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Mutuality

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Seeking God Together,
Even When We Disagree

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Not Easy

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A Legacy of Grace

“Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (Rom. 14:19 NRSV).

In this final issue of 2023, *Mutuality* celebrates thirty years in print with a look back. Since its founding, it has been a space for egalitarians, both within and outside of CBE, to share reports, experiences, and reflections on working out biblical equality in their own lives.

Advocating for biblical equality can be a tricky and often painful task; from churches stuck in their specific traditions to scholars who argue vehemently against biblical equality, emotions flare and change can feel impossible. Should we just throw in the towel, swallow our calling and pain to keep the peace? How do we balance righteous anger with loving exhortation, when all we want to do is flip tables?

For this legacy issue of *Mutuality*, we have gathered articles from our history that speak to just that. Advocating neither avoiding conflict nor attacking everyone who disagrees, each author explores a third approach: taking dissent seriously, calmly seeking to understand differing perspectives, and dialoguing in love and gentleness. Tempers may run high today, but we are not alone in the fight. We look back to the wisdom and words of those who came before.

The global church is made up of so many different perspectives and stories that it is no surprise we disagree on different points. We start off with a reflection by Louisa Macort, who dives into the question of whether disagreeing within the church is bad for our witness. Should Christians just agree in order to get along and maintain a united front?

Sometimes uncomfortable conversations are divine appointments that help us grow and reflect Christ more

accurately. In this next article, Mimi Haddad speaks about the importance of prophetic dissent within the church. Then, former *Mutuality* editor Megan Greulich describes the difference between peacemaking and peacekeeping and identifies the key to reconciliation even where it seems impossible.

Christena Cleveland explains some of the reasons that conflict gets ugly, and how we lose sight of the humanity of our opponents; she then shows what works and what doesn't as we push forward together. Susan McLeod-Harrison then outlines the ways that Jesus lifted up the broken, using his power for restoration—not aggressively, but with a spirit of forgiveness and grace.

Next, Liz Sykes asks two questions many of us have asked ourselves in awkward situations: Should we say something? And if so, what? Then, founding member Alvera Mickelsen provides a helpful guide for remaining gracious in moments of tension and discord.

Finally, Mimi Haddad wraps up the issue by reflecting on *Mutuality's* roots and looking forward to where the future will take us. We have also included clippings from the very first issue of *Mutuality*, when it was a newsletter—complete with an audio cassette order form!

As Christians, we are called to defend the oppressed, to work against injustice—and we are called to build each other up, giving an answer for what we believe in gentleness and respect. It is important *that* we speak, as well as *how* we speak. *Mutuality* has come a long way from where it started, but it strives to remain faithful to its original purpose, maintaining an irenic tone, speaking truth in love, creating light and not heat, as we help egalitarians share their stories and reflect on biblical equality together.

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Why Can't Christians Just Agree—For the Sake of Church Unity?

By Louisa Macourt

Editor's Note: This article was originally published on Mutuality online, September 25, 2017.

Why can't Christians just agree? Or, when they must disagree, why can't they disagree quietly?

Many people, both inside and outside the church, feel impatient and frustrated with in-fighting and dissent in the body of Christ—even over critical issues like racial and gender justice or domestic violence. See the recent response to Australian journalist Julia Baird's coverage of domestic abuse in the Christian church. Many of the initial responses accused Baird of undercutting the church in highlighting the issue.

We should be united in our primary mission—to bring the gospel to the world.

Essentially, because we, the church, are meant to be one body—united in faith and newness in Christ—disagreement is sometimes seen as a threat and a liability. And certainly, unity is the ideal for Christian community. But does striving for unity mean that we never disagree—on anything? That we never challenge bad ideologies and harmful practices for the sake of keeping the peace? That we ignore the ways Christians have failed the oppressed and vulnerable in order to save face?

We should be united in our primary mission—to bring the gospel to the world. But we should also be truthful about our failure to witness the gospel perfectly, and we should be faithful to *all* that the gospel entails, including the mandate to live justly.

And of course, we should also be united on the foundational tenets of Christianity: Jesus is God incarnate in human flesh. Jesus lived a perfect and blameless life. He died on a cross as a living sacrifice so humanity could be reconciled to God. He physically rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Jesus restored our broken relationship with God and made eternal life with God possible.

It's crucial that we the church are unified on these counts—publicly and privately. This is no space for dissent.

But some Christians argue that we should protect church unity at any cost. We should strive to agree on everything, and if we really can't agree, then at the very least, we should keep our dissenting opinions to ourselves.

For the sake of the gospel, we need a unified front—a face of agreement to show the world. We should hide disagreements over issues like patriarchy or racial injustice in the church from those who do not know Christ. Really, they insist, we should just get on with presenting the gospel.

Let's take a look at one example that's close to our hearts: Throughout church history, the role of women has been hotly debated. Today, dissenting churches and individuals who believe that women should be free to serve at all levels are often dismissed as liberals or heretics who reject the authority of Scripture. And



yet, the majority of those seeking to establish women in roles of leadership and teaching in the church do so out of a deep desire to be faithful to God's Word, plan, and purpose.

Rather than settling for quick solutions and shallow unity, let us practice both prophetic dissent and loving dialogue. Let us not be people who make assumptions about sisters and brothers who think differently than us. Rather, let us embrace challenging conversations for the sake of those who need us to have them.

There *are* real reasons to disagree within the body of Christ, after all. For example, egalitarians disagree over the role of women because we know there are high stakes: freeing half the church to serve and lead.

As the people of God, we are not just one person with one background, or one people group with one cultural background. We are a multitude with many different personalities, gifts, faith stories, family and cultural backgrounds, and ethnicities.

Considering that diversity of background and experience, it is not surprising that we understand various parts of the Bible differently. Some Bible passages and stories speak into our lives so much that we might even think they are written just for us. We bring our experience, our story, our lens, and our bias to the text.

For example, some Christians, and especially many Western ones, have never known what it means to have limited or no access to life's basic survival requirements—food, shelter, clothing, etc. Naturally, more privileged Christians have a different understanding of what it means for God to provide for our daily needs than those who struggle to access these resources. All this is to say—again—we bring our experience and our lens to Scripture.

For this reason, we *need* the diversity God has provided for in the body of Christ. We need the baby boomers *and* the millennials. We need men *and* women in leadership. We need the traditionalists *and* the charismatics. We need the Baptists *and* the Lutherans. We need the church in China and Iran just as much as we need the Western church.

And we also need pushback within the church over justice issues like empowering women in ministry or challenging systemic racism. It is far easier to just not talk about the hard things, especially when the hard things make us, the church, look bad. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't tackle them anyway.

Rather than settling for quick solutions and shallow unity, let us practice both prophetic dissent and loving dialogue.

We should be a people that relishes diversity rather than minimizes it. And we certainly shouldn't feel threatened by it. We should be people who learn from one another and grow together in love. And we should be a people who welcome hard truths and thoughtful critique, because iron sharpens iron and makes us all more like Christ.

So, back to the original question: why can't Christians just disagree quietly? Do we need to protect those who do not yet know Christ from dissent in the church? Is it a unified front, however shallow, that will win people to Christ?

I don't think so. We need to be honest as believers about what the church looks like in reality—imperfect and flawed. We shouldn't be fearful of disagreement or diversity within the church. We shouldn't hide the truth of our complexity—one body with many stories, backgrounds, and gifts.

When we avoid gracious debate and wield swords like “heretic,” “fundie,” “wolf in sheep's clothing,” “liberal,” “non-Christian,” or any other dismissive label at our sisters and brothers in Christ, we damage our own body as well as our gospel witness before the world. We have too often been quick to judge those we disagree with or believe are in error, and slow to listen to their perspectives or engage in constructive, open-hearted dialogue.

Christians should be known for their love, for both their unity and their diversity, and especially for their willingness to lay down their lives and arguments to simply *be the church*. I pray that we will be quick to listen, slow to anger, and slow to speak. I pray that we will be full to the brim with grace. I pray that we will have tough conversations with humble and merciful hearts. And I pray that we will never allow injustice to stand simply because we are afraid to have hard conversations.



