



Women: Men's Genuine Partners

A recent post made an insightful observation: “God is not a boy’s name.” Since God is not male, men are not morally superior, and being male is not a leadership quality. Yet throughout history, it’s Eve’s failures rather than Christ’s victories that are cited as the basis for male leadership. The persistence of sexism that assumes women’s inferiority is evident in the assumption that women pursue leadership in the church because they crave power and control. While male leaders are “assertive,” female leaders are viewed as “pushy.” Here again we too often consider men as more redeemed than women. Yet Scripture shows the genuine partnership between woman and man—a central theme permeating God’s perfect world, one that is distorted by sin and redeemed by Christ, a drama that unfolds in the early chapters of Genesis.

Strikingly, the only “not good” in a sinless world is Adam’s aloneness. God says, “I will make him an *ezer* (in Hebrew) or “a genuine partner” (Gen. 2:18).¹ Unable to find her among the animals (Gen. 2:19–20), God creates Eve from Adam’s side, introduces them and Adam bursts into song, celebrating his *ezer* singing, “At last! This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” (Gen. 2:23). Scripture emphasizes not their differences, but their unity and oneness. Created in God’s image and made of flesh, Adam and Eve share an embodiment that equips them for a shared vocation—to govern the world and be fruitful in it (Gen 1:27–31). In a sinless world, Adam and Eve rule over the animals and the earth, not each other. This, God says, is very good (Gen. 1:31).

Tragically, the mutuality Adam and Eve enjoy does not endure. Both disobey God and their sin distorts God’s perfect world. Their shared governance devolves into “he will rule over you” (Gen. 3:16). Male dominance devalues woman as inferior, obscuring her identity as man’s genuine partner. While sin ruptures their harmony and oneness, God provides a redemptive plan: a redeemer will come through a woman (Gen. 3:15). Through Mary and the Holy Spirit, Jesus was born to crush evil. In Christ’s victories over sin, we become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Supremely in Christ, women and women at the margins receive an unqualified welcome as genuine partners, created in God’s image for shared governance (Matt. 26:6–13; Mark 7:25–30; Luke 7:36–50; 8:40–56; John 4:7–30, 39–41). Unlike the rabbis, Jesus includes women as his disciples. They study at his feet and follow him as he ministers, preparing them as evangelists, teachers, and leaders (Luke 10:38–42, John 4:4–42). In Jesus, women are heirs of Abraham (Luke 13:16). They too are blessed for hearing and obeying God (Luke 11:27–28) above cultural roles. Through Christ’s crucifixion, death, and burial, women remain with him while the male disciples hide behind locked doors. As morning dawns, Mary Magdalene is the first to meet the risen Lord, and he sends *her* to tell the disciples he has risen (John 20:11–18). Obediently, she becomes an apostle to the apostles. A new creation movement dawns with women apostles, deacons, evangelists, and teachers, Paul’s genuine partners.

In Galatians 3:28 Paul explains, theologically, how people at the margins become genuine gospel partners. He reminds us that in Christ, the privileges of the Jew, the freed, and the male are now those of the Greeks, slaves, and the women as well. He describes how the slave Onesimus becomes bishop of Ephesus, Junia becomes a prominent apostle (Rom. 16:7), Priscilla a teacher of teachers (Acts 18:26), Phoebe, a deacon (Rom. 16:1), and Lydia, a house church leader (Acts 16:15). Paul goes further: he calls husbands to love their wives sacrificially and with empathy (Eph. 5:28–33). If your wife is hungry or cold, so are you. Those with cultural power—masters and husbands— should be characterized not by dominance but by the mutuality that Adam and Eve enjoyed before sin entered the world.

The genuine partnerships of women and men working side by side as evangelists, house-church planters, apostles, missionaries, Bible translators, and more comprise a Christ-follower revolution that transformed the most brutal superpower in history—Rome.² May we go and do likewise, now more than ever.

1. Jeff Miller, “Women and Words: Why Bible Translation Matters with Dr. Jeff Miller,” interview by Dr. Mimi Haddad, *Mutuality Matters*, CBE International, May 5, 2023, audio, 34:03, <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/women-and-words-why-bible-translation-matters-with-dr-jeffrey-miller/>.

2. Tom Holland, *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World* (Basic Books, New York, 2019).