cringe and are there and/or are there postures perhaps where you might agree theologically, but the EQ for lack of a better word is off-kilter? So this gets to what's really difficult about this topic and you hit on it. Do we think the challenges to complementarianism are mainly inside or outside of the movement? And again, it's inevitably both and it depends on where you live and what you see and how you grew up and your own experiences on whether you tend to think it's one or the other.

So I think we need to talk about the unhealthy sort of feminism. We need to certainly

talk about the movement of sexual liberation and how trans ideology undermines differentiation, all of those sort of outside secularizing, liberalizing forces. But you're right, Justin.

And there would be many of our friends who would say, really, those don't seem to be the big issues, the big issues are the things that we see in our complementarian churches, whether it's toxic masculinity, it's abuse. And so we have to acknowledge that these things are there. And if someone, a man or a woman says, well, Kevin, here's what I grew up with, here's what I saw, here's what happened to me.

I mean, my first posture is going to be to believe what they're telling me. And if it's an awful story, say that's awful, that's not what complementarianism should be. So to briefly answer your question, what might be some ideas or postures that seem unhealthy among thick, thick, head-headed complementarianism? I would say a hyper testosterone.

Yay, let's, everything is turned up, the volume to 11 and everything is men go out and have your Winston Churchill moment to fight them on the beaches and go out. And, yeah, that's called for at times. And that is an expression, I think, of masculine courage and protection.

But if that's the only mode. So that's one, I mean, I think related to that is the flip side of what we were talking about earlier. And that's when there are rigid stereotypes or when complementarians want to be overly prescriptive and to say, well, you know, real men don't wear pink polos.

Come on. Well, you can't make that sort of statement. And yet there's something to what Paul's saying in 1 Corinthians 11 that dress does show something about our bi-gendered identity, either male or female.

And so we can't completely say what you wear is irrelevant. And we have to deal with the cultural cues that tell us what sort of things are associated with manhood or womanhood. And so if, you know, one of my sons wanted to wear a pink shirt, that wouldn't be the end of the world.

And they wouldn't say, well, you can't ever do that. It's not what men do. And on the other hand, if everything he wanted to wear was pink or frilly or, or I mean, I would want to talk to him about what's going on and what's going on.

What do you think in here and have an honest heart to heart about that? So I think there are certain postures which are unhealthy. And then the last thing, and I'm interested, Justin or Colin, how you'd answer that question, I think so often, actually, I don't know how often, but I'm sure there are the kind of clueless pastors who have, as you said, Justin, a low EQ, emotional quotient. You know, we hear a lot recently about the sort of

mindset that says women are just temptations.

They're all just pot of her's wife and you can't talk to women. And you, boy, I hope I don't think I've done that. There's something healthy in the Billy Graham rule.

There's something healthy and, you know, I'm going to text. If I have to text you back and forth about a bunch of things, I may copy your husband on it. That doesn't seem to be a bad idea.

My wife has never come to me and says, "You know, it really makes me upset." You don't talk privately with more women. You don't email privately with more women. You don't text privately with more women.

I feel really demean. I think she doesn't. But there are those pastors who seem so terribly awkward around women who never learn how to talk.

I mean, they may even be married. And it's always at arm's length. It's always in a, you know, they may not even mean to be demeaning.

They may not be sensitive to the fact in a church that if you have a woman on your staff, she's very likely to be the only one or one of very few. And if you're not at least aware of that dynamic, that often can be hurtful to women. So I would guess in the rank and file complementarian churches, yes, there's the horrible stories about which we hear too often.

But I would guess it's more the sort of clumsy, awkward, low EQ sort of moments that would be there anyways. But then if you superimpose upon that, this is what complementarianism is about. Either because the pastor did that or the woman received it that way, then it feels really unhealthy.

Justin, how would you answer your own question there? Yeah, I think I would answer real similarly to what you did that I think it takes place in the race discussion as well as the gender and sex discussion when it comes to EQ. And it's one of those things that you can kind of, you know it when you see it, although it can potentially be difficult to define. Just, there are some people who are not inclined towards sensitivity, who like to rub certain truths in people's face, who don't include nuance, who don't want to listen.