Louisa Macourt lives in Sydney, Australia, and is currently working in university ministry. Louisa is passionate about seeing women empowered to use their gifts to serve God.

Egalitarian Prophets in the Church



By Mimi Haddad

**The struggle for justice—for good
over evil—is most profoundly waged
within the body of Christ.**

Editor's note: This article first appeared in the Winter 2005 issue of Mutuality.

In his second inaugural address, Abraham Lincoln noted the hostility and conflict between Christians across the Mason Dixon line. As the American clash over slavery split families, churches, and the entire nation, Lincoln pondered why the lines of hostility were drawn down the middle of the Church. Lincoln said, “Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. . . The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes.”

While Lincoln’s address raises many theological questions, I am intrigued by his observations that the struggle for justice—for good over evil—is most profoundly waged within the body of Christ. Theologians have likewise noted that the battles fought within the Church have significant spiritual and cultural consequences. It makes sense when you consider that Christians are to reflect the living God, and that the actions of the Church speak volumes to

an unbelieving world. Christians, therefore, carry the greater moral burden.

Because of this, believers have earnestly considered the great moral issues of their day and have, as a result, engaged in significant biblical debates that, at times, the conflict seemed to tear the Church apart. In retrospect, however, we can see how the controversy over Scripture and interpretation served to clarify positions in order to understand God’s purposes.

I am thankful that the abolitionists boldly opposed slavery, and they did so from a biblical perspective even as they embrace both conflict and hardship. Deeply rooted sin does not yield without a struggle. Thankfully, abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison (1805–79) pressed forward, despite years of opposition. Garrison wrote, “I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. . . I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD.” As Christian reformers participated in the great debates of their day, their efforts clarified the importance of issues, raising

a righteous, though often a dissenting voice. That their words created tension or alarm is precisely the point. They were sent by God to wake us up!

It seems to me that God inspires prophets and reformers to make us uncomfortable. Their moral and theological challenges lead to debate where diverging biblical ideas and opinions are rigorously scrutinized within the Christian community. Ultimately, the rightness of a cause emerges and reform is made possible. While the exchange of theological perspectives may become heated, it is by listening to one another that we make good decisions. The Christian community, like a large family, must sort matters out, even though this is sometimes accomplished with intense passion and even hard feelings. In advancing biblical justice, some offense may prove inevitable.

As Christians, we are part of a tradition in which we, as the body of Christ, discern the will of God by listening to one another, even and especially to those with whom we disagree. We need not fear differences, nor pursue peace at any price, since Church history teaches that the dissenting voices are often sent by God. Consider the important creeds and councils that arose from intense conflict and debate. The rigorous biblical dialectic that shaped the creeds and councils sharpened logic and clarified God's Word such that the documents that arose from such meetings continue to serve the Church today.

Just as in the past, prophets are working in nearly every corner of the world today, prompting us to consider important issues. Tirelessly, and at great personal expense, they challenge theological imprecision, biblical inconsistency, and injustice. Their words of biblical challenge may be viewed as a form of moral dissent, which is God-inspired and therefore necessary to lead the Church to greater health and unity. One would have hoped for more dissent by Christians in Nazi Germany, or in white South Africa, for example. While we are committed to reconciliation—to remaining in fellowship with one another—we cannot attain clarity or even authentic unity by shutting down debate and discussions.

**It requires courage to carefully
and respectfully listen to an
opponent and ask whether God is
speaking through them.**

We all know pastors who oppose requests to study what the Scriptures say concerning women's leadership. They are afraid of splitting the Church, of losing members, or offending people. Many want peace at any price, but I believe this weakens rather than strengthens the Church. Sadly, avoiding healthy debate and conflict often creates siloing and echo chambers that confirms bias and can devolve into vindictiveness towards our Christian "dialogue partners."

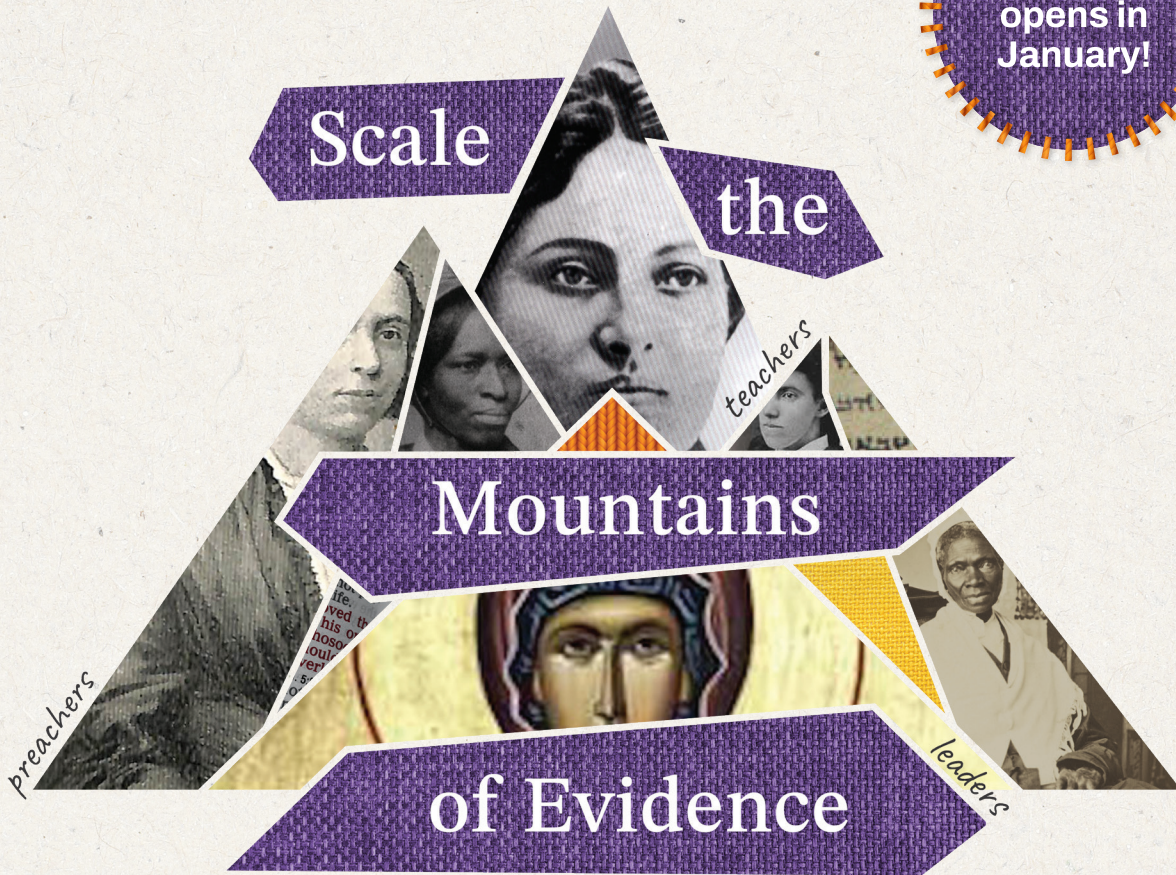
C.S. Lewis observed that apart from courage, no other virtue exists. It requires courage to listen to a voice you may not wish to hear. It requires courage to carefully and respectfully listen to an opponent, and ask, as David did, whether God is speaking through them. We must listen, and we must also ask that others listen to us.

My neighbor oversees a branch of the Lutheran Church in Ethiopia. He was the first to ordain women in his country. His actions were courageous, even as they were met with acrimony and hostility. He anticipated this response, and when I asked him why he pressed forward, he said that the women he ordained were dedicated Christians and skillful preachers. They were gifted and called by God to spread the gospel and serve the Church. Failing to advance their ministries was to oppose the very work of God.

Let us encourage our sisters and brothers in Christ to remain in biblical dialogue beside those with whom we disagree, even when there is tension, acknowledging that we, as limited human beings, discern God's leading in this way. Allowing people to exchange ideas and learn from one another is very healthy and God-given. The challenge is to travel together, through the conflict, arriving at the other end renewed and sharper in mind and spirit. Iron sharpens iron, and we want to be sharp instruments in the hand of God.



