

The Journey Back to Eden

By Glen G. Scorgie | Reviewed by Dawn Lindholm

One scholar stated, “You can’t learn something you think you already know.” In light of this proposal, Dr. Glen G. Scorgie’s book on relational harmony between men and women will enlighten only those who do not think they already have the right answer. The book is for those who hold Scripture in highest regard while also admitting that many issues, including gender issues, are not presented in clear black-and-white answers. Understanding Scripture and the movement of the Holy Spirit is a daunting task that Scorgie approaches with humility while admitting that, no matter how careful we try to be, our own cultural lenses may skew or blind us to the embedded and implicit truths of God. Readers who understand the complexity of the issue will appreciate how the author synthesizes the disciplines of history, sociology, and biblical hermeneutics to prove an egalitarian perspective.

With clarity, the book takes the reader on an historical journey from Bible times through church history to the present. The author does an impressive job in anticipating the readers’ concerns and questions. Every time an argument seems weak, Scorgie brings up the weakness and addresses it effectively. He convinces readers that there is a movement toward greater inclusiveness, which he calls the “trajectory of the Spirit.” With evangelical Christians arguing over what is “traditional,” this book reminds us that what we now consider “traditional” may in fact be a very modern construct. Scorgie traces the broadening movement of the Holy Spirit in relational harmony based on the Trinitarian relationship of God and how to apply that to human relations. The orthodox ontological equality within the Godhead and the temporary state of the subordination of the Son to the Father are seen as key to a true understanding of the issue.

The issue of slavery is one of the examples of the trajectory of the Spirit that Scorgie uses to justify his thesis of an ongoing movement of liberation. In Bible times, slavery was a culturally acceptable institution. Jesus did not challenge it, nor did most societies through much of history. In fact, Southern evangelical Christians fought to keep American slavery in practice through the nineteenth century using and quoting the Bible to justify their position. Now we are in the twenty-first century, and the vast majority of us would not tolerate even the idea of slavery, let alone practice it ourselves.

The Journey Back to Eden is written in a style that non-theologians are able to understand, yet it is not a simplistic assessment or explanation of the challenges facing the church of today on gender issues and stereotyping. As a woman in ministry, I struggle on the journey from feeling like a second-class citizen in the church. Many churches in my past have made male-only leadership a sacred truth by claiming that “God said so,” and for many it is an inalterable truth

because it came from the pulpit. But the problem is that it indeed came from the man in the pulpit and not from the Bible.

The Journey Back to Eden is a clear, engaging book for those who are willing to take the journey and those who find they have already begun the journey toward full inclusion of men and women in the kingdom of God. The book calls the church to gender equality and mutual respect. It gives hope to those who struggle with the issue and encouragement to those who already believe in the full inclusion of women.

I recommend this book to individuals who are beginning to question contemporary church traditions regarding men and women. The book is written, at times, in a winsome format in which readers feel like they are taking a personal journey with Scorgie from humanity's beginnings in Eden to present times. The vignettes of discussions with other people create a space in which readers engage in the conversation. While the issue is a complex one, Scorgie has the ability to structure his argument/apologetic in a form that simply clarifies the major objectives and concerns. It would be a superb book for small groups, as each chapter ends with suggested discussion questions.

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