And I think this is one of those areas. The theological truths are eternal and beautiful, but we do bring experience to the table. So if I'm talking to somebody, it makes a difference if you grew up in Bill Gothurgland versus growing up in some very different sort of progressive, permissive, cultural situation.

So we bring our own experiences to the table and I think part of just being a good Christian, not a man, a good woman, a good Christian is to be a good listener, is to want to learn more, to hear people, to be sensitive to what their fears and suspicions might be

without just taking certain prescriptions and principles and sort of using them as a hammer and seeing liberalism everywhere. And just the only solution of that is wheeling the hammer and let the truth drop on whoever is on the other side of it. Yeah.

Just say two things that real quick, I completely agree. So maybe pushing to our folks on the right, I would just underline what you said there, Justin. And oftentimes a little bit of humility, a little bit of question, listening, that sounds awful.

I'm sorry, can really go a long way. I mean, and it's not, you don't want to do it pandering, you don't want to do it. It's not manipulating, but to really mean it.

And it's true, you said both with race discussions and with gender discussions, especially if you're the person who's been considered the one to have power, to have that posture that says, tell me more about that. That sounds really bad. I'm really sorry.

I bet that happened and was even worse than you can describe now. That goes a long way. My pushing to our folks on the left, and I think you would all agree with this, both of you, is that we have to come back.

It sounds so simple, but we have to interpret our experiences through the Bible, not the Bible through our experiences. And I do feel like in internet discourse just encourages these bad behaviors, that it's often an emotion in search of irrationalization. It's a personal narrative in search of some intellectual framework that can give some illusion of really hard one rational thinking.

And so we don't discount people's experiences. We don't discount, especially people who have grown up in very unhealthy environments. And lack of father, bad husband, bad pastor, abusive situations.

And the challenge is always to let scripture interpret those experiences, not have those experiences dictate for us, then here's what the Bible must be saying. So when I see what seems to be an avalanche of new books coming out, in one way or another, going after patriarchy, they would call it. And we can talk about that patriarchy if you define it one way.

Father rule is a very biblical thing. In another way, all of the cultural connotations is something ugly. But the argument is, at least now doesn't seem to be so much.

Here are the exegetical points that you're failing on. Let's do a massive word search on Kefalay. Let's look at outentain and let's try to figure out how Greek infinitives work.

But it's some mix of history, personal narrative, cultural analysis, all of which comes to the conclusion, and I might say the conclusion was already there, but comes to the conclusion, this whole thing that you conservative evangelical, complimentary in people are doing is not even going to look at is how do you understand your own views and are

they biblical. But the whole thing you're about is evil, toxic, denigrating to women and politically inflammatory. And so it's a very different kind of argument.

I'd love to hear, well, I'll go to Colin and then Justin, I want you to just say something about that blog post that you re-upped again on the conundrum of complimentary and publishing and the challenge there. But anything to add to this, Colin? I wonder if Kevin, we could trace that mode of discourse to Matthew Vines' work on homosexuality and the conclusion of bad fruit. But more or less, it's not so much what the Bible says as what it's supposed to produce there.

And it's not hard to go through history or today to find examples of people who are doing this poorly, especially on the other side of your view. So if you're a egalitarian or even beyond that, geofirming is pretty easy to find examples and then you can just string together a series of bad examples that seem to form this clear, unimpeachable narrative that shows that, well, I mean, only a monster would ever believe this. It strikes me, I'm trying to hold two things in my head lately.

We published at the Gospel Coalition recently, Rebecca McLaughlin from her new book, *The Secular Creed with the Gospel Coalition*, writing about how pro-woman Jesus was. And one of the common critiques you get is, yeah, so amazing that it only took 2,000 years for any of it to actually happen. Jesus was so pro-woman.

And then for 2,000 years, the church was totally oppressive toward women. And then now all of a sudden, it's great. That's the argument that you hear from non-manifestly, not true.

It's not. Again, this is the way TikTok apologetics is working these days. But I do think at some level, we're trying to reconcile the beauty of what the Bible holds up and the promise of what the Bible holds up with the reality in some ways of history and the difficult application of it.

So I'm reading through Barbara Tuckman talking about the 14th century. And her overall view is that the church's view on sexuality was inherently oppressive. But still, some of the things she draws out about the medieval church's view toward women is plainly unbiblical.