Dr. Mimi Haddad serves as president and CEO of CBE International. She has taught as an adjunct associate professor of historical theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, Olivet University, and has taught for institutes and organizations worldwide. She is a graduate of the University of Colorado and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (*Summa Cum Laude*). She holds a PhD in historical theology from the University of Durham, England. Mimi received an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity from Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University in 2013. She was a founding member of the Evangelicals and Women Study Section at the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) and Evangelicals for Justice. She continues to serve on the leadership of ETS's Evangelicals and Women.

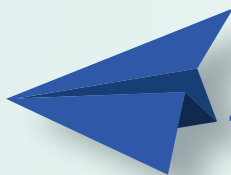


Tell Her Story

Women in Scripture and History

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SIMPLE, BUT NOT EASY

By Megan Greulich

Editor's note: This article first appeared in the Summer 2008 issue of Mutuality.

In college, I first learned the difference between peacemaking and (what I thought was) peacekeeping. I read Michael Emerson and Christian Smith's *Divided by Faith*, which highlights racial inequality and segregation in American churches. While it was easier to ignore the facts in front of me, the answer was simple: I knew racism and division in our churches should no longer be allowed to continue, unrecognized and unnamed for what it truly was. And while earlier on in my faith walk I might have preferred to "keep the peace," or "avoid stirring up trouble," I finally understood then that what we were "keeping" was not the "peace" that God intended for us.

Blessed are the peacemakers, Jesus told us. Peacemaking is messy, and far from easy—one day in a history class or at a marriage retreat reminds us that building long-term peace can be a process filled with conflict. Pursuing peace may lead us through difficult times, and the destination may not be what we expect. But it is an essential pathway for those of us who wish to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

As we reflect on the church's hotly debated issue of women and leadership, few could call reconciliation between egalitarians and complementarians an easy task. It is a debate that has divided denominations, churches, families, and friends. It forces us to confront our beliefs about the very nature of God, and the nature of who we are as women and men in Christ.

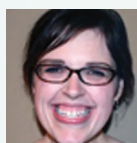
We may be convinced of the importance of this debate. But in the midst of what can be such a painful conflict, we still may find ourselves asking difficult questions. Do we compromise? Do we walk away? Do we honor God by stubbornly holding to a view we believe is true? What if we are wrong? What happens if we are right and we give up our convictions?

Conflict resolution is not easy. Yet we know we have a model of peacemaking in Jesus. In the midst of the most desperate conflict of all time, our separation from God, Jesus provided the ultimate solution: love.

**PERHAPS LOVE IS THE MOST
OBVIOUS SOLUTION FOR
RECONCILIATION, YET IT IS THE
ONE WE OFTEN OVERLOOK.**

It was a simple answer, but it was far from easy. Love. It was not a modifying of convictions or a resolution to keep quiet. It was passion, courage, and sacrifice. It was *agape*. So what does love look like for us as egalitarians? Sometimes it is patience, a willingness to walk alongside a friend or family member as they search for answers. Sometimes love is compassion, a recognition of God in the eyes of someone who disagrees with us. Sometimes love is humility, a quiet moment of lowering our defenses and admitting that our tone or our assumptions were in error. Sometimes love is courage, a sacrifice of our own personal comfort to stand for what is true. And sometimes love is action, a resolution to speak for those who have not been allowed to use their own voices.

Perhaps love is the most obvious solution for reconciliation, one that we might even call a "Sunday school answer." Yet so often it is the solution we most easily overlook.



Megan Greulich is a former editor of *Mutuality* magazine. She lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota, where she runs a bakery and is part of an urban Mennonite community.



Humble Community: Seeking God Together, Even When We Disagree

By Christena Cleveland

Editor's note: This article first appeared in the Summer 2014 issue of Mutuality.

A couple of years ago, I preached on the topic of singleness at my church and during a post-sermon question-and-answer session, I was asked a rather unexpected (given the topic) and baiting question about the merits of egalitarian versus complementarian marital relationships. Clearly, the inquirer wanted me to extol one approach and bash the other (and in all honesty, I could have easily done that). However, rather than choosing sides, I briefly outlined each perspective, citing the Scripture passages that are typically used to support each one—and encouraged people to humbly examine these perspectives in the midst of close-knit, trusted, and diverse community. Not surprisingly, as soon as the service concluded, I was verbally accosted by people from both the egalitarian and complementarian camps who believed that their perspective should have been championed and that the other perspective is ungodly, disrespectful, and just plain wrong. I quickly realized these people were more interested in vindication than in pursuing God's will together. They were not prepared to engage in healthy or loving discourse on this topic.

Not only is the egalitarian-complementarian battle burdened with the emotional baggage of a long and inglorious feud, it also has extremely high stakes. Both egalitarians and complementarians believe that this issue is of utmost importance in our rapidly evolving world. Among other things, it has far-reaching implications that impact how we conceive of gender roles of women and men, family structures, how we enact social justice, and how we apply ancient texts to our twenty-first century lives. What people believe about this issue is deeply important to us, regardless of which side of the debate we land. We believe that we are fighting the good fight as we strive to align ourselves with God's biblical truth.

But often we simply claim ownership of the truth, rather than seeking God together, in humble dialogue with believers of other perspectives. Consequently, we tend to have a difficult time seeing groups with different perspectives as family members who offer invaluable resources and insight. Instead, we see their perspectives as less valuable, less important, and less correct than our own. Armed with the belief that our faith perspective is entirely right, we easily come up with reasons why other perspectives aren't valuable and why dissenting voices should be extinguished. How dare they disagree with us, with truth? So we distance ourselves from them while digging our heels even deeper into the ground of our own beliefs. So much for humble examination, dialogue, and mutual pursuit of truth in the midst of diverse and close-knit community!

How Conflict Gets Ugly

Realistic conflict theory offers insight into the messy divide between egalitarians and complementarians by explaining how mere competition often devolves into hostility and disengagement between the competing groups. According to realistic conflict theory, relationships between groups get ugly when groups find themselves in a realistic conflict—one in which they are competing for valuable resources (such as sole possession of truth). Initially, group members are able to maintain an objective perspective and acknowledge that the opposing group is (at least on some level) deserving of resources and respect. However, when two groups vie for limited resources, one group is bound to fare better than the other. As a result, the loser becomes frustrated and resentful and the winner feels threatened and protective. Strong negative emotions such as hostility and prejudice are quick to follow as allegiance to our perspective overrides objectivity, fairness, and benevolence toward those who hold the opposite perspective.

Throughout history, realistic conflict has reared its ugly head. Researchers have found that between 1880 and 1930, the lynching of African Americans increased

Often we simply claim ownership
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How are we to engage in healthy and constructive dialogue with those who hold opposing viewpoints?

when cotton prices decreased in the South. This is most likely due to the fact that white and black farmers were competing for the same resource: money earned from the sale of cotton. When the resource became scarce (meaning cotton prices dropped and profits decreased), the stakes were raised. In this case, the hostility became so great that it led to lynchings. More recently, research has demonstrated that discrimination toward immigrant groups increases when unemployment levels are high. When everyone is vying for a small number of jobs, people are less tolerant of immigrants. When we care enough about something, the stakes are raised. And this is when things can start to get ugly.

Acknowledging Our Biases

So what then are egalitarians and complementarians to do? How are we to go about humbly examining our perspectives in the midst of close-knit and diverse community? How are we to engage in healthy and constructive dialogue with those who hold opposing viewpoints?

We must begin by recognizing that our beliefs about this issue are tainted by our experiences and motivations. Said differently, our worldview (the beliefs we hold and are constantly looking to confirm) greatly affects how we view this issue and its corresponding Scripture passages. Whether we are conscious of this or not, we approach this issue with an idea about what we want to believe. Consequently, we often find what we are looking to find. (Social psychologists call this confirmation bias.) In general, it's difficult for Christians to admit that their worldview affects their faith-based beliefs. And with this issue in particular, with its intricate layers of emotions and identity questions, I believe it is especially difficult to admit our biases.

