



The Dangers of a Single Narrative: How Slander Hurts Women

It was an exciting moment. Gathered to learn more about women's leadership, the speaker began by declaring their commitment to Scripture as an egalitarian. Everyone was thrilled, but within minutes that changed. Stunningly, the speaker demeaned biblical feminists as aligned not with Scripture, but with secular feminist ideals. Sweeping off the chess board all egalitarians but one, the speaker presented a single narrative that distorted truth—a misrepresentation seemingly for the sake of self-promotion. Sadly, this is the same tactic used by many complementarians. They too present a single narrative on women's leadership that sweeps off the table all biblical texts on mutuality and women's leadership to focus only on a single interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11–14, 1 Corinthians 14:34–36, and Ephesians 5:21–29. The attack on truth by a single narrative is too much a part of Christian and secular communication and is profoundly damaging.

Not long ago, a parent disgruntled by a coach who did not give their teen sufficient field time began to spread lies about the coach, resulting in his termination. He would later be vindicated by a slander lawsuit. Another coach, employed by an Ivy League university, was falsely accused and fired. Despite the school's prestige, this coach was never given an opportunity to address the allegations that disparaged his character. Later, his reputation was also cleared by a slander lawsuit. Those wrongly accused by a single narrative are highly motivated to recover their reputation and share their side of the story despite the time, pain, and cost it may take. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “. . . without justice, there is no peace.”¹ Certainly justice depends on hearing the truth. This is precisely the challenge in exposing the single narrative promoting male authority as God's design.

Thankfully, gaining justice and redeeming truth through due process that includes the perspective of the accused is a legal priority in the US legal system, which is based on Judeo-Christian values. Biblical texts challenging the dominance of a single narrative abound. Leviticus 19:11, 15–16 reads, “Do not lie. Do not deceive one another . . . Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality . . . but judge your neighbor fairly. Do not go about spreading slander among your people.” In the New Testament, Paul goes so far as to teach that slander is death-worthy in Romans 1:28–32.

Despite its pervasive presence in church history, the single narrative of Christian patriarchy has come under scrutiny

by theologians, historians, and church leaders worldwide. As a result, its capacity to deceive and distort Scripture is shrinking. Slowly but steadily, a far more consistent reading of Scripture is freeing God's gifts, calling, and empowerment of women. As egalitarian pioneers questioned the single narrative of patriarchy, many around world joined the quest for biblical truth on women. This is the history of the egalitarians who founded CBE.

Aligned with Scripture and critical of patriarchal culture inside and outside the church, CBE was founded to challenge the dominant patriarchal narrative through books, journals, events, and local chapters worldwide. CBE resources helped mobilize an international egalitarian movement to expose biblical misrepresentations embodied in the single narrative of male headship. These efforts continue to inspire churches, denominations, and organizations to “come let us reason together,” Isaiah 1:18. While we've reached a tipping point, there's much more work to do!

If you're an English speaker, you can find many excellent resources that expose false biblical allegations restricting women's gifts in the church, home, and world. Yet those who do not read or speak English or who do not have access to egalitarian resources may be especially vulnerable to the deceptions of a single narrative, placing them at risk for abuse. Because of the damage to girls and women in families, churches, and Christian communities, egalitarians have a call and opportunity to reach those outside the English-speaking world. For this reason, CBE hosts Spanish radio spots on women in Scripture and Mission which are having a huge impact. We also convene CBE conferences outside the US every other year. In 2025 we'll return to South America, where our resources mobilized significant egalitarian momentum in Brazil at CBE's 2023 conference in São Paulo. In preparation for next year, we need to translate key CBE resources into Spanish. To do this, we need your prayers and financial partnership. In gratitude for egalitarian resources in English, will you prayerfully be part of God's biblical liberation of those who have yet to hear? Join hands with CBE so that the next generation of Christians, worldwide, know that truth which sets Christian marriages, churches and organizations free of Christian patriarchy's single narrative. Thank you.

Notes

1. Mimi Haddad, “History Matters: Evangelicals and Women,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, ed. by Pierce, Westfall, and McKirland (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2021), 11–35.