It cannot be defended by the most ardent complimentary today, where I'm watching the BBC adaptation of *War and Peace* last night. And one of the characters, a father, is just completely misogynistic toward his daughter, just absolutely horrible toward his daughter. And we know that those things, I mean, a view of just actual female inferiority in those cases.

And so it seems like we're trying to deal with this. The Bible holds up something really beautiful, but people really make a mess of it in this world. And I want to point out that

I've never seen this being a complimentarian versus an egalitarian thing.

And I don't know how either side could feel real great about making an experiential argument these days. I mean, it's just if you want to go find examples of complimentarians doing bad things toward women, they're out there. And then I'm going to come back and I'm going to ask you about Bill Hybels.

I'm going to say, okay, so Bill Hybels is one of the most staunch advocates of women, supposedly. He's doing something very different, very different story there. It just seems that we've got to dial back the experiential narratives and try to lift up the biblical hope and try to live that, try to live that out.

And again, I believe the complimentarian way of doing that is the best way to do it. But there is something about complimentarianism where when I fail to do what God calls me to do toward my wife, to love my wife as Christ loved the church, it seems to hurt more. It seems to hurt her more.

It seems to hurt me more because of the beautiful promise of what it holds out when I fall short of that, when I sin, when I don't live that out, it seems to breed a certain kind of disappointment. And I wonder if that's Kevin, a lot of what's behind a lot of this trend that we're seeing is that complimentarianism holds out a pretty beautiful thing. Pretty beautiful thing.

But when it falls short, it gets pretty ugly fast. Yeah, two quick thoughts and throw back to Justin. But one, your point about history and how we tell history is exactly right.

If the danger used to be hagiography, meaning we tell our history as nothing but saints, the danger now is homotiography, which is we tell the history as nothing but sinners. Now, we don't usually tell our own history, although sometimes we do it. And again, that goes to race too.

We're right. It's right to have it brought to our attention that white American Christians over the history of this country, by and large, on the race issue got things wrong, the different degrees. But that's not really fair history either, nor is it a fair way to love our neighbor as ourselves, our dead neighbors also ought to be loved as we would want to be loved someday, to reduce people to the one thing that our culture prizes most, that they got most wrong.

Without any benefit of context, without the benefit of the doubt, without weighing against other options or other manifestations. So just on this issue of gender and sexuality, it's all too easy. Take anything and give me 50 years to pick bad examples, bad statements, when what would really be more scientifically plausible, though can't really be done, is to say, well, what did the alternative produce? Did the alternative idea produce something much better? Or if those are the bad examples, what about the

hundreds of thousands of millions of people over these decades who have lived with these ideas and produced much good fruit in their homes, in their marriages, in their churches? But we're always, bad news always makes news.

And it's not to discount it. I mean, we need to see history warts and all, but now we have people telling history warts and nothing else. And your warts, not mine, your problems, your side, and the more mono-causal, almost the more difficult it is to try to disprove.

Because you just take one big idea, you trace it with all of the whatever bad examples you can find, and therefore that equals this. So that's one thing. Second is, I hope our listeners understand, I hope my children understand, I hope our churches understand, as much as we might want to not deal with issues of gender and sexuality, we cannot avoid them and be faithful in this country and in the Western world.

How often have I wished I could be back in the 16th century where it was justification or back in some other century where the reason that empires were against one another was Homo Ucian, was Christ of the same nature with the Father. But you know, that's only because from a historical distance, those seem like rather safe intellectual theological debates. But in the moment, in the time, they felt just as divisive, just as explosive, just as absolutely combustible as these issues are.

So we cannot ignore issues of sex and gender and be faithful in this cultural moment. And we might wish that we had something else, and there will be many other things we should talk about, but this is one that we can't avoid. Justin, anything to piggyback on that? Or to go back to the question I asked 10 minutes ago about the conundrum for complementarians writing on this issue? Yeah, I'll just say something briefly that your little Jeremiah there warmed my historiographical heart.

I mean, it really is lamentable that we have professional historians trained at the highest level who are teaching graduate students in historiography who are doing really bad methodological history. That is unfair, that it's not even attempting to be fair, that's using history as a weapon. So I agree with you completely, and I think the three of us who all love history want to see honest history.