But decades of social psychology research reveal that our motivations and experiences greatly influence how we view women and men and the roles that we assign (or don't assign) to them. For one, we've long known that women who possess a traditional gender-role

identity are more likely to desire marriage, marry at a younger age, and are less motivated to work outside the home after marriage.¹ In other words, our decisions about marriage and marriage roles are motivated by our perspectives on roles for women and men (which are often passed down to us by our parents).

More recent research has shown that our experiences also influence our identities as women and men. One study found that school environment influences how much women identify with stereotypically masculine traits (such as independence, assertiveness, willingness to take risks). College women who attended gender-segregated junior high or high school were more likely to identify with stereotypically masculine traits than women who attended coeducational junior high or high school.² The researchers concluded that in all-female schools, women must take on stereotypically masculine tasks like student body president, as well as stereotypically feminine tasks like student body secretary or liaison to substitute teacher. As a result, they begin to identify with both masculine and feminine characteristics, whereas women who've attended coeducational schools typically only identify with feminine characteristics.

This research suggests our perspective on the egalitarian-complementarian debate is heavily influenced by our context and powered by our motivations. When we realize that we bring an intricate web of past experiences and motivations to our examination of issues relating to women and men, gender-based roles, and roles for women and men in marriage, we can begin to build conversations around self-examination and mutual story-telling, rather than hostile competition.

Honoring the Stories that Shape Us

When we realize that our perspective on this issue is powered in part by our motivations, we are called to deeper humility. When we realize that our interpretation of Scripture is unavoidably biased (and thus potentially inaccurate), we're more likely to approach conversations with humility, openness, and an eagerness to listen that equals our eagerness to speak. It is with this posture that we must approach this issue.

When we realize that our individual contexts color our perspectives on this issue, we can begin to examine how our personal experiences contribute to our viewpoint (and perhaps become aware of our own biases or inaccuracies). And we can begin to see how

other people's personal experiences contribute to their viewpoint. Theology cannot be separated from biblical context. We see this when we recognize that the entire Christian theology is based on the grand, true story of God and us and that Jesus more often than not communicated theology through story-telling.

And theology cannot be separated from the stories of those it impacts. But more often than not, when mired in debate, we separate theological principles from their original contexts. Without the context of lived experience, the principles seem naked, insubstantial (through the lenses of our very different stories), and not very compelling. Imagine the irony of slave-holders preaching God's justice to slaves! When the stories and experiences of the oppressed are ignored, proclamations of justice ring hollow. We must return this debate to the rich world of the contexts that shape us.

Before asking people why they believe what they believe about this issue and before asking them to substantiate their claims with biblical "proof," try asking them to share their story. And then share your story. In other words, actually get to know each other. Share "brain space" as Paul urges us to do in Philippians 2:2 when he says "be of one mind." It is from this jumping off point that we can begin to have true relationship-based, empathetic dialogue that can lead to powerful and transformative conversations about women, men, and marriage.

Try asking them to share
their story. And then
share your story.



1. See Bem (1974, 1981, 1985).
2. Yoko Sugihara and Emiko Katsurada, "Gender-role Identity, Attitudes Toward Marriage, and Gender-Segregated School Backgrounds," *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, no. 47 (September 2002): 249-258.



As a social psychologist, **Christena Cleveland** provides practical ways Christians can address cultural discord among themselves and build reconciliation between the powerful and the oppressed. She lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and is the author of *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart*.

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- Suzanne Stabile (The Enneagram Journey)

Access Special



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Good News for the Poor in Spirit

Editor's note: This article was originally published in the Winter 2011 issue of Mutuality.

In Jesus's mountainside talk in Matthew 5, Jesus speaks to powerless people. He has just finished going through Galilee teaching and healing “every disease and sickness among the people” (Matt. 4:23), and so needy ones continue to pursue Jesus wherever he goes. What they get right now is his attention. When he sees them, Jesus sits down. He speaks to the listeners about their suffering and its relationship to the kingdom of God. He surprises them by saying that poverty of spirit, mourning, and meekness have given them blessings. He suggests that their suffering and powerlessness can create kingdom characteristics—a merciful heart, purity, and the desire to make peace. Jesus compares these powerless people to the revered prophets of the past, warning them that they may be persecuted as well (Matt. 5:3–12).

Jesus praises the poor. He sees the blessings that have come, or will come, to them—blessings they could never have laid claim upon in their misery. He wants his new disciples, some of whom have left secure lives to follow Jesus, to understand the dignity, character, and compassion that can be forged from powerlessness, and to understand how the kingdom of God appears. It's as though Jesus were saying to his disciples, “Really look at these people. See what I see and *be that*.”



By Susan
McLeod-
Harrison

***Jesus Uses
His Power
to Relieve
Suffering,
Including
Death and
Oppression***



Given my reading of the Sermon on the Mount, can I conclude that suffering and powerlessness are blessings? Are we to seek them out in order to obtain “the Beatitudes”? The results of suffering can yield kingdom character traits, but powerlessness, loss, agony, oppression, and death are not from God. How do I know? The gospels show that Jesus used his power to heal, save, restore, and resurrect from the dead. He empowered the least powerful, including women.

For example, in Luke’s gospel (7:11–15), Jesus merely observes a woman crying in the middle of a funeral for her only son. She does not notice Jesus, and she does not know enough about him to ask for anything. Yet, Jesus approaches her in her intense grief and says, “Don’t cry.” His heart goes out to her, as he may imagine his own mother’s grief at his death. He knows that this widow will be alone and destitute without her son. So, Jesus uses his power: he raises the man from the dead. Jesus wants to relieve the woman’s pain. He is not interested in her spiritual growth via suffering; he desires to bless her with the return of her beloved son.

There is hardly a greater imaginable power than to resurrect the dead. Jesus uses it again with a twelve-year-old girl, who is the daughter of a synagogue leader. The man is so desperate that, embracing the shame of a servant, he falls to the ground and begs Jesus to come to his house to heal his daughter. Jesus

responds to the ruler’s pain by pressing through the crowd to get to the dying daughter. While being “almost crushed” by so many people, Jesus mysteriously claims that someone has touched him, and says he knows this because “power” has gone out from him. The woman who experienced healing only by touching Jesus’s cloak falls at his feet, ashamed and afraid. Jesus renames her as God’s own Daughter—and publicly lauds her faith. Then he moves on to the home of the now-grieving parents, as their daughter has died. Amidst weeping and the mocking laughter of unbelief, he resurrects the young girl. In this dual story of healing and resurrection (Luke 8:40–56), Jesus’s power seems to ooze out of him, it is so palpable, real, and effective. His power moves toward the suffering, to relieve it, wherever he finds it, or whenever the hurting ones find him.

Jesus’s power to relieve oppression points to Jesus’s authority, a byproduct of power. The crowds often recognize the authority of Jesus’s words (e.g. Luke 4:32), but his authority is most evident when he confronts demons, because the demons know exactly who he is and must submit to his power. In the synagogue in Luke 4, a man possessed by an evil spirit cries out, “Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” Jesus commands, “Come out of him!” And the demon immediately exits (Luke 4: 31–37). Jesus uses his power-as-authority to confront and dismantle that which inflicts pain, in order to restore and heal human beings.

***Jesus uses
his power to
dismantle
that which
inflicts pain,
to restore,
and heal.***



Jesus Uses His Power to Advocate for Women

Jesus not only speaks with authority to evil beings, he also uses his voice to speak powerfully for those to whom no one listens. On a Sabbath, while he is in the respected and powerful position of speaking in the synagogue, Jesus notices a bent-over woman who can barely return his gaze (Luke 13:10–17). He sees this woman as he saw the crowds that day on the mountain when he spoke of kingdom values with his disciples. He discerns her poverty of spirit, and the kingdom that is truly hers. Calling her forth, he blesses her with the freedom, dignity, and beauty of a tall stature. Then, when the synagogue leader rebukes her implicitly for receiving healing on a Sabbath, Jesus defends her right to be healed as a “Daughter of Abraham.” The title “Son of Abraham” would normally describe male Jews, so Jesus radically includes the woman, and all women, in God’s kingdom.

