



A Faithful Future

The seams of theological patriarchy appear to be stressed. More people are speaking out against injustices committed against women in the church regardless of where they stand on the doctrinal spectrum. Clearly, there are still vocal opponents to women's full participation in ministry and leadership, but when some try to squelch the voices of certain women, Christians of all theological stripes are ready to defend. I have noticed that those who might have been reticent to defend women in any kind of ministry in years before are ready to encourage and support some women now.

Obviously, this progress toward including women in leadership and ministry is the work of the Holy Spirit and further evidence of the inbreaking of God's work in the world. I also see this as the fruit of previous generations of egalitarians who were faithful to their calling to teach mutuality and advocate for women—generations that you will encounter in this magazine.

In this issue of *Mutuality*, we at CBE wanted to gather a variety of voices in a conversation about the past, the present, and the future of the egalitarian movement, and about how we as egalitarians can all work together. In these articles, I hope you'll gain a clear picture of who we are and what we're doing. We are Christians who advocate for the inherent equality of women and men, regardless of race, class, or ethnicity, and for God's vision of mutuality in the home, the church, and the world. And we are faithful to follow this calling. But I'd like to take a brief moment to begin to imagine where we might go in the future.

First, we are clearly still in the trenches, so we need to keep working on our mission. Churches and Christian organizations are still overwhelmingly led by men alone (and white men at that). We must continue to do the biblical and theological study that supports and ungirds our ministry. I am reminded of the recent work of scholars in books like *The Gospel According to Eve* (reviewed on page 26). We are still only beginning to uncover and bring to the forefront women's interpretations of Scripture.

Second, we need to keep telling women's stories. In this issue, an article about Pentecostal missionary Lillian Trasher reminds us of what it looks like to follow one's calling faithfully. I hope her story encourages us all to answer God's calling wholeheartedly wherever we are and whatever we're called to do. You will also read an article about rhetorical strategies employed by women preachers. One strategy that patriarchy employs to keep women isolated from one another, and to keep men clutching at power, is diminishing the stories of women's leadership in the church across time and space. We cannot be what we cannot see, so the enemy makes sure that we cannot see our foremothers or hear of the work they have done. We need to keep telling these stories until we can hear the great chorus of women who have come before us as clearly as we can hear the great chorus of men.

Third, we need to use our privilege to stand beside others. I hope that throughout these articles you encounter a still small voice encouraging you to use what benefits you have to journey beside others as a faithful colleague. Regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or class, you have something unique to give and contribute to the mission of the egalitarian movement. We also know what it is like to be unheard, so we need to be the first to listen to those who are different from us.

Above all, my prayer for the future of the egalitarian movement is for unity. We cannot let petty divisions keep us apart, but we also need to reckon gently with the places where we have let significant disagreement separate us. I'm certain we have all said or thought something disparaging about someone younger or older. Many of us need to repent of the ways we have ignored our bias against someone of another race or ethnic group. Certainly, there have been times when we have dismissed the poor or favored the rich and privileged among us. God "reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). No matter how sin has torn us apart, the Lord is working to bring us to unity, and we must join him in that ministry.