If that makes us look bad, it makes us look bad. Let's just be honest. Let's get the facts out there.

Let's look at this from all sides and not just use it as a weapon against those mean people that we don't like. The repugnant cultural other. Exactly.

Yep. Yeah, so you've asked a couple of times about this blog post that is, I re-up it every once in a while, and it's from Tom Schreiner, due testament professor at Southern Seminary. It's almost 20 years ago now that he wrote this, but he said sometimes I wonder if egalitarian is hoped to triumph in the debate on the role of women by

publishing book after book on the subject.

Each work propounds a new thesis which explains why the traditional interpretation is flawed. Complementarians could easily give in from sheer exhaustion thinking that so many books written by such a diversity of different authors could scarcely be wrong. Further, it's difficult to keep writing books promoting the complimentary in view.

Our view of the biblical text has not changed dramatically in the last 25 years. Should we continue to write books that essentially promote traditional interpretations? Is the goal of publishing to write what is true or what is new? One of the dangers of evangelical publishing is the desire to say something novel. Our evangelical publishing houses could end up like those in Athens long ago who used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new, quoting X-17-21.

I do think that is a really significant insight that the complementarians in terms of exegesis say, "Stove it changed our minds. We have not been persuaded that the text means something different than what it looks like it means." But how can you keep saying that year after year after year where the egalitarian can always propose something novel, some new twist, some new insight, some way that we've all missed things? I think what strikes me is that egalitarian by and large the most popular books don't even feel like they're trying to make the biblical case anymore. It's just so blindingly obvious that these people are bearing bad fruit and therefore, no matter what the text means, it cannot mean that.

I'm thankful, Kevin, in light of that kind of gloom and doom report that you have written this book because I think that you do have a unique voice and insight and we do need to go back to the text to go back to say, "What does the word of God say? Is it open to interpretation? Is it clear? Is there a compelling reason beneath it?" And then to give people some practical helps, not just how do we parse this particular word, but it is one of those issues that you have to make a decision. If you didn't belong to a church and you just kind of debate it theoretically, if you're involved in a church, you have to make a decision of, do you have women who are elders or not? How do you treat women in the church? There is no perpetual sitting on the fence with this issue, so I'm really grateful you have written the book. Well, I'll use that as our segue to wrap things up.

Well, I'm mentioning my own book, "Men and Women in the Church, a Short, Biblical, Practical, Introduction." It is all of those three things. It's only 150 pages of text. The first part goes through biblical exploration, part two questions and application.

I say at the beginning, I want this to be a meat and potatoes book, not a fire hot salsa book. It's conversant and aware of some of the current issues that are out there, but it's not a book going to set the record straight on everybody else who I think is wrong. I really hope a non-anxiety kind of book.

I wanted to be contemporary enough that, hey, it speaks into our moment, but I didn't want it to be the sort of book that three years from now you say, "Ah, nobody's reading that other book anymore," or those blog posts don't matter anymore. I would love for this to be a book that people on the church bookstore can pick up, a Bible study, a college student, a high school student could say, "Hey, I want to read something that's pretty short, accessible, but hopefully learn it." That's what I've tried to do. I just piggyback on your exhortation there, Justin, to go back to the text.

I know evangelical people want to give up on the term and I understand some reasons why, but if that term has any historical value, we have to be the people who are going back to the text. That was the Reformation slogan, "Add faunteis back to the sources." Let's go back. Let's always go back and see what the scripture says about this, that the Bible can shape who we are, the Bible can interpret our own experience.

Justin, I think as we come to these convictions and maybe most of the listeners here share these complimentary convictions, my pastoral exhortation is to be fearless and to be happy. If happy sounds too bad, then joyful is a good, biblical word. But to be fearless, not apologetic, but there is something very jarring to people when you hold these sort of views in a way that's happy and healthy and joyful and willing to make light of yourself and admit your own faults and especially to the men out there, lay down your life to love and sacrifice for your wife and to, if you have the privilege of raising children to raise them as best you can to be men and women after God's own heart.

So thank you brothers and Lord willing, we'll see each other in person, the Gospel Coalition next week and looking forward to that and we'll hopefully talk about some more books. So until next time, hope you will glorify God and join forever and read a good book.

[Music]

(buzzing)