Luke records other occasions where Jesus advocates for women, such as when a woman came into Simon the Pharisee’s house, where Jesus dined, with a jar of expensive perfume for Jesus in her hands (7:36–50). Jesus hears Simon’s unspoken accusations against

both himself and the woman. He takes the opportunity to preach a mini-Beatitudes sermon to Simon, telling him: *be like this woman*. Jesus begins his long boast of the woman as a superior hostess to Jesus, as one who has greater love for God than Simon does, and as one who is forgiven for her sins. When he is done, he turns to the woman herself: “Your sins are forgiven... your faith has saved you... go in peace.” He heals the woman with the assurance that all is well with her spiritually, causing the guests to acknowledge that her sins are indeed forgiven (“Who is this who even forgives sins?” Luke 7:49).

In Luke 10:38–42, Jesus advocates for Mary to Martha—but also to his male disciples who may have been echoing Martha’s thoughts. Martha has a complaint about Mary taking the position of a disciple at the cost of leaving Martha alone to do the women’s work: “Tell her to help me!” she says. Jesus still cares for Martha and her feelings (“You are worried and upset about many things”—we call this reflective listening today), yet Jesus tells Martha, Mary, and the men that Mary has chosen the better path, that of a listening, learning disciple of Christ, no different from the men who also choose Christ. Jesus defends Mary and her assumption of discipleship, to all who are present.

In Luke 21:1–4, Jesus also sees authentic discipleship in a woman, this time in a widow with clearly very little money. What could have been a moment of shame for a woman giving less than a penny to the temple treasury becomes a time of historical significance: Jesus commemorates her generous, faith-filled act not only to the male disciples but also, through Luke, to Bible-readers throughout time.



Jesus Rejects Aggressive Power

Jesus obviously wields power in a way that most of us do not. (When was the last time you raised the dead?) In fact, many of us feel powerless without a metaphorical weapon—a deadly glance, thought, or word. Sometimes in our worst moments we have even gotten physical with our attempt at power—a grab of a child or push of a spouse, or other physical outbursts that we may recall with anguish. We cannot make people do what we would like them to do, which can be intensely frustrating.

Jesus couldn’t always influence people to do what he wished either. He found that his power to compel people to believe in him, and to love him, was limited by the people themselves. But Jesus allowed it. He didn’t reach for the weapons of aggression to hammer

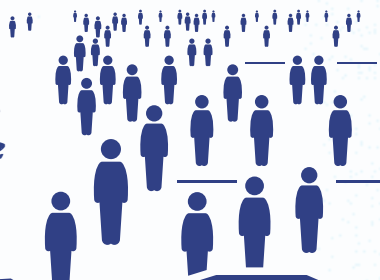
the world into the kingdom. Instead, he spoke the truth, but when people had made up their minds to crucify him, he even quit speaking (Matt. 27:11–14).

Despite Jesus's non-violent approach to power, there is an example in the gospels of Jesus getting physical. Jesus drove out both buyers and sellers of doves and livestock, in the temple outer courts. Some have pointed this out as an example of Jesus's approval of situational aggression or violence. Given that Mark places his account of “the cleansing of the temple” between the beginning and ending parts of the story about Jesus cursing the fig tree (Mark 11:12–26), Jesus

seems to be cursing the false religion and injustice of the temple, with his actions. At the same time, he adjusts the focus of his followers from his own actions to their specific calling. When his object lesson about the fig tree had to do with faith, he was perhaps saying that God will take care of those who act unjustly. We do not have to actively curse our enemies, and we do in fact have to forgive them (Mark 11:25). Jesus, as God, can act authoritatively in judgment of those living out a false religion of hypocrisy and injustice. We, his followers, can have faith in God to “move the mountain” (versus obliterating it), while returning again and again to a spirit of forgiveness.

***We do not have to actively curse our enemies,
and we do, in fact, have to forgive them.***

***But
Meanwhile,
How Do We
Do Justice?***

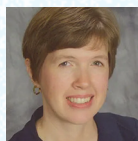


We live in the twenty-first century, in metaphorical temples where divisions continue. In Jesus' time, Gentiles and women were subject to segregation in the temple, and, in many ways, these discriminatory practices of the temple continue through the modern church.

But what is different in this time and place is that many women obtain power in the world, and even occasionally the church. I have often struggled with power—both my own and others'. How do I obtain it, yet still use it humbly for service? How do I use my gifts and see myself as a powerful human being in the church? The words “women” and “power” have come to be seen as mutually exclusive in the church, if power is even accepted as positive. However, power is the stuff of God's kingdom—“the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power” (1 Cor. 4:20). Power comes in a variety of forms to humans. Skill, knowledge, competence, articulateness, persuasiveness, status, degrees, privilege, authority—not to mention the charismatic gifts and the fruit of

the Spirit—are all forms of power that God can use for the kingdom. The real challenge is staying aware of power differences and the potential for injustice that comes from that difference. We also must continue to see the blessedness that Jesus saw in the powerless crowds when he gave the Sermon on the Mount. And, just as Jesus admonished his disciples to use power to humbly serve rather than lord over others (Matt. 20:20–28), so we must do the same.

Within the church, women and men have the challenge of being called to speak the truth about oppression and injustice against women and girls, and to act and advocate on their behalf, as Jesus did. As we follow Jesus in this way, we will often feel as Jesus may have when he spoke—rejected. Yet, Jesus told his disciples to leave a town if they were rejected, to shake the dust off their feet (Mark 6:7–11). If religious leaders don't listen, we can freely leave, and seek out a church community where we are respected and heard. We aren't called to make believers out of those committed to a false religion of injustice. We are called to have faith in God's power, to forgive those who hurt us, and to use our power for healing, justice, and service to the powerless—just as Jesus did.



Susan McLeod-Harrison is the author of *Saving Women from the Church: How Jesus Mends a Divide* (Barclay Press, 2008).



TO SPEAK OR NOT TO SPEAK?

By Liz Sykes

*Editor's note: This article was
originally published in the Summer
2007 issue of Mutuality.*

Maybe you can
relate to some of
these experiences:

Friends are telling us about a prisoner they have been visiting who has recently become a Christian. The latest news is that his wife has also accepted Christ and is just beginning her walk with God. Our friends tell us how they have already encouraged this woman to submit to her husband now as "head of the house." Should we speak up about this hierarchical view of marriage or just let it pass?

We have just discovered that our new neighbors go to the local church. The men from this church are beginning a study of *Wild at Heart* that will meet in our neighbors' house. This study is a sticky situation, because it's a great opportunity to get to know our neighbors, but we do not support the claims about gender roles in this particular book.

When is the right time to speak out on issues of biblical equality and justice? The Bible instructs us to be careful with our words, saying less rather than more. It may seem that it would be more honoring to God if we hold our tongues—particularly when our words might hurt others or cause division.

But then again, the Bible also instructs us to stand up for the poor and oppressed and this cannot be done in silence. There must be a time and place for speaking the truth where God's desire for people is neglected or misconstrued. Sometimes our silence communicates endorsement of attitudes and actions with which we strongly disagree, and we become guilty by association.

Proponents of gender-based hierarchy claim that their beliefs are truly biblical, which suggests that Christians who have other views are mistaken or even heretical. Maybe fear of being labeled “liberal” in our theology or “worldly” in our practices keeps some of us from speaking out about equality.

On the other hand, if we are also committed to biblical accuracy and to communicating God's great plan of salvation for all people, then we should speak out boldly on issues that reflect the character and will of God. Rather than responding to negative comments about equality, we should take the initiative in conversations and positively state the full redemption available to all people through Christ's sacrifice.

When women speak out about equality, they have to deal with the implied contradiction of defending themselves rather than obeying the biblical injunction to suffer quietly when mistreated. It is so much easier to speak in defense of someone else, which is why it's crucial for men to speak up for equality. As men who support true equality begin to face criticisms for the stand they take, they enter into solidarity with women who have suffered these indignities for centuries.

A man at church neglects to hang up the welcome signs at the high school where the church meets. After a woman politely asks him to post the signs, he responds, “I won't be told to do anything by a woman.” Is this just a petty response that is best ignored, or should the man be challenged about his view of women?

Another way to encourage ourselves to speak up is to consider those who are watching and following our examples. Young people in particular will benefit from the stand we take for justice, which may come at a high price for us just now. If we can make things easier and smoother for others, we will have a sense of accomplishment even if we do not benefit directly. When we see women being belittled or mistreated we can choose to speak up about a better way for women and men to behave with each other.

We should speak out boldly on issues that reflect the character and will of God.

If we do become more outspoken on issues of women's leadership, then we need to do so in a tone free of bitterness. When we have allowed God to heal our own experiences of injustice and learned to forgive, our words will be upbuilding and full of hope for a better way of treating others. Finding other Christians who believe and practice biblical equality in all areas of life will help us to grow in our understanding of biblical truths as well as give new hope for our own relationships.

Yes, we must speak and constantly be in touch with God to know how, where, when, and most importantly—why.



Liz Sykes and her husband Trevor have been involved in Christian ministry in Perth, Western Australia, for 35 years. Liz sees biblical equality as vital to an understanding of full redemption through Christ and with her husband would love more opportunities for dialogue with confused or enquiring Christians—on a personal level or addressing congregations.

How Can Graciousness Forward the Message of Equality?

By Alvera Mickelsen

Editor's note: This article first appeared in the Autumn 2000 issue of Mutuality.

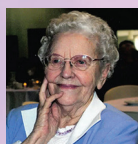
How do we forward the cause of biblical equality?
The same way wise people forward any other cause:

1. Understand to whom you are speaking and/or writing. What are their interests? What do they feel strongly about? What do they understand about their own position or yours?
2. Do not push your beliefs on this or any other subject. After other people find you to be a thoughtful, gracious person, they are more likely to listen to your views when the subject arises naturally in conversation.
3. Very few people are won to any cause by direct confrontation. Most people are not won to Christ by being told what dreadful sinners they are. They are won when they see the loving message of Christ lived out in us. When you have the opportunity, you can express how the belief in biblical equality has helped your marriage, home, work or the way you see yourself, etc. You are not telling them what they ought to do or think, only sharing your personal experience.
4. Commend a person, a group, or your church when you see any evidence of biblical equality in action. Express your appreciation when a woman is invited to participate in some way—to lead in prayer, read Scripture, or head a committee. And don't say, "It's about time we had a woman doing. . ." Instead say something like, "I was especially blessed when Jane Jones read the Scripture this morning. I felt as though I were a real part of the service." You have not found fault with anyone—you have just commended someone for ministering to you.

5. Use humor when you can. Recently I heard someone say, "It isn't a question of whether women can preach and teach. They have been doing that through the centuries. The question is—'Who can listen?'" Depending on the circumstances, you might add, "I wonder why men have put up with those restrictions on them for so long?"

6. In everyday contact with people, look for ways to recognize and commend every small step toward equality. When you see a husband do a thoughtful act of mutuality toward his wife, you can say, "That was a very thoughtful act on your part." Commend your children's teachers when they help children to step out of "gender-based roles."

The issue of egalitarianism is far more emotional than theological. The theological questions are relatively easy to deal with. The prejudices and emotional threats are far more difficult. And they must be dealt with on emotional levels, demonstrating the gentleness and strength of Jesus, our Lord.



Alvera Mickelsen was a founder of CBE and CBE's first board chair in 1997. She worked with grassroots CBE chapters and served for years as a CBE board member. A gifted teacher, writer, and editor, Alvera authored accessible books that remain bestsellers not only in CBE's community, but around the world.

Disturbed by the shallow reading of Scripture used by many Christians to marginalize women's gifts, Alvera frequently wrote for and edited CBE publications and spoke at CBE events and those of her denomination—the Baptist General Conference.

A key visionary within CBE and a tough debater, Alvera was intensely gracious to all she engaged. She was a sought-after mentor for younger egalitarians, writers, scholars, and leaders. She was in constant contact with her students and served as a faithful guide to many aspiring movers and shakers.

Alvera was a people's theologian, bending her enormous talents toward fanning into flames God's gifts and call in everyone's lives. She was enormously successful because she was far more interested in seeing everyone become an advocate for biblical justice than she was in her own success or reputation.

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Over time, it developed from a black and white newsletter into a colorful thirty-page award-winning magazine available in print and online to individuals, churches, and organizational members worldwide. We have had the privilege of hosting authors from all walks of life, cultures, ages, denominations, and contexts, sharing their experiences and reflections on biblical equality where the rubber hits the road and egalitarian theology is put into practice. *Mutuality* has explored a variety of issues, including theology, biblical interpretation, singleness, motherhood, masculinity, dating, pornography, justice, and the church, to name a few. As our author pool has become increasingly international, we have had the opportunity to share an inside look at how biblical equality is spreading in communities throughout the world.

As we extended our reach, CBE began providing free online access to both CBE publications—*Priscilla Papers* and *Mutuality* magazine—along with a weekly blog which shares both the name and mission of

Mutuality. Print issues of *Priscilla Papers* and *Mutuality* magazine continue to be published quarterly for subscribers as well as distribution at in-person events where they seem to fly off the shelves.

As we look to the future, we are excited about what is ahead. Plans for 2024 and 2025 are coming together and will include themes such as Bible translation, slander within the body of Christ, the experience of women in cults, and more. We will continue to bring in international voices to connect and hear from egalitarians throughout the world. We hope you are encouraged and challenged by *Mutuality* magazine for many years to come!

If you would like to write for *Mutuality*, please see the submission guidelines and themes at (cbe.today/writemutuality). We would love to hear from you.

Mutuality Publishing Awards

Year	Award	Details
2023	1st place, Best in Class	"The Problem of Porn: Women, Men, Intimacy, and the Church," <i>Mutuality</i> , vol. 29, no. 3
2023	Award of Merit	<i>Mutuality</i> magazine, Organizational (Print) and Organizational (Digital)
2022	4th place, Best in Class	"The Fullness of Galatians 3:28," <i>Mutuality</i> , vol. 29, no. 2
2021	2nd place, Best in Class	"Making Peace with Paul," <i>Mutuality</i> , vol. 28, no. 1
2021	3rd place, Editorial	"It's Time to Follow Beth Moore Out of the SBC," by Mimi Haddad, <i>Mutuality</i> Blog March 17, 2021
2021	Award of Merit, Organizational (Print)	<i>Mutuality</i> vol. 28, no. 1 and vol. 28, no. 2

For the complete list visit:
cbe.today/mutualityawards

Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

Romans 14:19

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Mutuality • December 1994

The Glory of CBE Chapters

At a CBE chapter meeting a woman once told me, while tears slipped down her cheek, that this was the first time she had heard the Bible used to reaffirm women. She attends CBE chapter events because she finds healing there. Another friend of mine founded a CBE chapter after the church she had planted, nearly single handedly, determined that men alone may serve as elders. She organized a local CBE chapter, and after several years of CBE forums, where her pastoral staff attended, women now serve as elders in her church!

What would happen if there were a CBE chapter in every city in the United States? To date there are over thirty CBE chapters in our country, but we need hundreds more, here and abroad.

Ruth Bolyard, Chapters Coordinator, and others work regularly with CBE leaders, helping them organize, assisting speakers, books, mailing off materials helpful to chapters. The materials are costly to print, store and mail.

CBE Chapters – United States

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ACE249 From Anguish to Reconciliation: Pastoral Care for Abused Women
ACE250 God, I Hate You; Sally, I Love You
ACE251 God's Word on Rape
ACC117 Harassment, Power, Discrimination and Competition
ACE252 Headship and Submission: Disputing the Excuse for Abuse
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ACE255 A Pilot Program of a Group Intervention for Abused Wives From Evangelical Churches
ACE256 The Gap Between the Ideal and the Reality in Women's Experience of Hierarchical Marriage
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ACE259 Silent Screams from the Past
ACE260

Free women to use their God-given gifts!

A unwomen.org study shows that giving women equal authority is necessary for human flourishing.¹ Women leaders who work alongside men in ministry settings are necessary for their churches and communities to flourish.

CBE's work demonstrates that by exposing the inequities of women, communities change and grow opportunities for women. For example, the Reformed Church in America now ordains women after a CBE member used online resources to leverage social change and theological education.

CBE receives countless testimonies about the social, economic, and gospel flourishing that has come through the raising of women to equal partnership with men. Men have reported that their parenting and interactions with women have been changed for the better because of CBE's resources. Women report that CBE was instrumental in their faith journeys, relationships, and vocational confidence as they have been empowered through CBE's award-winning resources. Read about CBE's projects at cbe.today/projects.

With your generosity, many more can come to know that women and men were created by God with equal dignity and agency to lead and serve side by side.

Give before December 31 to help us spread the message that God created ALL his children to use their gifts for God's glory and purposes.



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CBE's DNA: Serving the Global Church



A daughter of immigrants, our family struggled to make the US our home. Unlike our neighbors, our family was small and lacked extended relatives and social networks. Struggling to seamlessly blend into US culture, my grandmother had difficulty learning English and rarely socialized outside our home. We ate foods others found odd, and our clothes seemed equally strange. When my uncles visited, they wore long robes, carried prayer beads, and spoke a guttural language that sounded peculiar and harsh. Part of an honor-shame culture, we valued the elderly as much as our ancient church—both out of step with US culture. Imagine my delight in meeting Dr. Cathie Kroeger—a CBE founder deeply committed to the global church.

We met at Harvard, where Kroeger was studying Syriac—the language of our Maronite tradition. In building an international organization that vigorously uncovered women's leadership in Scripture and history, Kroeger was unearthing the biblical status of women long buried by bias and ignorance. She consistently maintained a learning, humble posture that was welcoming and respectful. It was love at first sight.

From the beginning, CBE was committed to serving international Christians in the global church with the best biblical resources available—most developed by our founders and early board. Dedicated to irenic conversations, our resources aim at cultures in the West and beyond.

As CBE *International*, we've translated key resources into more than thirty languages. We have published articles from international authors in both *Priscilla Papers* and *Mutuality* magazine. Most recently, we implemented a tool that enables our entire website to be translated into seventeen languages. Our radio spots on "Women in Scripture and Mission" are aired in English and Spanish, resulting in significant impact with listeners calling the station saying, "We've never heard anything like this before!" Minutes after our radio spots air, website visits increase significantly; some days we have over 3,000 requests to translate our website content into Spanish! As funding increased, CBE

began hosting yearly conferences alternating between the US and abroad in countries like Kenya, South Africa, Colombia, and Finland. This summer, CBE held its first conference in Brazil, establishing an egalitarian footprint in the fifth-largest country in the world.

**Dedicated to irenic conversations,
our resources aim at cultures in
the West and beyond.**

Over 40 percent of evangelical families in Brazil encounter abuse. Barred from ministry roles, women in many churches may even be restricted from playing instruments during worship. Brazil had very few egalitarian books in Brazilian Portuguese until CBE's 2023 International Conference in São Paulo, themed "Setting the Record Straight: Women and Scripture." There, attendees received two CBE books translated into Portuguese, both of which are now available online and in bookstores throughout Brazil, with other titles soon to follow. And while Brazil's primary language is Portuguese, we were thrilled that every single one of the copies of *Priscilla Papers* and *Mutuality* magazine (in English!) were snapped up by attendees on the first day.

The model of irenic biblical engagement at the conference in Brazil followed a pattern established in India in 2007 when CBE held its first event in the subcontinent. The local CBE chapter continues to flourish under leaders like Havilah Dharamraj, chapter leader and editor of *Priscilla Papers*. Her ongoing work in India provides invaluable insight and a much-needed international perspective in our publications as we keep our eyes on the big picture of what God is doing in the global church.

In cultures where egalitarian theology has been marginalized or that have little access to CBE's message, these are communities where CBE finds our calling—like

the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS). Until recently, women comprised around 6 percent of ETS members; women scholars encountered humiliation; and no woman had served on the executive committee until this year. These and other examples represent communities where CBE creates cultural and linguistic bridges to bring Scripture's teaching on women and leadership. Every year that passes, our calling proves more critical. Why?

Thankfully, with the vast number of excellent egalitarian resources published in English every week, CBE can barely keep up with reading and reviewing the books we receive.

Yet, there are women and men who have little to no access to egalitarian resources in their language and they desire our support. Given the impact of our message in communities that "have yet to hear," it is no accident that I met Cathie Kroeger that chilly spring morning at Harvard. Her calling and mine were forged in collaboration with global leaders in bringing *God's Word to Women* to all the world, to reach women like my grandmother, isolated in their context. Now, thankfully, we have several resources in Arabic and from a Middle Eastern context that skillfully and graciously include women as Jesus did, lovingly and humbly. CBE can do no less.

CBE Resources for Spanish Speakers

Visit cbe.today/spanish or scan the QR code below to explore our Spanish resources online, including:

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- Books available in Spanish.
- Lectures from CBE's International Conference in Columbia.
- Igualdad Biblica de Varon y Mujer, by Philip B. Payne.
- And so much more!

Be sure to check out mujerradio.org for Spanish radio spots and articles that highlight women in Scripture and mission.



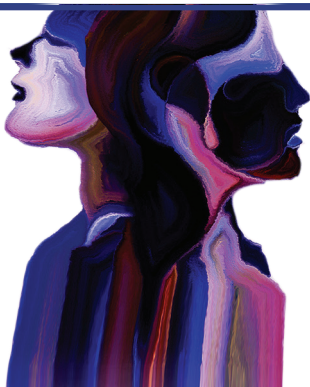
 **CBE**
INTERNATIONAL
EN ESPAÑOL

Reaching the world with CBE resources!

CBE exists to promote the biblical message that God calls women and men of all cultures, races, and classes to share authority equally in service and leadership in the home, church, and world. CBE's mission is to eliminate the power imbalance between men and women resulting from theological patriarchy.

God is working through CBE in our continual pursuit to reach more people worldwide with the biblical message that women and men were created for mutuality. Thanks to your prayers and support, we have reached more than one million people through CBE's new website, Christian radio spots, and with the help of our multimedia resources that were launched in 2022. The new website gives CBE a robust platform to organize and promote our ever-growing content in over seventeen languages. CBE's new website won the Marcom Platinum Award—the highest marketing award.

CBE's website houses and promotes thousands of articles and multimedia resources to educate and equip Christians on women's shared leadership and authority in the home, church, and world. Using this vast array of online resources, CBE uniquely engaged an extensive global network of ministry partners: women and men who are thought-leaders, humanitarians, biblical scholars, and gospel pioneers from more than one-hundred denominations and sixty-five countries. This network disseminated CBE's award-winning resources to many cultures, ages, educational levels, denominations, and vocations. Together we prayerfully and skillfully promoted women's leadership by creating and leveraging resources that reveal the biblical and moral flaws of Christian and cultural patriarchy.

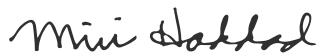


Due to COVID, CBE's 2022 Atlanta conference was our first in-person conference since 2019. The conference included many pioneering sessions, including a panel discussion featuring CBE's Bible translation team. 186 individuals attended the conference in person and eighty-two additional individuals viewed the keynote sessions through Facebook Live. These lectures are available on CBE's website, YouTube, and SoundCloud.

See CBE's annual report for April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 at cbe.today/annualreports.

To shift and adapt our work to address cultural differences, in 2022 we incorporated a commitment to the intersection of women, race, and ethnicity in CBE board and staff policies, manuals, and practices, and via revisions to our mission statement and core values statement. During CBE's conference, Rev. Michelle Williams of Shalom Consulting, led a leadership luncheon and lectures on "Women Leading Justice and Reconciliation Efforts" and "Using Our Collective Courage to Live Out Galatians 3:28."

Thank you for standing with CBE as together we advance the gospel by equipping women and men to share authority equally for God's glory and purposes.



Dr. Mimi Haddad
President



Biblical Equality is Growing in South America

A stylized logo featuring a blue open book. Above the book is a white cross. To the right of the book is a white star. The entire logo is set against a yellow background.

CBE International first visited South America in 2014 with the conference "Men and Women in Christ: Identity in Ministry," held in Colombia. In 2023, we returned—this time to Brazil to "Set the Record Straight" on Women and Scripture. The Lord moved powerfully throughout the conference, healing, encouraging, and equipping participants who returned to their communities on fire for biblical equality. As we are planning our upcoming conferences, we turn to Argentina in hopes of returning to South America very soon!

Be sure to check out Mutuality's 30.3 summer conference issue for all the details on Brazil 2023, including an in-depth report from CBE president Mimi Haddad. The lectures are available on CBE's website, YouTube, and SoundCloud.

Praise and Prayer

Praise

- We praise God for a successful Giving Tuesday and the donors who sacrificially give to support CBE and its resources.
- We praise God for a successful start to conference planning for CBE's conference in Denver, Colorado, scheduled for July 26–28, 2024.
- We praise God for the launch of a Spanish resources page to reach our Spanish audience with more of CBE's resources.
- We praise God for the work already done on CBE's next book, a compilation of lectures from our 2021 London Conference.
- We praise God for the opportunity to translate *Mutuality by Design* into Spanish!

Would you be willing to pray regularly on behalf of CBE? Join our prayer team to receive a full list of prayer needs on a quarterly basis, plus occasional urgent prayer needs. Please email us at cbe@cbeinternational.org to sign up.

Prayer

- We ask God for continued provision as we enter a new year where we will examine and contemplate our goals as a faithful, God-honoring organization.
- We ask God for financial support from foundations and individuals during end of year giving and through monthly supporters. We pray for funding for CBE's initiatives, like our 2024 conference in Denver, the Alvera Mickelson Memorial Scholarship, our Christian radio project, *Mutuality Matters* Podcast, eLearning courses, and other book and translation projects.
- We ask God for continued focus and steadfastness as the CBE staff prepare for registration launch, website updates, and promotions for our 2024 conference in Denver, Colorado.
- We ask God to supply us with faithful conference sponsors and exhibitors who align with CBE's mission, statement of faith, and core values.
- We ask for God's guidance in reaching new communities and audiences worldwide through outside events, CBE publications, and CBE's online presence.

**Start 2024 the right way
with a CBE church and
organization membership!**

Receive up to **15% off**. Become
a member at cbe.today/orgsale
today or scan the QR code!



CBE INTERNATIONAL (Christians for Biblical Equality)

CBE International (CBE) is a nonprofit organization of Christian women and men who believe that the Bible, properly translated and interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of women and men of all racial and ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all ages, based on the teachings of Scriptures such as Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (NIV 2011).

MISSION STATEMENT CBE exists to promote the biblical message that God calls women and men of all cultures, races, and classes to share authority equally in service and leadership in the home, church, and world. CBE’s mission is to eliminate the power imbalance between men and women resulting from theological patriarchy.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

- We *believe* in one God, creator and sustainer of the universe, eternally existing as three persons equal in power and glory.
- We *believe* in the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ.
- We *believe* that eternal salvation and restored relationships are only possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.
- We *believe* the Holy Spirit equips us for service and sanctifies us from sin.
- We *believe* the Bible is the inspired word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.
- We *believe* that women and men are equally created in God’s image and given equal authority and stewardship of God’s creation.
- We *believe* that women and men are equally responsible for and distorted by sin, resulting in shattered relationships with God, self, and others.
- Therefore, we *lament* that the sins of sexism and racism have been used to historically oppress and silence women throughout the life of the church.
- We *resolve* to value and listen to the voices and lived experiences of women throughout the world who have been impacted by the sins of sexism and racism.



SUBSCRIBE

Receive a year of print copies of *Priscilla Papers*, CBE’s academic journal, and *Mutuality*, CBE’s popular magazine. Subscriptions are available for individuals, churches, and libraries.

Learn **more at cbe.today/subscriptions**.

JOIN

If your church, seminary, school, or nonprofit agrees with CBE’s Statement of Faith and Core Values, join CBE as an organizational member to receive publications, discounted conference registrations, and more.

Visit **cbe.today/orgmembers** for more info.

CORE VALUES

- Scripture is our authoritative guide for faith, life, and practice.
- Patriarchy (male dominance) is not a biblical ideal but a result of sin that manifests itself personally, relationally, and structurally.
- Patriarchy is an abuse of power, taking from women and girls what God has given them: their dignity, freedom, and leadership, and often their very lives.
- While the Bible reflects a patriarchal culture, the Bible does not teach patriarchy as God’s standard for human relationships.
- Christ’s redemptive work frees all people from patriarchy, calling women and men to share authority equally in service and leadership.
- God’s design for relationships includes faithful marriage between a woman and a man, celibate singleness, and mutual submission in Christian community.
- The unrestricted use of women’s gifts is integral to the work of the Holy Spirit and essential for the advancement of the gospel worldwide.
- Followers of Christ are to advance human flourishing by opposing injustice and patriarchal teachings and practices that demean, diminish, marginalize, dominate, abuse, enslave, or exploit women, or restrict women’s access to leadership in the home, church, and world.

CONNECT WITH CBE

Connect with CBE online to learn more about us, enjoy the resources we offer, and take part in our ministry.



Visit our website, cbeinternational.org, to find thousands of free resources—articles, book reviews, and video and audio recordings.



Get news, updates, and free resources (**cbe.today/news**).



Follow our blog (**cbe.today/mutuality**).



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Follow us on LinkedIn (**linkedin.com/company/christians-for-biblical-equality/**).



Find us on YouTube (**youtube.com/@cbeinternational**).



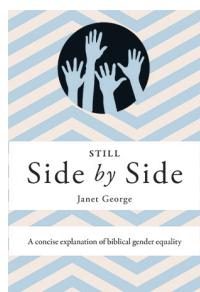
Listen to us on Soundcloud (**soundcloud.com/cbe-international**).

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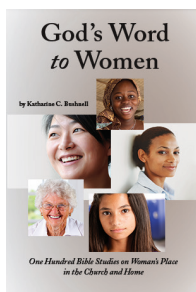
Explore CBE Published Books



Still Side by Side: A Concise Explanation of Biblical Gender Equality, Revised Edition

Janet George

An introduction to the biblical equality of women and men, *Still Side by Side* explores the Bible's teaching about the role of men and women in the family, church, and world. A valuable resource for individuals or groups, each chapter is introduced with a question and brief answer, followed by a more in-depth exploration.



God's Word to Women: One Hundred Bible Studies on Woman's Place in the Church and Home

Katharine Bushnell

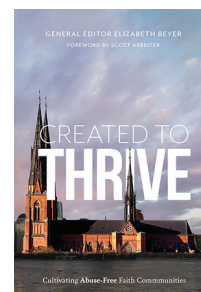
From Genesis to Revelation, Bushnell provides a thorough explanation of every Bible passage that touches on women. A Scholar of Hebrew and Greek, she studies the passages in their original languages and in their historical context, discovering insights sometimes obscured by Bible translators. First published in 1921, scholars have deemed *God's Word to Women* one of the best whole-Bible approaches to the question of women's place in the church and home.



Mutual by Design: A Better Model of Christian Marriage

Edited by Elizabeth Beyer
with Lynne Nelson

The Bible casts a vision of marriage where men and women co-lead and co-serve as equal partners. This book explores that vision. Useful for both group or individual study, this book is written for those considering marriage, those already engaged, newlyweds, and any couple seeking to improve their relationship. Chapters include discussion questions, exercises, and suggestions for further reading.



Created to Thrive: Cultivating Abuse-Free Faith Communities

Elizabeth Beyer, ed.

Created To Thrive brings together the voices of experts and faith leaders to tackle topics related to abuse. Born out of a desire to equip pastors and Christian leaders to respond wisely to create safe spaces where all can flourish, *Created to Thrive* explores the dangerous consequences of women's devaluation and how theology can perpetuate abuse.

cbeBookstore

providing quality resources on biblical gender equality

For more resources,
visit cbebookstore.org



Mutuality offers articles from diverse writers who explore egalitarian theology as it impacts everyday life.